POSITIVE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract

Today, a greater emphasis has been put on the emotional aspects of education. One of these aspects is the pedagogical relations between teachers and students; in this context referred to as teacher-student relationships. It has been broadly researched that positive types of teacher-student relationships have a lot of benefits on students' wellbeing and school success and therefore it is essential, that teachers focus on building these types of relationships.

With a mixed-methods approach, the present study collected quantitative and qualitative data on the following matters concerned about teacher-student relationships: teachers' dedication, values, views, focus, strategies and competence, as well as challenges. The data was collected with the use of a questionnaire and observations, and discussed with available, former research, that is summarized in the literature review.

The results revealed that teachers are dedicated to and focused on teacher-student relationships and use a variety of strategies in order to build them. Additionally, it was discovered that teachers have faced challenges that are mostly related to the student such as behavior, cultural differences, and special needs. Based on the findings, a set of recommendations were provided for further research at the end of this research paper.

Keywords: *positive teacher-student relationships, values, views, focus, dedication, strategies, competence, challenges*

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1. Introduction

Teacher-student relationships are a crucial part of a teacher's job. Teachers must be aware of what actions can develop those relationships to positive and what might generate them to negative or even non-existent. The importance of positive teacher-student relationships has been broadly researched and it is essential that teachers are aware of the advantages that they have for students. These include greater academic achievement, wellbeing, and better school adjustment. Research has also found positive effects for teachers, and these include feelings of joy and competence.

However, only a few or no studies have been done that investigate the occurrence of positive teacher-student relationships, and teachers' views and values for them. Therefore, the present study aimed to focus on a variety of aspects, including teachers' strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships along with teachers' views and values together with to what extent they focus on the topic in question. It also explored what kind of challenges teachers have faced when building relationships with their students. Given the several benefits that positive teacher-student relationships have on students and even on the teachers, it is important that teachers keep this as one of their top values and goals in their profession. Fortunately, today, the traditional mindset and practices have created space to place emphasis for the wellbeing of students and teachers.

This thesis consists of a literature review and of a research project which has been conducted as fieldwork in an international school in Finland. The results of the present study are presented in the results chapter and conclusions are discussed in the research conclusion chapter. Moreover, recommendations for further research are included.

2. Rationale

2.1 Objectives

The aim of this study was to find out the extent that the teachers at a Finnish international school are dedicated to building positive teacher-student relationships. This consisted of teachers' views, values, and focus on the relationships with their students. Moreover, the researcher intended to build her own knowledge on a variety of aspects related to teacher-student relationships such as strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships. Lastly, to the extent possible, the researcher aimed to raise awareness in the field of education of the importance of the topic in question.

2.2 Motivation

The motivation for commencing this study was based on the researcher's personal interest and values. After going through different experiences as a pre-service teacher and noticing different practices of different teachers, the researcher's interest in the topic of positive teacher-student relationships arose. The researcher desired to learn more about the topic through this research project as it would potentially develop her in her own identity and as a future class teacher. The researcher views the positive teacher-student relationships as being one of the top factors in creating a successful and meaningful learning experience for a student and therefore is highly motivated to raise awareness about the topic in the field of education and to develop herself.

2.3 Research Questions

The study aimed to answer the main research question which is the following:

To what extent are primary school teachers at an international school in Finland dedicated to building positive teacher-student relationships?

In order to effectively answer the main question, the following sub-questions were generated:

   i.   *What is a positive teacher-student relationship?*
   ii. *To what extent are positive teacher-student relationships valued and focused on by teachers?*
   iii. *Which factors can complicate the development of positive teacher-student relationships?*
   iv. *What strategies do teachers use to build positive teacher-student relationships?*

Sub-question *i* was explored and answered merely through the literature review following this chapter. The sub-questions *iii* and *iv* are also discussed in the literature review but for this context, they are answered through the present study which also answers sub-question *ii*. The results and conclusions for these research questions are discussed near the end of this research paper.

The term *dedicate* may appear ambiguous. In this context, it refers to the effort that teachers put in order to establish positive teacher-student relationships. That includes teachers' values and views on teacher-student relationships, as well as *focus* which refers to the use of strategies and conscious aim to (learn to) build positive relationships.

2.4 Significance

The significance of this study is based on the essentiality of building positive teacher-student relationships, which has been researched to a large extent. According to Baker, Grant, and Morlock (2008), research has found several advantages of positive teacher-student relationships to both, the students, and the teacher.

Most studies have focused solely on the effects of teacher-student relationships and strategies for it, whereas the current study, in addition, explores teachers' views, values, and focus. Although this is a small-scale study, it provides the school and possibly the educational field with valuable information on teachers' values and views, strategies, and other aspects of the topic in question. It can raise awareness on the importance and motivate professionals of education to take action, for instance in minimizing challenges that teachers face when aiming to build positive relationships with their students. The leaders of the school where the study was conducted, will be able to knowledge teachers' views and actions and thus possibly modify certain practices of the school.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Introduction to Teacher-Student Relationships

A teacher-student relationship refers to a pedagogical relation between a teacher and a student, which is simply defined as the interaction between those two (Horttanainen, 2018). The nature of a teacher-student relationship is reciprocal, meaning that the actions of the teacher and the student affect each other (Zhu, 2013). Moreover, a teacher-student relationship is not permanent but temporary, with time frames and goals. The ultimate goal of it could be seen as increasing a student's skills so that the specific teacher is no longer needed. (Kansanen, 2004 as cited in Horttanainen, 2018.)

Van Bergen, McGrath, and Quin (2019) classify teacher-student relationships as being either positive or negative. They define, that there is a lot of closeness and little conflict and dependency in a positive teacher-student relationship whereas, correspondingly, a negative teacher-student relationship has little closeness and a lot of conflicts or dependency.

A positive teacher-student relationship is also characterized by openness, honesty, warmth, and trust as well as reciprocal respect and care. All of these characteristics can make both the student and the teacher feel free to communicate directly and honestly with each other. (Baker, 2006; Gordon & Savolainen, 2006 as cited in Kivari, 2016.)

3.2 Factors that influence teacher-student relationships

Studies have found many different factors, that influence the value of a teacher-student relationship. The teacher, student, school, and society all contribute to forming the relationship positive or negative (Pianta, 1999).

One of the most important factors from the teacher's side is the skill of interpersonal communication (i.e. Pianta, 1999) which will be explained later in this literature review. Moreover, teacher's

positive attitude towards the students, age of under 30, and a sense of well-being and success all positively affect the teacher-student relationship (Horttanainen, 2018; Koca, 2011). However, Horttanainen points out, that a relationship can benefit from the experience of an older teacher. Correspondingly, teacher's negative attitudes and burnout can form the teacher-student relationships negative (Shen, McCaughtry, Martin, Garn, Kulik & Fahlman, 2015 as cited in Horttanainen, 2018). Also, the way teacher interprets students is also a big factor. If a teacher misinterprets a student or does not seek to interpret at all, it can lead to a negative or even non-existent teacher-student relationship (Raehalme & Talib 2006, as cited in Horttanainen, 2018).

Skipper and Douglas (2015) found that a teacher's style of giving feedback to the students plays a significant part in the formation of a teacher-student relationship; criticism can weaken the relationship because students tend to believe that the feedback indicates whether or not the teacher likes them. Surprisingly, praises given after sudden achievements were not found to affect the relationship (Skipper & Douglas, 2015).

Factors related to the student are age (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015 as cited in Horttanainen 2018), gender (Wu, Hughes & Kwok, 2010), ethnicity (Horttanainen, 2018), and personality along with behavior (Horttanainen, 2018; Pianta, 1999; Rudasill, 2011; Zee, Koomen, & Van der Veen, 2013 as cited in Kivari, 2016). According to Wu et al. (2010), girls tend to have better relationships with teachers. McGrath and Van Bergen (2015) discovered that older students are more at risk to experience negative teacher-student relationships than younger students (as cited in Horttanainen, 2018).

As for personality and behavior, building close relationships with shy and quiet students has been proven to be more difficult than with brave, open, and self-directed students (Horttanainen, 2018; Rudasill 2011). This is usually due to the fact, that shy students rarely start an interaction with the teacher whereas self-directed students would do that more. However, it has been noted, that not only do brave students start to interact with teachers but also *teachers* start an interaction with them on their initiative, more often than with shy students. (Rudasill, 2011.)

In addition to the challenge of building a relationship with a shy student, teachers find it even more challenging to build one with a student with behavioral issues. According to research done by Hoglund, Klingle, and Hosan (2015), student's inappropriate behavior will most likely result in a negative teacher-student relationship (as cited in Horttanainen, 2018). This inappropriate behavior could manifest itself as passivity and aggressiveness for instance (Gallaghera, Kainza, Vernon-Feagansa & White, 2013 as cited in Horttanainen, 2018).

Schools and society can either promote or disregard the building of positive teacher-student relationships with their values and measures (Pianta, 1999). First of all, class sizes should maintain small, for teachers to create positive and strong relationships with their students (Mustary, 2020). Horttanainen (2018) stresses that big class sizes tend to break togetherness and make it more difficult to form relationships as it is usually crowded and noisy from too many students. Secondly, as the curriculum defines the aim of teaching

as well as its content, it has a direct impact on teacher-student relationships (Kansanen, 2004, as cited in Horttanainen 2018). The more the curriculum emphasizes individualized teaching and taking students into account, the more teacher-student relationships are valued in the classrooms (Horttanainen, 2018).

Lastly, a school's community and especially the leaders (i.e. principal or executive staff) have a huge impact on how teacher-student relationships are formed (i.e. Van Bergen et al., 2019). In their study, Hussain, Nawaz, Nasir, Kiani, and Hussain (2013) discovered that many teachers found it challenging to build positive teacher-student relationships if their colleagues had more of a traditional mind setup; meaning that they prefer an authoritative way of teaching rather than focusing on building relationships with their students.

As mentioned earlier, a teacher's wellbeing and sense of ability affect the quality of a teacher-student relationship. The support of school leaders becomes critical when these two factors suffer. Alongside creating an emotionally positive and supportive school climate, leaders can provide emotional support for teachers who are going through stress or feel helpless in managing student behavior (Horttanainen 2018; Van Bergen et al., 2019). Leaders should give as much autonomy as possible to the teachers and provide instruction on how to build positive teacher-student relationships. The emotional and instructional support will encourage teachers to invest time and energy in building relationships with their students. In addition, the behavioral expectations and values set by the leaders for the school community will also contribute to the formation of teacher-student relationships. (Van Bergen et al., 2019.)

3.3 Interpersonal communication skills and intercultural communication competence

As mentioned earlier, a teacher's interaction style affects the formation of a teacher-student relationship. Teachers must have interpersonal communication skills to build positive relationships with their students (Suryani, 2018). According to Sarason (1999), the absence of a system that assesses how teachers interact with children is a major problem in the field of education (as cited in Gablinske, 2014).

Interpersonal communication skills are the kind of, that teacher has in order to communicate effectively with the students and thus enable the formation of positive teacher-student relationships. Communication can be verbal, which manifests itself in word choices, speaking, and use of language as well as non-verbal, which, in turn, includes the use of body language and sound along with taking emotional states into account and responding to them. Proper use of these makes a big part of interpersonal communication skills. (Horttanainen, 2018). According to Kauppila (2005), positive interaction consists of honesty, acceptance, openness, emotional connection, perception, interest, activeness, and understanding (as cited in Horttanainen, 2018). In practice, a teacher in Gablinske's (2014) study was observed to use the following practices in her interaction with the students: tone of voice, proximity to students, personal conversations, active listening, feedback to students, and the use of humor and praise.

In addition to the skill of interpersonal communication, teachers, especially teachers at international schools, must have intercultural communication competence. Intercultural communication refers to communication between people from different cultures (Nunez, Nunez Mahdi & Popma, 2014). According to Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009), intercultural communication competence consists of abilities and skills that are needed in interaction with people from different cultures. One of the skills is an ability to understand a variety of cultures, including one's own, and apply this understanding into intercultural communication (Teachingenglish.org, nd.).

Bryant et al. (2017) suggest that teachers take time to strengthen their intercultural communication competence, for instance by studying different cultures; this will help teachers to be responsive and sensitive towards cultural differences in the classroom. Arends (2015) also highlights the importance of developing intercultural communication competence, in order to avoid misconceptions and prejudices about students from different cultures.

3.4 The effects of teacher-student relationships

Plenty of research has been done on the effects of a teacher-student relationship. Findings indicate that there are several effects on both, the students, and the teacher (Baker et al., 2008), and whether these effects are negative or positive, depends on the quality of the relationship.

Positive relationships

Positive teacher-student relationships support students' overall development and growth (Curby, Rimm-Kaufman, & Abry, 2013 as cited in Kivari, 2016; Horttanainen, 2018). First of all, they help in school adjustment: students feel safe, competent, secure, and contented, and hereby are motivated to learn and make social connections with peers (Hamre & Pianta, 2006 as cited in Gablinske, 2014; Koca, 2016; Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995 as cited in Skipper & Douglas, 2015; Pianta, 1999). Secondly, students' attitudes towards school and motivation are enhanced and this can lead to fewer disruptive behaviors (Gutierrez & Buckley, 2019; Horttanainen, 2018; Koca, 2016; McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015, as cited in Gablinske, 2014; Suryani, 2018). When students feel comfortable in the classroom, they will be braver to engage in learning activities and ask questions from the teacher (Horttanainen, 2018).

According to Hamre & Pianta (2001), positive-teacher-student relationships that are experienced in kindergarten, predict student's good behavior and motivation to study in later school years. It, anyway, proves to be that the impact of teacher-student relationships on children's development is essential in the first years of school when they are first developing concepts of how to learn and be a student (Pianta & Walsh, 1996 as cited in Prino, Pasta, Gastaidi and Longobardi, 2014). Positive teacher-student relationships are also found to lead to better success in adulthood (Horttanainen, 2018).

Positive-teacher student relationships have even proven to result in greater academic achievements such as better grades and higher scores in standardized tests (Gablinske, 2014; Gutierrez &

Buckely, 2019; Fan, 2012 as cited in Kivari, 2016; McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015 as cited in Horttanainen, 2018; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt & Oort, 2011).

'Hattie's barometer of influence' by a professor of education, John Hattie, is a scale that ranks different factors that affect student achievement. The effect sizes in this scale rank from deviations of -0.2 to 1.2. If ranked 0.0 or lower, the student achievement is affected negatively and in 0.0-0.15, the student achievement is not affected. Deviation of 0.15-0.4 means that there are typical effects of teachers on students that can be accomplished in one year of teaching. Ranking anywhere above 0.4, means that there are above-desired effects on student achievement. Teacher-student relationships scored d=0.52 in 2017, and thus the effect on academic achievement is high. (Hattie, 2012; Waack, 2018.)

Although building positive teacher-student relationships with students with behavioral issues were mentioned to be difficult, it is critical to do so because according to Hamre and Pianta (2001) Juvonen (2006, as cited in Oreshkina & Greenberg, 2010) students who are at risk to develop or already have social, emotional, or academic difficulties will benefit greatly from a positive relationship with their teacher. For instance, some studies demonstrated, that students who were in the need of special education, did no longer need it if they had positive relationships with the teachers (Pianta et al., 1995 as cited in Oreshkina & Greenberg, 2010). Moreover, positive teacher-student relationships can prevent at-risk students from developing behavioral issues and depression, despite the possible negative home conditions (Horttanainen, 2018).

Although a lot of studies focus on the effects that teacher-student relationships have on *student*s, some have also observed it from the teachers' perspective. First of all, a positive teacher-student relationship brings meaningfulness into a teacher's job, which will then increase the quality of teaching (Horttanainen, 2018). Then, according to an interview conducted by Hargreaves (2000), teachers mentioned positive teacher-student relationships to be the most important sources of joy and motivation for teaching (as cited in Spilt, 2011). Hagenauer's (2015) findings support this as well: teachers that experienced positive teacher-student relationships, often reported experiences of joy and rarely feelings of anger or anxiety. In addition, Hamre and Pianta (2001) state that a positive teacher-student relationship can increase the teacher's motivation to use more time and energy to support the student. In fact, teachers often mention positive teacher-student relationships as one of the main reasons why they stay in the profession (O'Connor, 2008 as cited in Spilt, 2011).

Negative relationships

In addition to knowing the benefits of positive teacher-student relationships, it is important to be aware of the disadvantages that a negative teacher-student relationship can have. A negative type of teacher-student relationship has unfavorable effects on students and teachers. According to Doumen et al. (2008), negative a teacher-student relationship can create behavioral problems in the student such as aggressiveness (as cited in Kivari, 2016). They continue, that this leads to more conflicts between the teacher and student (see also Spilt,

2011). Moreover, the conflictual relationship between the teacher and the student usually creates conflicts between the student and his/her peers (Buyse, Verschueren, Doumen, Van Damme, & Maes, 2008, as cited in Koca, 2016).

Students that have negative relationships with their teachers, face more issues in learning, school adjustment, and self-esteem, and tend to have more school avoidance (Birch & Ladd, 1998 as cited in Skipper & Douglas, 2015; Buyse et al. 2008, as cited in Koca 2016; Horttanainen, 2018). They all also found that negative relationships lead to student's worse academic achievement and performance. Lastly, as teachers tend to spend less one-on-one time with the students that they have negative relationships with, those students are at risk of getting too little social and academic support from their teachers (Baker et al., 2008).

The negative effects for teachers are often emotional and mental. Teachers' meaningfulness and satisfaction towards their profession decreases (Horttanainen, 2018) and they might even face feelings of helplessness or incompetence (Spilt, 2011; Spilt & Koomen, 2009). Moreover, teachers can experience stress and burnout as well as form negative attitudes towards their students (Claessens et al., 2017).

3.5 Strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships

Given the effects that relationships have on both the student and the teacher, it is essential that the teachers build positive teacher-student relationships that generate trust and respect (Gablinske, 2014). In order to do so, teachers must have the skills and knowledge required for it.

There have been some studies on effective strategies for teachers to build positive teacher-student relationships; however, referring to Gablinske (2014, p. 36) "more research is needed to establish practical application strategies that teachers can use to effectively create strong and successful relationships with their students."

Hamre and Pianta (2006) suggest that schools should actively encourage teachers to frequently interact with their students (as cited in Gablinske, 2014). Moreover, schools should set teacher-student relationships as one of their priorities and give guidance to teachers about different ways to build positive relationships with students (Hamre & Pianta, 2006 as cited in Gablinske, 2014; Van Bergen et al., 2019).

According to Koca (2016), teachers are unconsciously already promoting positive teacher-student relationships when they provide a safe classroom environment and support children's basic psychological needs. Furthermore, as students spend such a significant amount of time with one teacher, there are several opportunities to build positive teacher-student relationships (Baker, 1999 as cited in Gablinske, 2014).

Hussain et al. (2013) characterize building a positive teacher-student relationship as a process, that takes time and requires experience from a teacher. A teacher in Gablinske's study (2014) describes a process that she uses to build positive teacher-student relationships. She starts by building trust with her students; engaging them in conversations about their lives, and actively listens to them to find out their interests. These interests and sources of motivation she uses for making the lessons engaging. Then she establishes rules and a reward system together with the students; this gives students a sense of ownership of the classroom environment. Lastly, this teacher studies her students' behavior and collects observational data, that she uses to make strong connections with her students. (Gablinske, 2014.)

The teachers from Horttanainen's study (2018) also describe their process of building teacher-student relationships, but in periods. Before meeting the students, these teachers study prior information about them or have meetings with each other and parents. This enables teachers to familiarize themselves with the students and consider their needs better. Horttanainen (2018) stresses that it is important for teachers to take students' individual abilities into account while being open-minded without prejudices and seeing the students as equal.

When the teacher meets the students for the first time, he/she takes over the class and the authority by creating rules and practices. From the beginning, teachers strive to create a good team spirit and atmosphere in the classroom through a variety of games and activities. At first, a relationship is built with the whole class, and then with individual students, into which time and effort should be spent as much as possible. (Horttanainen, 2018.)

Teachers keep building teacher-student relationships continually during the school year. Each student is equally paid attention to, and this is done daily, during lessons as well as in breaks and spare time. A positive and respectful attitude, as well as small actions such as a tap on the shoulder and kind words, will enhance the quality of a teacher-student relationship. Teachers also mentioned that they share stories from their personal life in order to be more accessible to the students. (Horttanainen, 2018.)

The two most common strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships that were suggested by multiple researchers were "conversations about students' interests" and "demonstration of care". Akira, Gutierrez, and Buckley (2019) highlight the importance to make time to check in with students, as this demonstrates caring and communicates that the teacher is available in a need of help. Bryant, Bryant, & Smith (2017) also advise teachers to show that they care by greeting students, checking in with them regularly, and making themselves available both, before and after class. Moreover, Van Bergen et al. (2019) found that positive teacher-student relationships can develop when the teacher simply expresses care and positive regard for the student.

Teachers in a research done by Oreshkina and Greenberg (2010), described that "supporting students" and "being available for them" is one of the most meaningful ways of building positive teacher-

student relationships. The teachers in the study of Horttanainen (2018) also mentioned that they do their best to be present for their students whenever it is needed.

The starting point for teachers when they are aiming to build positive relationships with students is to get to know them individually; their interests, perspectives, and backgrounds (Bryant et al., 2017). This can be done with different relationship-building games and activities (Bryant et al., 2017; Gutierrez & Buckley, 2019). However, the most effective strategy is to have frequent conversations with the students, especially about their lives (Horttanainen, 2018; Oreshkina & Greenberg, 2010; Suryani). This will enable teachers to find common interests with students and connect on a more personal level, which enables positive teacher-student relationships to develop (Gutierrez & Buckley, 2019; Hamre & Pianta, 2006 as cited in Gablinske, 2014). On the contrary, those shared interests between the teacher and the student will facilitate conversations which again helps to build relationships (Gutierrez & Buckley, 2019).

Gutierrez and Buckley continue, that is also favorable that teachers share stories from their lives as well as invite humor and joy to the classroom. Overall, a positive classroom atmosphere and teaching style support the formation of positive teacher-student relationships (Gutierrez & Buckley, 2019; Pianta et al., 2012; Van Bergen et al., 2019). In addition, motivating students is a big part of building relationships (Bryant et al., 2017; Oreshkina & Greenberg, 2010). According to Bryant et al. (2017), specific praise on students' strengths and effort can motivate and make students view the teacher in a more positive light.

4. Research design

4.1 Participants and context

The study was conducted in a primary department of an international school in Finland. The questionnaire was sent to all class teachers of grades 1 to 6, from which ten teachers agreed to participate. In addition, three language teachers with their own classrooms were personally approached to fill out the questionnaire in order to get more perspective.

A total of 5 class teachers agreed to participate in the observations; grades 1, 2, 3 (n=2), and 4 were observed. These teachers were part of the ten class teachers that filled out the questionnaire. All the teachers are diverse with individual teaching experiences and backgrounds; however, participants are categorized only based on their age to ensure anonymity (see Table 1).

Table 1
Demographics

Age	Participants (total n=13)
28 or less	1

29-35	2
36-42	2
43-50	4
51-59	3
60+	1

As the researcher selected the participants with a specific purpose in mind, the type of sampling that was used in the research is called *purposive sampling*. More specifically, the researcher used a *convenience sampling,* in which easily accessible and contactable people are chose. In addition, the study included some *snowball sampling*, as the researcher decided to invite the three language teachers to participate in the questionnaire. This was due to a recommendation from a colleague and the low response rate. (Wellington, 2015).

4.2 Methodology and methods

The current study classifies as a *case study*, as it examined one, specific school (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). It required both quantitative and qualitative data to be collected to answer the research questions; thus, the study involved a *mixed-methods approach*. According to Creswell (2007), a mixed-methods approach leads to a more complete understanding of the research problem.

Both, quantitative and qualitative data were collected through an online questionnaire on Google Forms. It included mainly closed-ended questions but had also a couple of open-ended questions (see Appendix I), that provided the researcher with numerical data as well as some qualitative data such as experiences. As the questions of the questionnaire were very diverse, they concerned all the sub-questions of the study, which included the main objectives: values, focus, challenges, and strategies. Online questionnaires are usually convenient for the participants and can possibly provide the researcher with more honest answers as it might feel more anonymous for the respondents than in-person questionnaires or interviews for instance (Cohen et al., 2018).

In addition to the questionnaire, structured observations were used. In these *non-participant* observations (Wellington, 2015), the researcher made use of a pre-created observation form (see Appendix II) that provided her with quantitative data. This quantitative data was used in answering sub-question *ii*, which concerned teachers' strategies. The observation form helped the researcher with keeping track of the occurrence of different strategies and factors that create positive teacher-student relationships. These strategies were carefully chosen based on the literature review of this paper. Each teacher was observed for a whole school day, which were 4-hour long.

As this study involved different methods applied to the same context, it used *triangulation*; more specifically the *between method* (Austin, 2016). Moreover, between method is evident in the fact that both, quantitative and qualitative data were collected through the questionnaire. According to Cohen et al. (2018), triangulation ensures validity.

Table 2 offers an overview of the data gathering tools used in this study and displays what type of data is collected for each sub-question; qualitative or quantitative.

Table 2
Data gathering tools and type of data collected

	Data gathering tool			Type of data	
	Observations	Questionnaire	Literature Review	Qualitative	Quantitative
Q. i			✗	✗	
Q. ii		✗			✗
Q. iii		✗	✗	✗	✗
Q. iv	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

4.3 Analysis of Data

The data analysis process for the questionnaire began with the researcher checking each response for completeness, accuracy, and uniformity as suggested by Cohen et al. (2018). As the questionnaire was created with Google Forms, the results were automatically converted into statistics in a form of pie- and bar charts. This allowed the researcher to spot immediate trends. The results were then transferred to Excel to be further analyzed, which was also used to create data graphs.

The data of the observations were analyzed mostly by hand, with the use of pen and paper. The manual data analysis included looking for occurrences, similarities, and deviations. Otherwise, the analysis process followed the same pattern as the analysis of the questionnaire.

Results of both, the questionnaire and the observations were color coded and categorized (See Table 3) as suggested by Austin (2016), Cohen et. al. (2018) Creswell (2007), and Wellington (2015). The codes/categories were chosen based on the literature review/theoretical framework and sub-questions.

Table 3
Color codes that were used to analyze the data of the questionnaire and observations

Values and Views	Challenges	Strategies and Competence

4.4 Quality

Continuous efforts were made to ensure the *validity* and *reliability* of this study. Firstly, the researcher made use of triangulation; as mentioned previously, two effective methods were used (observations and questionnaire) and both, quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Secondly, the researcher used an appropriate sample which consisted of a suitable number of participants with diverse backgrounds.

The researcher used the tool of observation for measuring solely variables that are possible to detect and therefore do not create plenty of misinterpretations. Thus, observations were only used in looking for strategies. Moreover, to ensure reliability, the observations were consistent: the duration was always the same and the pre-made, structured observation sheet was used (see Appendix II). Lastly, throughout the whole study, the researcher avoided subjectivity, by staying unbiased. According to Cohen et. al (2018), the above-mentioned factors all enhance the validity and reliability of a study.

4.5 Ethics

Throughout the whole study, the researcher followed the Ethical Guidelines in Educational Research established by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). Thus, all the aspects such as anonymity, non-traceability, sensitivity, the right to withdrawal, and many more were strictly applied in this study. First, the management of the school was fully informed about the study and its process, after which the researcher obtained permission to conduct the study. All questions regarding the study were openly answered by the researcher.

Participation in the study only took place with the participants' signed consent. The consent form on both, the questionnaire, and the observation, informed the participants about the purpose, conditions, and their rights regarding participation. No logging into Google Forms was required to fill out the questionnaire, which ensured anonymity. Moreover, for the researcher to display sensitivity, respect, and neutrality as well as to avoid participants' discomfort, she considered and formulated the questions for the questionnaire in an appropriate way.

5. Results

The results have been divided into the following themes based on the sub-questions: values and views, challenges, and strategies and competence. As mentioned earlier, the data on the strategies were collected with both the questionnaire and observations, but for other themes the data was collected merely through the questionnaire. Any previous research found was discussed in the literature review.

5.1 Values and Views

The questionnaire (see Appendix I) consisted mostly of questions related to teachers' values and views. As apparent in *Figure 1*, all teachers found positive teacher-student relationships either *very important* or *important*. Interestingly, the importance was experienced to be equal to both teachers and students. The results seem to indicate, that teachers are aware of the advantages that positive teacher-student relationships have on students, like better school adjustment, motivation, behavior, and academic success as described previously in the literature review. Additionally, as the teachers personally appreciated positive teacher-student relationships, they may have experienced positive effects such as meaningfulness in the job, joy, and increase of motivation (Hargreaves, 2000 as cited in Spilt, 2011; Horttanainen, 2018).
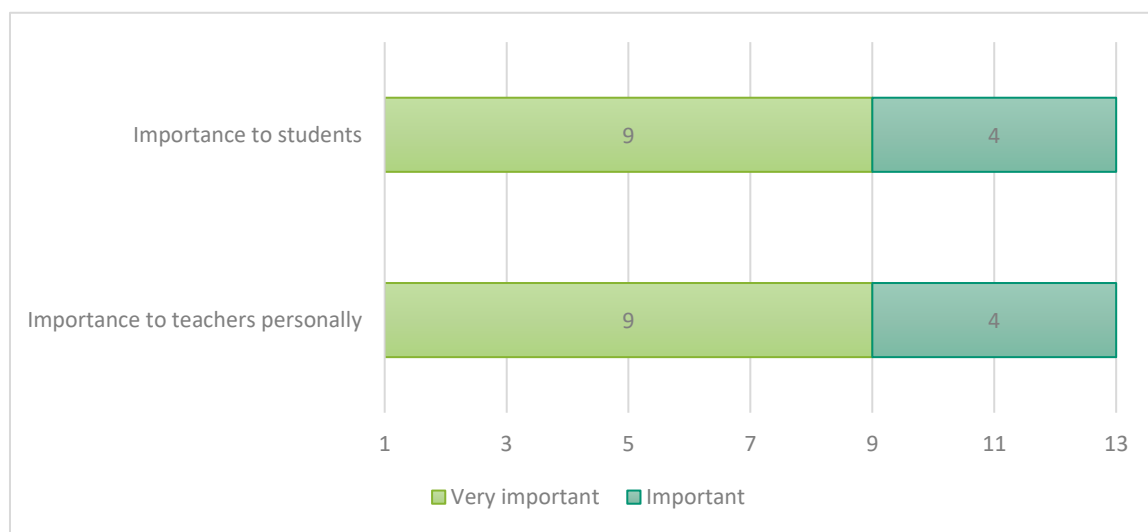

Figure 1. Teachers' views on the importance of positive teacher-student relationships

Teachers were invited to rank the following six skills from the most important to the least important: *Behavior management, building positive teacher-student relationships, organizational skills and time management, lesson/unit planning, communication with parents, and cooperation with colleagues. Table 4* indicates that nearly half of the teachers perceived *building positive teacher-student relationships* as the most important skill while *cooperation with colleagues* was ranked by most of the teachers to be the least important skill from the given options. *Building positive teacher-student relationships* was also ranked in places 2 (n=3) and 3 (n=4) but no lower. This indicates that teachers perceive building positive teacher-student relationships as one of the most important skills of a teacher.

Table 4

Ranking of teachers' most important and least important skills based on teachers' views

	1.	2.
The most important skill	Building positive T-S relationships (n=6)	Behavior management (n=3) Lesson/unit planning (n=3)
The least important skill	Cooperation with colleagues (n=5)	Communication with parents (n=3)

The literature review suggests that teachers should aim to interact with their students as much as possible during breaks and spare time such as before and after school. As displayed in *Figure 2*, just over half of the teachers (n=7) felt that they interact frequently with their students outside teaching sessions (such as breaks, lunch, and before/after school). Additionally, teachers were asked, if they feel that the time they use for such an event is enough - most of them perceived it to be adequate (n=11). However, two teachers reported dissatisfaction with the adequacy.
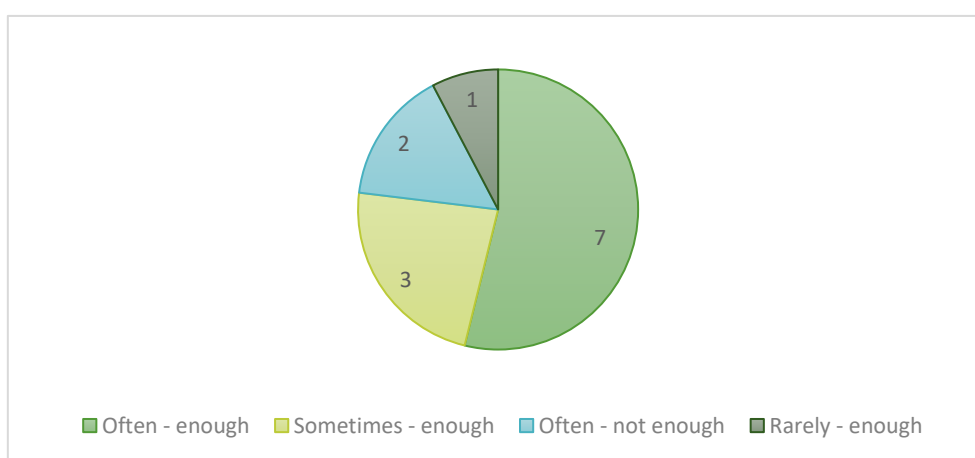

Figure 2. Interaction between teachers and students outside teaching sessions: self-assessed frequency and its adequacy (frequency - adequacy)

Given the effects that relationships have on both the student and the teacher, it is essential that teachers focus on building positive teacher-student relationships (Gablinske, 2014). Teachers were invited to self-assess their focus on building positive teacher-student relationships. The word *focus* was defined to the teachers as: *"using strategies, paying attention to your interaction with the students and developing yourself in the skill of building relationships".* As *Figure 3* indicates, results split nearly equally into 2 categories; a bit over half perceived themselves to focus *enough* on building positive teacher-student relationships whereas the other half felt that they focus *almost enough* but experienced some scope for improvement.
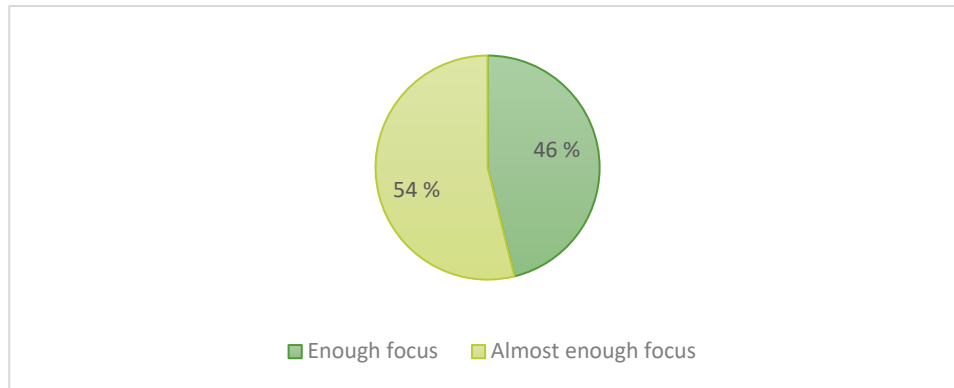
Figure 3. Teachers' self-assessment of their focus on building positive teacher-student relationships

5.2 Challenges

As referenced in the literature review, many factors influence the value and formation of a teacher-student relationship, and these can be related to the teacher, student, school, and/or society.

Teachers were asked to select challenges, that they have faced when building teacher-student relationships. The challenges chosen to this particular question were based on the theory in the literature review. Teachers also had the possibility to report other challenges, but none chose to do so. The majority of the teachers had faced challenges when attempting to build positive teacher-student relationships at some point in their careers. The main factors complicating the development of a relationship were experienced to be either factors related to the student such as behavior or special needs, or simply, the lack of time (see *Figure 4*). Interestingly, no factors related to the school's management or colleagues were experienced which can perhaps indicate that the school's practices promote positive teacher-student relationships.
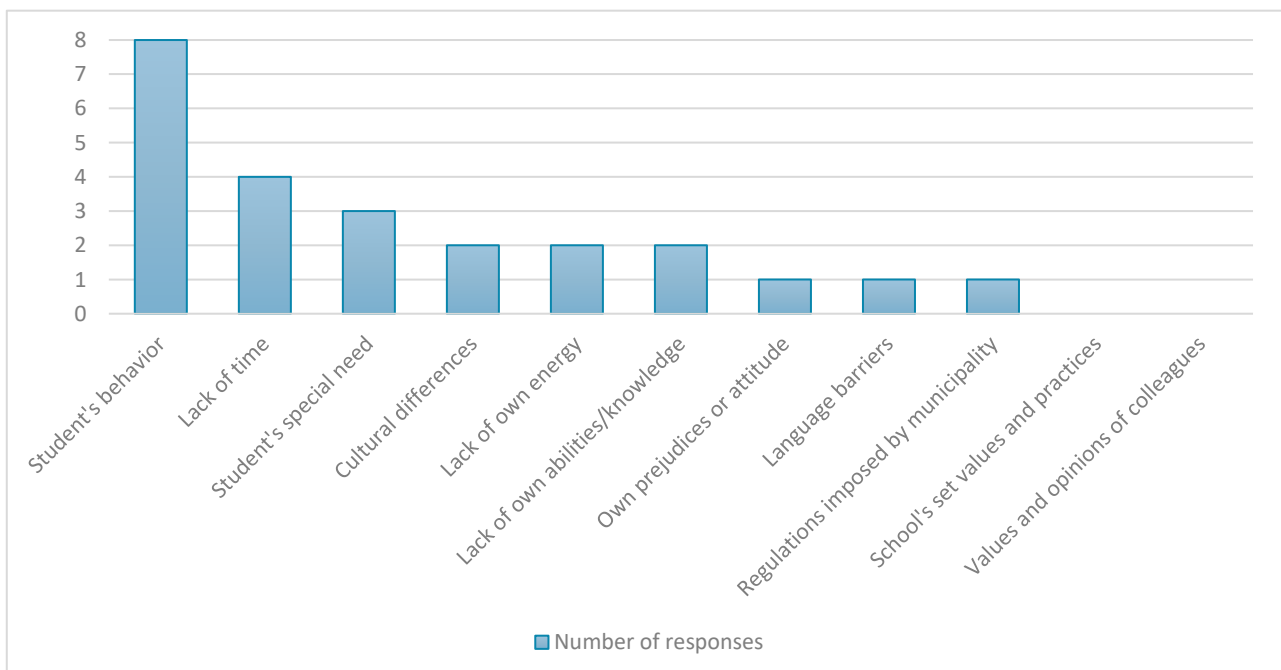
5.3 Strategies and Competence

In order to effectively build positive teacher-student relationships, teachers need to be aware of different strategies for it. Some of the strategies that were suggested in the literature review included: conversations with students about their interests, sharing stories from personal life, checking in with students, motivation, and praise.

Figure 5 summarizes teachers' self-reported relationship-building strategies. *Conversations with students about their interests and lives*, *getting to know students*, and *listening* were most frequently reported in the questionnaire. As apparent, some of the teachers' reported strategies were identical to the ones in the literature review like *sharing stories about personal life, spending time outside classes,* and *positive body language.*
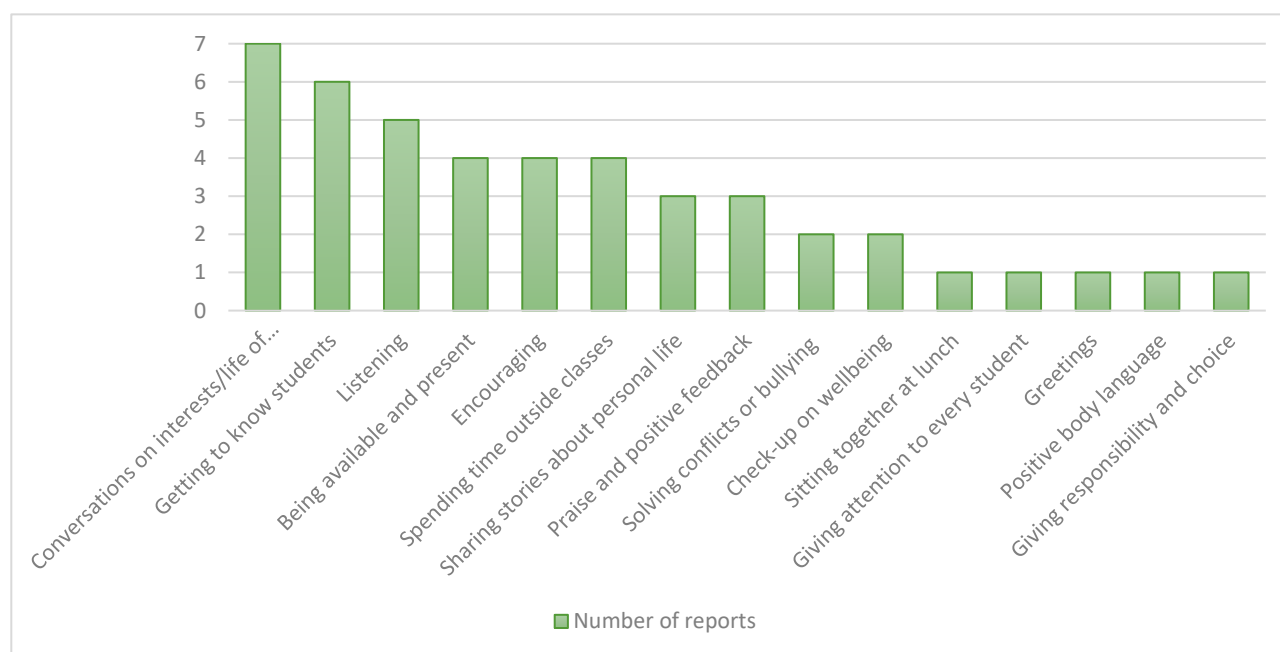

Figure 5. Teachers' self-reported strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships

Following up, teachers were asked where they had received information on the strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships. The most common sources of information were *higher education*, *previous* and *current workplace*, and own *research about the topic* (see *Figure 6*).
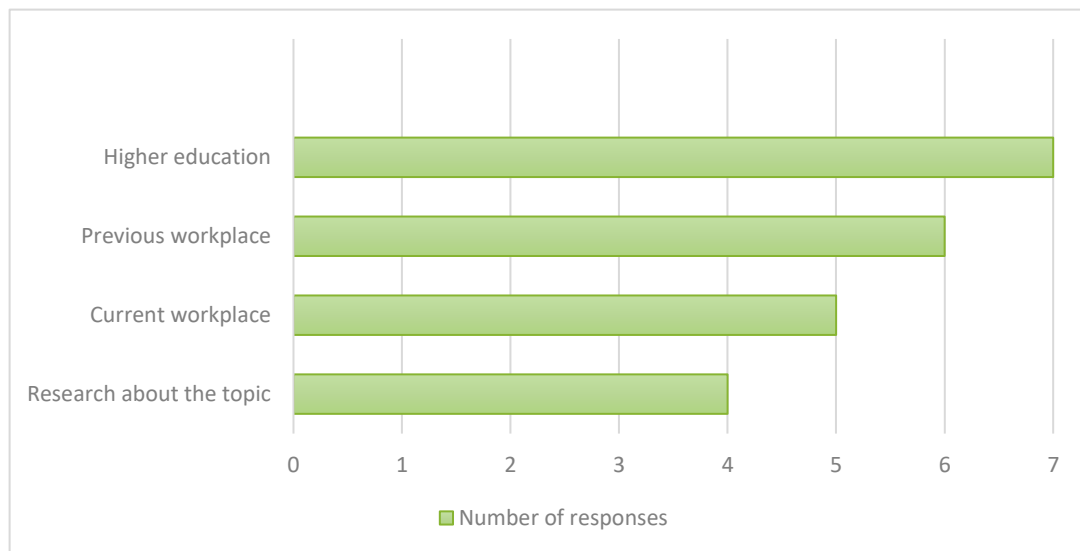
18

Figure 6. The most common sources of teachers' knowledge on strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships

As mentioned previously, the observations focused on finding out what strategies teachers use during a regular school day. *Figure 7* includes all the strategies and a record of how many times those occurred. The most observed strategies were *praise, positive body language, check-in with students learning,* and *conversations.* The occurrence of giving praise was very frequent from each teacher; also positive body language was witnessed a lot. The strategies that the researcher did not notice or noticed very little, were 1-on-1 time with a student, stories about personal life, and choices and responsibilities. Also checking in with a student's well-being was noticeably less common than checking in with a student's learning. Some of these could be explained by the lack of time or the observer's presence.
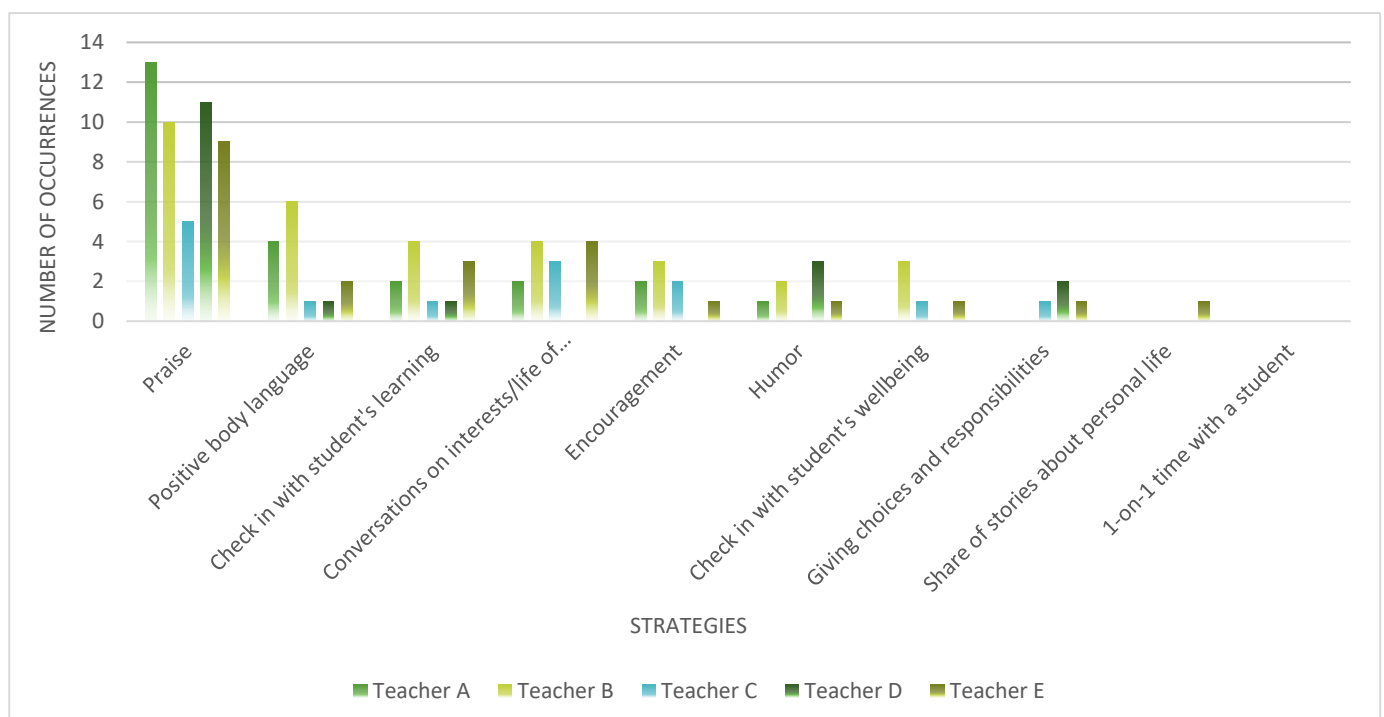
Figure 7. Strategies observed and their occurrences during a 4-hour school day

For some strategies the number of occurrences was not recorded; instead, it was merely observed whether or not the strategy was implemented by a specific teacher. *Table 5* summarizes the strategies observed and the number of teachers that implemented them. According to Bryant et. al. (2017), teachers can demonstrate care by greeting their students. As it is apparent, all teachers greeted students as a group. Most teachers also greeted students individually, however, only at some or a couple of them. A question arises whether or not the students that are not greeted by the teacher (by teacher's initiative) feel left out. This might be an issue when it comes to the shy students for instance.

As displayed, four out of five teachers had a neat and organized physical classroom environment. This refers to whether or not the classroom is tidy, has items in labelled places and not all over the room, and whether or not there are classroom schedules visible for the students.

Table 5.
Strategies observed and number of teachers implementing them

Strategy	n (5=100%)
Greets students as a group	5
Greets students individually	4
Always calls students by their names (no pointing, saying "you", or forgetting/mixing names)	3
Has a neat and organized physical classroom environment	4
Sits with students at lunch	3

As emphasized in the literature review, schools should give guidance to teachers about different strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships and encourage them to frequently interact with students. *Figure 8* summarizes answers on whether or not teachers would be eager to participate in a workshop organized by the school, that informs about strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships. All teachers viewed the idea as positive, but nearly half felt like they would not benefit from it and thus would not be eager to participate.
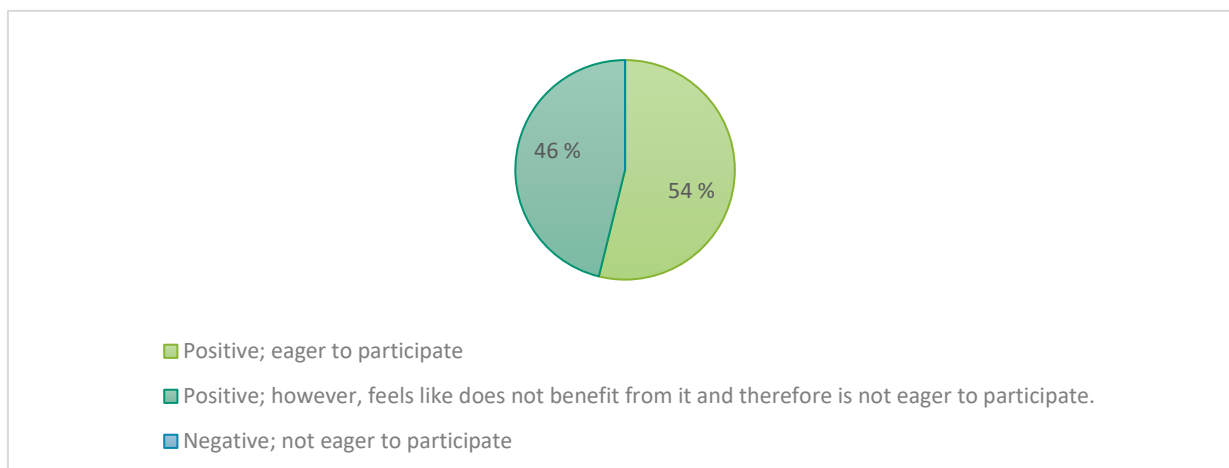
Figure 8. Teachers' view on a workshop on strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships

Although the current research did not focus on teachers' *competence* in building positive teacher-student relationships, some findings regarding it arose unexpectedly from the data collection.

Some of the responses in the questionnaire might indicate that teachers have good competence and knowledge in building positive teacher-student relationships. For instance, as displayed in *Figure 5,* teachers were able to name strategies or describe processes that they use in building relationships with their students. Moreover, all teachers had received knowledge on strategies (see *Figure 6*). Lastly, as *Figure 8* displays, many teachers felt like they were not in the need of a workshop on strategies which may indicate, that teachers feel competent enough.

On the other hand, the responses can demonstrate, that some teachers do not feel competent enough in building positive teacher-student relationships. This can be interpreted from *Figure 4*, in which challenges different challenges were presented. First of all, some teachers reported, that they lack their own ability or have too little knowledge and therefore find it sometimes difficult to build relationships. Secondly, as it was explained, most challenges reported were related to the student, such as behavior, cultural differences, or special need. This indicates that teachers need more practical knowledge on how to build positive relationships with different students.

6. Research conclusion

6.1 Sub-questions

   i. What is a positive teacher-student relationship?

As mentioned earlier, the first sub-question is merely investigated through the literature review of this research paper. From the findings in the literature review, it can be concluded that a positive teacher-student relationship is a pedagogical relation between a teacher and a student that includes characteristics such as openness, closeness, warmth, honesty, and trust as well as reciprocal respect and care. Additionally, only a little bit of conflicts or dependency is found in a positive teacher-student relationship.

ii. To what extent are positive teacher-student relationships valued and focused on by teachers?

Given the effects that positive teacher-student relationships have, which were explained in the literature review, it is essential that teachers set positive relationships with their students as one of their main values and aim to focus on building them. As mentioned earlier, this research question was investigated through the questionnaire. Therefore, the conclusion for this question is based on teachers' personal views and experiences and can be seen as a qualitative question to which quantitative data was collected.

As it was apparent in the results, the teachers viewed the importance of teacher-student relationships relatively high to both themselves and the students. Moreover, almost half of the teachers ranked positive teacher-student relationships to the first place in an order of importance and the other half ranked it either in second or third place which is still perceived as fairly high. When asked about teachers' sources of knowledge on building positive teacher-student relationships, some teachers (n=4) expressed that they had researched about the topic on their own initiative, which indicates the value towards the topic. In addition, all teachers felt positive about a workshop on strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships and half of them were eager to participate which shows that teachers understand the importance to learn about the topic in question.

As for focus, most teachers reported to spend time frequently (n=9) or sometimes (n=3) with their students outside teaching sessions. Most of them interpreted it to be adequate but some (n=3) felt like it was not enough even though they answered that the time they spend is frequent. That again can demonstrate teachers' values. Interestingly, when teachers were asked about whether or not they (feel like they) focus enough on teacher-student relationships, a bit over half answered that they focus almost enough, and the other half expressed that they focus enough. In other words, half of the teachers feel like they could focus more on positive teacher-student relationships.

From these findings it can be concluded, that first of all, it is clear that the teachers at International School in Finland do value positive teacher-student relationships and focus on them. The question asks to what extent the positive teacher-student relationships are valued and the extent they are focused on. The researcher has concluded that teachers at the International School in Finland value and focus

on the positive teacher-student relationships to a large extent. A scale of "very large extent, large extent, some extent, little extent, and very little extent" was considered when answering this question.

iii. Which factors can complicate the development of positive teacher-student relationships?

The literature review identified a variety of factors, that can complicate the development of a teacher-student relationship. These included factors related to the teacher, such as teacher's *prejudices and negative attitude*, *burnout*, *values*, and *lack of skills or knowledge* as well as factors related to the student, like *behavioral issues*, *shyness*, *older age*, and *male gender*. Moreover, school and society can negatively affect the formation of teacher-student relationships, and these include values *of the school and its community* as well as the *aims of the curriculum.*

Based on the results in the questionnaire, most teachers at International School in Finland had been facing some of the challenges described above and they can significantly complicate the development of teacher-student relationships. As detected in the results, challenges related to a student were more common than challenges related to the teacher. These included *behavior*, *special needs,* and *cultural differences*. However, some respondents expressed to have faced challenges related to themselves like *lack of own energy*, *lack of own abilities/knowledge,* and *own prejudices and attitude*. A common challenge among teachers was also the *lack of time*.

Other challenges that were selected, were *language barriers* and *regulations imposed by the municipality*. Positively, none of the respondents had faced challenges related to the school/workplace, such as *its values and practices* or *opinions and values of colleagues*.

iv. What strategies do teachers use to build positive teacher-student relationships?

Both the questionnaire, and observations were used to collect data for this research question. Additionally, the literature review summarized previous research done on the strategies.

The strategies that teachers self-reported and which were also recognized in the literature review were the following: *having conversations with students about their lives and interests*, *getting to know students*, *listening*, *being available and present*, *encouraging*, *spending time with the students outside teaching sessions*, *sharing stories about personal life*, *giving praise and positive feedback*, *checking up on wellbeing*, *giving attention to each student*, *greeting*, and *using positive body language and interaction style*. New strategies that were not identified in the literature review included *solving conflicts and bullying situations*, *sitting with students at lunch*, and *giving responsibilities and choices*. These strategies teachers

had learned or gotten knowledge on from their higher education, own research, and current or previous workplace.

As explained earlier, the researcher focused on observing strategies that had been suggested in the literature review. Thus, the observation sheet (see Appendix II) was created based on that. The most common strategies that the researcher noticed teachers using were *praise, positive body language*, *check-in with students' learning*, *conversations with the students about their lives/interests*, *encouragement*, and *humor*. Some of the teachers were also witnessed to *check in with students' wellbeing* and *give choices and responsibilities*. Only one teacher *shared stories about his/her personal life*, and nobody spent one on one time with students - this could be due to the lack of time. Moreover, the presence of the researcher might have affected it to some extent.

As for the strategies which for times of occurrences were not recorded, the researcher observed all teachers *greeting their students as a class* and many also *greeted individual students*. Nearly all teachers *had a neat and organized classroom*, and some teachers chose to *sit and eat with their students during lunch*. A couple of teachers were witnessed to point at a student and/or say "you" instead of calling their name when they wanted to answer a question, but fortunately, this was not frequent.

The strategies that the researcher observed, were mainly the ones that the teachers had also self-reported. However, although strategies like *praise* and *positive body language* were frequently noticed by the researcher, these strategies were not reported much in the questionnaire. Also, *humor* was one of the strategies witnessed, yet no teachers reported it. The low report rate of these strategies could be due to a lack of knowledge or simply forgetting to report.

In conclusion, all the strategies mentioned above are strategies that teachers use to build positive teacher-student relationships, based on the literature review, questionnaire, and observations.

6.2 Main question

To what extent are primary school teachers at an international school in Finland dedicated to building positive teacher-student relationships?

Since discovering answers for the sub-questions through the literature review, questionnaire, and observations, a conclusion for the main question can be quite confidently drawn. As explained earlier, the word dedicate in this context refers to teachers' values, views, focus, and use of strategies.

Generally, it can be concluded that teachers at Finnish International School in Finland are dedicated to building positive teacher-student relationships to a large extent. This is based on the findings of the sub-questions. Firstly, teachers value and focus on positive teacher-student relationships to a large extent. Secondly, teachers use a variety of strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships and the study

also indicates the competence and knowledge of teachers to be rather good. Lastly, teachers have faced challenges when aiming to build teacher-student relationships, which indicates that teachers have actively attempted to establish them.

In order to strengthen and increase teachers' dedication to building positive relationships with their students, the school can take steps that were recommended in the literature review. These include setting positive teacher-student relationships as one of the top values of the school community, giving emotional support for teachers that are undergoing stress, giving teachers as much autonomy as possible, and most importantly, giving guidance to teachers about how to build positive teacher-student relationships (for instance, in a form of a workshop). Some or even all of these steps might have already been implemented by the school - this was not researched and thus cannot be known through this study.

7. Recommendations

As mentioned in the literature review, according to Gablinske (2014), more research is needed to establish strategies that teachers can use to build strong and successful relationships with their students. The current study supports this statement. The results indicated that teachers find it somewhat difficult to build positive teacher-student relationships with students whose behavior is challenging, who have special needs, or different cultural manners than to what teachers have gotten used to. Thus, more research is recommended to be done on how to build positive relationships with students like this.

During the current study the researcher came across another topic that arose unexpectedly; the competence of teachers regarding positive teacher-student relationships. Although this was covered to some extent in this study, it could have been an efficient research question. Therefore, more research is recommended to be done on teachers' feelings of competence in building positive teacher-student relationships.

Lastly, the researcher recommends studies to be done on how the school or even the municipality promotes or limits building positive teacher-student relationships with its actions.

8. Limitations

Like any other research, also this study has several limitations, which can negatively affect the overall quality of the results and the conclusions drawn from them.

First of all, as this was a case study focusing on one specific school, the conclusions cannot be generalized to different contexts. However, the results can be considered in other schools for instance, by implementing the strategies and considering the challenges that teachers might face. That can raise important discussion among the school communities.

Secondly, the population of the data collection was rather narrow; 5 out of 18 teachers were observed and 13 teachers took part in the questionnaire. Thus, there is a chance that the results could have differed to some extent if the number was different. To some extent, the low response and volunteer rate was due to the pandemic of Covid-19 that was still present in the world during the researcher's stay in the school and had to, understandably, be treated with caution. However, fortunately, the sample was diverse in both observations and the questionnaire with the different grade levels and teachers' experiences, which somewhat eases this limitation.

Lastly, teachers were aware of what topic is in question when being observed and this might have affected their actions to some extent.

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Appendices

Appendix I - Questions of the Questionnaire

1.   Agreement to Participate *

    ⬭ I have read and understood the above information and would like to take the survey

2.   What is your gender? *

    ⬭ Male

    ⬭ Female

    ⬭ Other: _____

3.   Choose your age group *

    ⬭ 28 or less

    ⬭ 29-35

    ⬭ 36-42

    ⬭ 43-50

    ⬭ 51-59

    ⬭ 60+

4.   To what extent do you consider positive teacher-student relationships important for students? *

A teacher-student relationship refers to a pedagogical relation between a teacher and a student. A positive teacher-student relationship is characterized by closeness, openness, care, trust, warmth and reciprocal respect. Both, the student and the teacher feel comfortable to communicate openly with each other. It has little to no conflict and dependency.

    ⬭ To very large extent

    ⬭ To large extent

    ⬭ To moderate extent

    ⬭ To small extent

    ⬭ To very small extent

5.   How important are positive teacher-student relationships for you? *

( ) Very important

( ) Important

( ) Somewhat important

( ) Somewhat unimportant

( ) Very unimportant

6.   How often do you consciously use time to interact with your students outside a teaching session, so
      for instance during lunch, recess, before/after school? *
      "Interact" refers to having conversations, playing, and overall being present

( ) Often

( ) Sometimes

( ) Rarely

( ) Never

7.   Following up from the previous question... Please choose a statement that applies to you. *

( ) I use enough time to interact with my students outside teaching sessions

( ) I use too much time to interact with my students outside teaching sessions

( ) I use too little time to interact with my students outside teaching sessions

8.   Have you faced any challenges in building positive teacher-student relationships?
      *

( ) Yes

( ) No

9.   If you answered "yes" to the previous question, please choose challenges that you have faced. You
      may choose multiple answers as well as add your own.

☐ Language barriers

☐ Cultural differences (such as different manners, and way of communication between cultures)

☐ School's set values and practices

☐ Regulations imposed by the municipality and the country

☐ Lack of time

☐ Lack of own energy

☐ Student's behavior

☐ Own prejudices or attitude

☐ Student's special need

☐ Lack of own abilities and/or knowledge

☐ Values and opinions of colleagues

☐ Other:_____

10. Please explain how you have built and maintain positive relationships with your students. *
    You may give single strategies or/and explain the process of how you have built relationships with your students.

    _____

    _____

    _____

11. Where have you been informed about strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships? You may choose multiple answers as well as add your own. *
    Choose all that apply

    ☐ My past higher education

    ☐ Current workplace (this school)

    ☐ Previous workplace

    ☐ By chance from media

    ☐ From researching about it

    ☐ I have not been informed about strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships

    ☐ Other: _____

12. How do you feel about a workshop organized by your workplace, that gives practical advice on how to build positive teacher-student relationships? *

○ Positive, and I would be eager to participate

○ Positive, but I personally feel like I would not need it and therefore would be uninterested to participate

○ Negative

○ Other: _____

13. Please choose a statement that applies *
"Focus" refers to: practically using strategies, paying attention to your interaction with the students and developing yourself in the skill of building relationships.

○ I feel like I focus enough on building positive relationships with my students

○ I feel like I focus almost enough on building positive relationships with my students

○ I feel like I focus too much on building positive relationships with my students I

○ feel like I focus too little on building positive relationships with my students

14. Please order the following skills from the most important to the least important to you as a teacher (1.= most important, 6.= least important). *

	Behavior management	Building positive teacher-student relationships	Organizational skills and time management	Lesson/unit planning	Communication with parents	Cooperation with colleagues
1.	○	○	○	○	○	○
2.	○	○	○	○	○	○
3.	○	○	○	○	○	○
4.	○	○	○	○	○	○
5.	○	○	○	○	○	○
6.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix II - Observation Form

Date:	Grade:
Time:	

Strategy	Frequency
Has a conversation about/comments on non-school related matter e.g. students' interests	
Shares stories about personal life	
Uses praise	
Uses humor	
Spends 1-on-1 time with a student	
Checks in with a student about his/her learning	
Checks in with a student about his/her emotional wellbeing	
Uses positive body language e.g., smiles, thumbs up	
Gives choices and age-appropriate responsibilities	
Greets students	

Does the teacher ever call out the students without saying their names, so e.g. saying "you" or pointing: ___

	Yes	No
Remembers names of the students		
Greets students individually		
Greets students as a group		
Has lunch with the students (sits with them)		
Has clear and tidy structure in classroom		

Additional comments and observations

Appendix III - Consent Form

I agree to participate in a research project on "Positive teacher-student relationships" conducted by Emilia Huotari. The research project collects data through observations of grade 1 to 6 classroom teachers as well as through an online questionnaire in the *(name of the school anonymized)*

I will be observed by Emilia Huotari for the duration of: _____.

Only the above-mentioned observation time is included in the research project.

I understand that:

- This research project is part of a course requirement for the researcher and is conducted under the supervision of NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences.
- My participation is voluntary. I may withdraw from the research at any time with no negative consequences for me.
- The research project is completely anonymous: any information about my participation, including my identity, is confidential. The following steps will be taken to ensure this confidentiality:
  1. Researcher takes notes during the observation, but my name and class will never be used or written in the observation notes of the researcher. Me and my class's identity will be completely anonymous throughout the research process and in the final research paper.
  2. The only place where my name and class will be used is on this informed consent form, and it will be kept separate from the observation notes.
  3. This consent form will be kept in a private, locked cabinet in the researcher's home
- The observations of me will be used in the researcher's research project in a following way: observation data will be analyzed by the researcher and included in the data presentation (graphs) of the research paper. Conclusions from the graphs will then be made. Any observation notes of me will be destroyed immediately after the data has been analyzed.

Any concerns or questions regarding the research project should be directed to the researcher's email: emilia.huotari@student.nhlstenden.com

I have read the information in this consent form, and I agree to participate in this research project. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form after it has been signed by me and the researcher.

Date:_____

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Signature of Researcher

_____   _____
 Name of Participant (please print)   Name of Researcher (please print)