

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

Pärnu kolledž

Ettevõtlusosakond

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**THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING AN  
INSPIRING PERSONAL BRAND ON THE EXAMPLE OF  
ESTONIAN PHYSICS TEACHERS**

**Võimalused inspireeriva persoonibrändi arendamiseks Eesti füüsikaõpetajate  
näitel**

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Pärnu 2022

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## **The Opportunities for Developing an Inspiring Personal Brand on the Example of Estonian Physics Teachers**

Young people are not interested in becoming a physics teacher, as evidenced by the fact that a quarter of physics teachers in Estonia are over 60 years old. The aim of this study was to find out the opportunities for developing the personal brand to be a more inspiring physics teacher. Five teachers were interviewed and 242 students answered the survey to receive a two-sided view of teachers' personal brand. The study revealed that the teachers do not find it decisive to develop and manage their personal brands consciously rather than be themselves and express their true values because teachers' brands are developing over time. Students consider inspiring the teachers who develop positive relationships and create supportive climate and can manage the classroom efficiently. Some other characteristics such as being humorous and enthusiastic, engaging students and using simple language help a teacher to become more inspiring to students.

**Keywords:** personal branding, inspiring teacher, inspired student, role model, physics teacher.

### **Introduction**

One of the latest deepening social matters is the scarcity of new teachers. There is a lack of interest among students in becoming a teacher or continuing working as a teacher once the specialty has been acquired (OECD 2020). This matter is more relevant to natural sciences which are indicated by the small number of university students in these specialties. The severity of the problem is also shown by the fact that one in four physics teachers is at least 60 years old in Estonia. In addition, students complain that natural science lessons are boring and difficult because the emphasis is on theory, not so much on practical tasks. (Mets and Viia 2018)

This article is focusing on the personal brand of physics teachers. To inspire students to become more interested in physics, it is first necessary to understand the

physics teacher as a role model and inspirator. To benefit from their personal brand and inspire young people, it is important for them to understand their professional identity. This is important to understand the gap between the teacher's vision and students' vision of the teacher. Developing a personal brand gives teachers the opportunity to design their brand so that they will be able to be just the kind of teacher they want to be and what inspires young people. Personal branding has not been expanded upon from physics teachers' point of view. Personal branding was at first mainly associated with public figures, e.g. artists, politicians, athletes and influencers (Chen 2013). Still there are some research that discuss the personal branding of lecturers (see e.g. Bessette 2014). Some articles focus on personal branding in social media as nowadays it may have the greatest impact on managing the personal branding (Chen, Rui and Whinston 2021; Park, Williams and Son 2020).

The aim of the article is to find out the opportunities for developing the personal brand to be a more inspiring physics teacher, answering two research questions:

- (1) How do physics teachers see their personal brand?
- (2) What do students find inspiring about their physics teachers?

In order to answer the research questions, a mixed methods study was conducted with Estonian physics teachers and their students.

## **Theoretical Background**

### ***Inspiring teacher as a role model***

Teachers are role models to students (Lashley and Barron 2006) and they own a major role in students' learning behaviour (Cheung 2020). Role model is respected and

followed by others and someone who people want to be like (Bricheno and Thornton 2007). In addition, “role models inspire and teach by example, often while they are doing other things.” (S. R. Cruess, R. L. Cruess, and Steinert 2008, 718) For students for whom the teacher has been a positive role model and inspiration, it has contributed to their professional development (San-Martín et al. 2021). Thus, it is important that teachers acknowledge their importance in students’ life and career choices.

Perceptions of an inspiring teacher and teaching are different, no unambiguous guidelines or keywords have been developed for who and how is inspiring. According to the most common descriptions, an inspiring teacher is characterized by excitement, innovation and creativity. In addition, teacher’s inspiration is often judged by the extent to how the teacher engages students and develops students’ passion and interest in the subject and learning overall. (Sammons et al. 2014; Solpuk Turhan et al. 2019) However, Derounian (2017) found that an inspiring teacher is motivating, encouraging, and passionate about the subject he teaches. Hence, measuring the level of inspiration is intuitive rather than based on specific criteria.

Sammons et al. (2014) identified the characteristics of an inspiring teacher:

- enthusiasm,
- positive relationships with students,
- flexibility and adapting their practice into the situation,
- making learning purposeful and relevant for students,
- promoting a safe and exciting learning environment,
- introducing clear and positive leadership in the classroom,
- self-development in cooperation with students,
- introduction of innovation.

Besides to the qualities already mentioned before, McGonigal (2004) adds empathy, attention, perseverance and satisfaction to being an inspiring teacher. He points out how important it is for the teacher to make each student feel themselves and their knowledge and opinion needed. In addition, inspiring teachers consider it necessary to use modern teaching methods, such as group work, games, competitions and other similar activities (Trent 2011). However, it is mentioned in the literature (McGonigal 2004; Derounian 2017) that inspiration is a collaboration between teacher and student, so it cannot be said that only the teacher and his/her personal qualities and skills play a role in inspiring the student but also the student's personality and attitude towards the teacher. A key factor in a teacher's inspiration is how strong personal contact one is able to make with the student (Lamb and Wedell 2013). As seen above, it is not possible to say in one word which the inspiring teacher is like. Inspiration depends on many characteristics, skills and attitudes – both teacher and student.

After examining which the inspiring teacher is like, the question arises – how is this information useful for teachers? To start working towards being an inspiring teacher, an useful “tool” would be the development of his/her personal brand which helps the teacher to find ways how to evolve into being more inspiring to students.

### ***Personal branding***

One of the best-known concepts of a personal brand was created by Tom Peters who drew attention to the importance of people designing and developing their own brand, being the marketing manager of their own brand, just like companies (Peters 1997). Personal branding is a process in which a person is marketed as a brand, similarly to products, services and companies (Blaer, Frost, and Laing 2020).

The development of a personal brand is based on the basic principles of marketing (Pagis and Ailon 2017). When talking about the brand, two different terms emerge: brand identity and brand image. Brand identity shows how a marketer wants to display his/her brand; the brand image shows how others perceive the brand. (Labrecque, Markos, and Milne 2011) It is important to keep in mind both views while developing the personal brand. While the personal branding was initially associated with celebrities and public figures, then according to the modern approach, everyone has the opportunity to develop their own personal brand (Chen 2013), but not everyone has control over their own personal brand and cannot be aware of and manage it (Jacobson 2020). In consequence, every teacher has already developed a personal brand in the eyes of his/her students, but this may not be what one agrees with, as it has developed coincidentally over time.

Every brand should have an engaging story to tell and for personal brand the story accrues from a person's competencies and character (Hagenbuch 2017) so the bottom of the personal brand stems from core values which lead the personal branding development process from the beginning. The first and surely one of the most important steps towards creating a desirable personal brand is writing down a personal statement of purpose which will act as a guide in the brand's developing process (Gander 2014).

Teachers' brand identity can be seen as four main determinants (Aaker 1996; Brandabur 2012):

- (1) product – the major elements that design the teacher brand identity such as specialisation, teaching abilities, values and users,



- (2) organization – focused on the educational organizational image and qualities, for example the school’s personnel and its quality, and teaching methods, which usually has a broader impact than a teacher’s image,
- (3) person – based on a teacher itself, which is mainly built of teacher’s personality, skills and relationships with students, colleagues and others,
- (4) symbol – mainly elements on teacher’s CV such as positions, educational background, organizations etc, but also some natural and distinctive characteristics and physical attributes that are memorable to the auditorium.

These determinants give an overview about teachers’ brand identity in general, therefore the author adds on the inspiring teachers’ characteristics to this approach as these are firmly related (see Table 1 p. 10). Each characteristic of an inspiring teacher can be found in “person” and “product” because these are the main parts of a teacher’s brand identity showing who he is and what competencies he has. The characteristics that have an impact on an “organizational” view are related to how the teacher manages the learning environment in the classroom. The “symbols” that design the teacher’s memorability are his/her relationships with students (and colleagues), enthusiasm, responding to students’ feedback and openness to innovation.

**Table 1.** The relationship between the characteristics of an inspiring teacher and the teachers' brand identity

	Product	Organization	Person	Symbol
Enthusiasm	✓		✓	✓
Positive relationships with students	✓		✓	✓
Flexibility and adapting their practice into the situation	✓		✓	
Making learning purposeful and relevant for students	✓		✓	
Promoting a safe and exciting learning environment	✓	✓	✓	
Introducing clear and positive leadership in the classroom	✓	✓	✓	
Self-development in cooperation with students	✓		✓	✓
Introduction of innovation	✓	✓	✓	✓

Sources: based on Sammons et al. 2014; Aaker 1996; Brandabur 2012 (compiled by the author).

According to the recommendations of developing the personal brand, it would be necessary to start with the “person” part where a teacher should think through his/her core values and purpose to sort out the “why” – why is he/she doing what he/she does (could also be the statement of purpose). If the “why” is clear, it is easier for the teacher to understand himself/herself and make further decisions in the brand's development process.

Examining the existing literature about role models, inspiration and personal branding, it can be said that all of these keywords are firmly related. It can be stated that teachers are role models to students in various ways: they show attitude towards learning and other students and teachers, furthermore, their teaching methods arouse (or do not) interest in the subject. Role models can be positive, negative and neutral. If a teacher is developing and managing his/her personal brand, he/she is more likely a role model with an inspiring and positive image. The more the teacher inspires the student,

the greater probability there is the student will want to specialize in this teachable subject.

### **Materials and methods**

With this study, the author wanted to find out how physics teachers see their personal brand and what their students find inspiring about them. To this end, a mixed-method study was conducted, in which physics teachers were interviewed and their students were asked to complete a questionnaire. The data was analysed by qualitative content analysis, descriptive statistics. As a result, opportunities for developing the personal brand to be a more inspiring physics teacher were found.

The study used both a qualitative research method, such as structured interviews with Estonian physics teachers in junior high and high schools, and a quantitative method – questionnaire survey for the students of the interviewed teachers. Five physics teachers in Estonia were selected on an occasional basis. The interview questions were compiled based on different sources: Sammons et al. (2014); Kolodeznikova, Neustroeva, and Timofeeva (2021); Aaker (1996); Brandabur (2012) (see the questions in Appendix 1). An invitation to participate in the study was sent by e-mail to 30 teachers, of whom only 5 agreed (see Table 2 p. 12). Four interviews were held via Zoom and one face-to-face in school.

**Table 2.** The demographics of the interviewed teachers

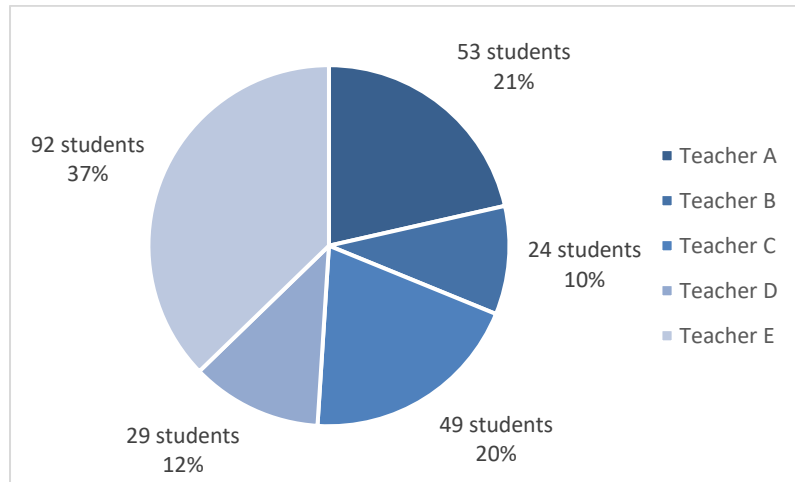
ID	Gender	Age	Work experience	School level <sup>1</sup>
M25	Male	25	2 years	III
M41	Male	41	17 years	III and high school
F23	Female	23	2 years	III and high school
F24	Female	24	1 year	III
M63	Male	63	42 years	III and high school

The teachers interviewed represented mainly three categories by work experience: new teachers who had been working as a teacher for 1–2 years, one teacher with intermediate experience for 17 years and one long-time teacher with 42 years of experience. It is important to mention that the Teacher F24 whose work experience as a teacher was only 1 year, instead was a professional pilot and was recently invited to school as a part-time physics teacher because there is a severe shortage of them. Other participants were professional teachers.

All the interviewed teachers were asked to forward the link of the questionnaire survey to their students to get a second view of the teachers' personal brands (see the questions in Appendix 2). 247 students answered the survey; the respondents per teacher are shown in Figure 1 (p. 13). Some teachers asked their students to fill the survey in class, whereas some just forwarded the survey link and asked to do it as homework, thus the differences between the number of respondents may be due to this or the fact that the teachers had a different number of students.

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<sup>1</sup> In Estonia, there are four school levels: I (1st–3rd grade); II (4th–6th grade); III (7th–9th grade) and high school (10th–12th grade).



**Figure 1.** The research sample

The method of qualitative data analysis is qualitative content analysis which uses horizontal and thematic analysis to find cross-cutting themes, keywords and relationships and their more specific background. The method of quantitative data analysis are descriptive statistics.

## Results

### *Physics teachers' view about their personal brands*

The following is an overview of the teachers' own views about their personal brands. To introduce the topic, the interviewees were asked to tell how they understand the term "inspiring". Teachers said that inspiring means someone's increased interest in something that brings sparkle in their eyes. When someone is inspired, they have the willingness to learn more or do more. Furthermore, an inspiring person shows others the path they would want to follow.

All teachers said they try to be inspiring for their students but not all of them have the confidence to tell they actually inspire them. Only Teacher M63, who had the longest work experience, confidently felt he was inspiring, explaining he tries to communicate in a simple language, not so much in scientific language. In addition,

humour and stories about life overall have a certain place in his lessons. The most hesitant about being inspiring were new teachers who felt a bit unconfident so far as they do not yet have that much experience and knowledge in teaching.

Every teacher felt he/she was enthusiastic but the level of it depended also on the students (how they act and react) so there is an interaction between the teacher and the students. The teachers saw their enthusiasm transmitting to students by their willingness to act and cheerfulness. However, it was mentioned several times that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative effect to students' motivation and skills. Teacher M63 brought out that teachers can be compared with actors – the emotions help the students to affirm the knowledge and on the other hand, some certain movements or eye contact are useful for classroom management.

One of the most important aspects of being an inspiring teacher seems to be positive and respectful relationships between the teacher and his/her students. Like teacher M41 said: “The way I treat students, the way they treat me.” What helps to cultivate positive relationships are humour, flexibility, encouragement and simply talking about life as well not only about the subject. It was also mentioned that it is significant for teachers to focus on so-called difficult students also when developing relationships. The classroom climate has to be good and safe; it creates a basis for teaching. Some teachers consciously tried to stimulate the classroom climate, some said it comes naturally and is rather linked to just developing positive relationships.

The teachers found it vital making learning purposeful and relevant for students. They try to give as lifelike examples and connections between physics and real life as possible. It is necessary to explain the “why” behind every topic learned – why they

need to learn something and where it will be useful in the future. This enables the students to understand and remember better.

Every teacher interviewed considered themselves flexible – both in terms of lesson activities and assessment – and susceptible to changes. They are helpful to students and always want to find the best solutions to different situations if the student shows interest. Teachers are interested in students' feedback but not all of them ask for feedback systemically, some get the feedback spontaneously. They do not rush to change their practice according to the feedback, but firstly evaluate the relevancy of it.

One remarkable outcome was that the younger the teacher the more he/she likes to use different teaching methods and wants to be innovative. None of the teachers preferred only unilateral lecture type lessons but new teachers not only wanted to pass on theory and solve tasks, they also wanted to play physics-related games, let students teach each other, search for physics around themselves, etc.

Personal branding was a rather unfamiliar topic to the teachers. Some had a clue, some had never heard of it but none of them develops their personal brand consciously. After a brief introduction they thought it needs to be developed to some extent, but it should not be the main objective in a teacher's point of view. The teacher M63 with the longest work experience believed the personal brand of a teacher develops within the years and one learns over time what students like or do not. A personal brand needs to be developed to the point where the teacher's personality would emerge.

Aspects that need to be focused on while developing physics teachers' personal brand in a teachers' point of view: keeping the same requirements and rules throughout the years; friendly relationships; being "visible"; making learning interesting; must be an expert in physics; and the most fundamental – a teacher has to be himself/herself, not

trying to be or copy someone else. Teachers considered authority to be quite important, but they wanted to avoid a major barrier between them and the students.

Nowadays the social media is people's reputation designer as well. Every interviewed teacher had at least a Facebook account, younger teachers used Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok and LinkedIn, too. However, they were rather passive users and posted rarely – if so, about their activities without following certain styles or guidelines. Facebook (Messenger) seemed to be one of the main communication channels between teachers and students because messages can be delivered instantly (3 out of 5 teachers used it for communicating with students).

The teachers said that the school they are working in and their colleagues also have certain effects on their personal brand because the particular school affects the way they teach, as well. However, the teachers felt supported by the school and colleagues, so this rather has a positive effect. The teachers valued honesty, activeness, optimism, curiosity, self-criticism, understanding, courage, and humour the most. New teachers thought they differ from other teachers with youthfulness and they felt they can identify more with students. A bit older teachers said they differ with their friendliness and practical approach.

### ***Students' opinions on how inspiring their teachers are***

To answer to the second research question, the students' answers were first analysed using descriptive statistics and then compared to their teacher's views about their personal brand. The means of students' opinions of their teachers can be seen in Appendix 8.

Students found Teacher M25 quite inspiring (55% completely or rather agreed with it, 10% completely or rather disagreed) (see Appendix 3). Teacher M25 gained the most



support in developing positive relationships with students, engaging them in discussions and providing feedback, having good behaviour management skills and creating a positive climate for learning. Teacher M25 said he does not necessarily work for creating positive relationships and climate for learning, it rather develops naturally and he liked it that way. In addition, he said he can cope with different situations normally in the classroom.

There was one aspect the students disagreed with the most – the teacher making them interested in the subject. There were not many who completely or rather disagreed (15%) but quite many (40%) could not exactly say whether the teacher has made them interested or not. On behalf of these students, Teacher M25 has to make a special effort to make physics attractive to them and to be inspiring to them.

The main difference between Teacher M25's view and his students' view was that the teacher felt he has some difficulties with discipline in the classroom at times and that he is rather not authoritative, although his students valued his behaviour management skills highly (see Table 3 p.18). Still, there was a lack of interest in the subject though.

**Table 3.** Teacher M25's personal brand

TEACHER'S VIEW	STUDENTS' VIEW
Rather inspiring. Has good relationships with students but does not develop positive relationships and climate consciously and purposefully. Considers important natural communication and honesty. Sometimes expresses his expectations for students and their learning.	Quite inspiring. Develops positive relationships with students and creates a positive climate for learning.
Considers enthusiasm important to engage students in learning.	Engages students in discussions and provides feedback. Rather enthusiastic.
Is not very strict teacher and at times has difficulties in maintaining discipline in the classroom. Does not consider himself authoritative.	Has good behaviour management skills.
Focuses on students understanding the topic. Considers giving vital examples and development and innovation in learning to be important. Considers very important the relevancy and purposefulness in learning. Uses different activities in teaching. Is flexible and accommodative in teaching. Is rather receptive to changes and can adapt quickly.	Rather engages and motivates students through varied learning activities. Shows interest in students' learning and well-being. Honours students' choices and input. Flexible. Does not make most of the students interested in the subject.

Teacher M41 (see Appendix 4) was considered inspiring by 54% of students (who completely or rather agreed with it), 25% thought otherwise (who completely or rather disagreed). Students value the teacher's contribution to developing positive relationships the most. Significant is that both Teacher M25 and Teacher M41 gained the most support in the exact same aspects: positive relationships, student engagement, good behaviour management and supportive climate. Teacher M41 considered the development of positive relationships and climate the most important, so he lets students express their opinions and tries to communicate with them as much as possible. It was reflected in the great result in student engagement, too. Regarding good behaviour management, Teacher M41 explained he mostly had been teaching in schools

with very good standard, thus he had not had a need to deal with discipline issues and he has been able to give all his attention to teaching.

Three aspects need mentioning that students disagreed with the most. Firstly, nearly half (42% who completely or rather disagreed) of Teacher M41's students said that he had not made them interested in the subject. The same number of students did not agree that their teacher makes learning purposeful and relevant, although Teacher M41 said he always tries to explain the "why" behind every physics topic and relate it to everyday life (show where the physics is around them). Quite many (38% of students) also thought that Teacher M41 does not implement clear instructions (17% of students could not decide).

There were some differences between Teacher M41's view and his students' view about his personal brand (see Table 4 p. 20). Although Teacher M41 said he expresses his expectations to students often and focuses on students understanding the topic, the students felt the teacher's instructions are not clear enough and he does not make learning purposeful enough. Most of Teacher M41's students were not interested in the subject, as well.

**Table 4.** Teacher M41's personal brand

TEACHER'S VIEW	STUDENTS' VIEW
Rather inspiring Enthusiastic and can transmit it to students. Finds it very important to develop positive relationships with students and treat them as an equal with him and engage them in learning. Focuses a lot on creating a safe, positive and supporting climate for learning. Values honesty and self-criticism. Considers himself an authority.	Quite inspiring. Rather enthusiastic. Develops positive relationships with students and creates a positive climate for learning. Has good behaviour management skills.
Expresses rather often his expectations for students and their learning. Manages the lesson effectively. Takes students' feedback into account. Focuses on students understanding the topic. Uses different activities in teaching. Considers giving vital examples and development and innovation in learning to be important. Is flexible and receptive to changes in teaching.	Uses learning time efficiently. Engages students in discussions and provides feedback. Does not give instructions clearly enough. Does not make learning purposeful and relevant enough. Honours students' choices and input. Slightly engages and motivates students through varied learning activities and is rather innovative. Flexible. Does not make most of the students interested in the subject.

Teacher F23 (see Appendix 5) seemed to be quite inspiring to students (64% completely or rather agreed with it, 16% completely or rather disagreed). She had very good relationships with students (90% of them completely or rather agreed with it). Teacher F23 stood out with the high level in honouring students' choices and input, too. She received great feedback in good behaviour management and supportive climate for learning, exactly like previously described teachers. Teacher F23 liked to take time in a lesson for having a chat with students about everything else than learning as well. Teacher F23 did not get any remarkable negative feedback from students. She also got the least support in making students interested in the subject (22% disagreed and 31% were in between).

Teacher F23 was not so confident about her being inspiring and enthusiastic but most of her students considered her that way (see Table 5 p. 21). Although she does not

necessarily focus on developing positive relationships, she has been very successful in it. Interesting is that Teacher F23 said she rather does not express her expectations for students, but students thought she does it clearly. The same phenomenon was with learning purposefulness, as well. Despite that, most of Teacher F23's students were also not interested in the subject.

**Table 5.** Teacher F23's personal brand

TEACHER'S VIEW	STUDENTS' VIEW
Rather inspiring. Rather enthusiastic and can transmit it to students.	Inspiring. Enthusiastic and transmits it to students.
Does not focus on developing positive relationships with students but considers it important. Creates a positive climate in the classroom as needed. Values openness and courage. Feels herself rather authoritative and that students honour her.	Develops positive relationships with students and creates a positive climate for learning. Has very good behaviour management skills. Honours students' choices and input.
Rather does not express her expectations for students and their learning. Prevalently can manage the lesson effectively. Takes students' feedback into account.	Clearly expresses expectations for students and objectives for learning. Manages the lesson effectively. Engages students in discussions and provides feedback.
Uses different activities in teaching and considers innovation in learning to be important. Considers important rather giving vital examples than purposefulness. Is very flexible and receptive to changes and unexpectednesses in teaching.	Shows interest in students' learning and well-being. Makes learning purposeful and relevant. Implements clear instructions. Uses learning time efficient. Flexible. Does not make many students interested in the subject.

Similarly to other teachers, Teacher F24 (see Appendix 6) was also quite inspiring to students (55% completely or rather agree with it, 10% completely or rather disagreed). She got the greatest support in being flexible and efficient time-using. Other strengths were also behaviour management, student engagement, student honouring and positive relationships. Teacher F24 found herself to be very flexible, describing she always wants to find solutions when students have some issues with concerns, poor grades or

missed tasks. She stood out with a desire to do a lot of different kind of tasks in a lesson (e.g. games, presentations by students, worksheets, practical tasks). Teacher F24 brought out she can stay calm in every situation and students know she keeps her word which explains the great support in behaviour management. She never wants to make students feel bad when they do not know the answers, she rather tries to encourage them to try again and tries to create a positive emotion. There are no aspects that Teacher F24's students largely disagree with.

Teacher F24's personal brand did not differ much between a teacher's and her students' view (see Table 6 p. 23). Teacher F24 did not say very confidently (due to the lack of experience in working as a teacher) that she is rather enthusiastic but explained she tries to transmit it to students more and more. Even so, students saw Teacher F24 as a very enthusiastic teacher. She has made most of her students interested in the subject as well.

**Table 6.** Teacher F24's personal brand

TEACHER'S VIEW	STUDENTS' VIEW
Inspiring Rather enthusiastic and increasingly tries to transmit it to students.	Quite inspiring. Very enthusiastic and transmits it to students.
Considers positive relationships with students important. Focuses a lot on creating a safe, positive and supportive climate for learning. Values understanding, activeness and curiousness. Feels herself rather authoritative.	Develops positive relationships with students and creates a positive climate for learning. Has very good behaviour management skills. Honours students' choices and input.
Prevalently can manage the lesson effectively. Takes students' feedback into account and is willing to develop.	Manages the lesson effectively. Clearly expresses expectations for students and objectives for learning. Engages students in discussions and provides feedback.
Uses different activities in teaching and values new solutions in teaching. Considers the relevancy and purposefulness in learning to be very important. Is very flexible and receptive to changes.	Engages and motivates students through varied learning activities and is innovative. Makes learning purposeful and relevant. Uses learning time efficient. Very flexible. Makes students rather interested in the subject.

Compared to other teachers, Teacher M63 (see Appendix 7) was considered the most inspiring to his students (66% completely or rather agreed with it, 8% completely or rather disagreed). Interesting is that Teacher M63 got the highest results in completely different aspects than others: efficient use of learning time, implementing clear instructions, being enthusiastic and managing the lesson effectively. Teacher M63 was considered rather not so innovative and he likes to conduct lessons in a more traditional way which usually consist of a lecture and task solving (each student can do it on the board). He emphasized giving vital examples and simple explanations. He felt he can transmit the enthusiasm to students because they come along in a lesson and they are not bored in a classroom. It can be seen on Appendix 7 that students were consensual and no qualities were outlined which Teacher M63 should develop.

Teacher M63's students saw him mostly the same as he described himself (see Table 7 p. 24). The only notable aspect was that Teacher M63 said he is rather a

traditional than innovative teacher but his students valued his use of innovative approaches quite highly.

**Table 7.** Teacher M63's personal brand

TEACHER'S VIEW	STUDENTS' VIEW
Inspiring Enthusiastic and can transmit it to students. Focuses on developing positive relationships with students and considers it very important. Creates a positive climate in the classroom as needed. Values optimism, energeticity, humour and friendliness. Feels himself rather authoritative but does not consider it very important. Manages the lesson effectively. Takes students' feedback into account and is willing to develop as needed.	Inspiring. Very enthusiastic and transmits it to students. Develops positive relationships with students and creates a positive climate for learning. Has very good behaviour management skills. Honours students' choices and input.
Does not use many different activities in teaching and is rather traditional than innovative. Considers giving vital examples in learning to be very important. Flexible but not so receptive to changes.	Manages the lesson effectively. Clearly expresses expectations for students and objectives for learning. Engages students in discussions and provides feedback. Rather engages and motivates students through varied learning activities and is rather innovative. Implements clear instructions. Uses learning time very efficient. Makes learning purposeful and relevant. Very flexible. Makes students rather interested in the subject.

As can be seen from the above, certain characteristics that were most valued by both teachers and their students emerged. In most cases, teachers' and students' views about teachers' personal brand were quite similar which is good because it shows that the teacher has stayed true to themselves and tries to express this in the best possible way.

## Discussion

Inspiring teachers make students interested in the subject, furthermore, they show others the path they would want to follow (Bricheno and Thornton 2007). Teachers in this study had varying working experiences. Therefore a distinct contrast could be seen for



new teachers who were not very confident about being inspiring to students, especially compared to the teacher with the longest experience who was quite sure he was inspiring, additionally, his students confirmed it firmly. It is positive that at least half of those teachers' students considered their teacher rather inspiring.

All the characteristics mentioned by Sammons et al. (2014) were used as a basis for assessing the teachers being inspiring. Remarkable is that the teachers considered it very important to develop positive relationships with students, as this seems to be the basis for further collaboration and teaching. This was well reflected in the students' opinions also, with most teachers receiving the highest results in this aspect. The other most common strengths across teachers: good behaviour management skills, student engagement in discussions and providing feedback, creating a positive and supportive climate for learning. All of these characteristics were rated the best for at least three teachers, thus these seemed to be the main characteristics of an inspiring teacher.

While the strengths of different teachers are generally similar, the strengths of Teacher M63, who got mostly only positive feedback from his students and was the most inspiring of the teachers in the study, were different: efficient use of learning time, implementing clear instructions, being enthusiastic and managing the lesson effectively. Teacher M63 also differed from other teachers by his more traditional teaching approaches which is interesting because, as Trent (2011) has brought out, inspiring teachers use modern teaching methods like group work, games, competitions and other similar activities. The question arises as to whether these above-mentioned characteristics make the teacher inspiring instead. It cannot be directly concluded from this study, it would need further research among more teachers to confirm it. Still, Teacher M63 highlighted several times that the teacher's confidence, authority and

knowledge about what students like develops over time and experience. In consideration of this, it is intelligible why he was seen as the most inspiring.

However, it is clear what was the main aspect counteracting a teacher being inspiring – the teacher does not make students interested in the subject (Solpuk Turhan et al. 2019). The author suggests that speaking in simple language, giving vital examples, emotions and humour help to make students more interested. Still, more specific reasons would need further investigation.

In conclusion, as Derounian (2017) suggested, measuring the level of inspiration is intuitive rather than based on specific criteria, it is important to note that all teachers in this study had different students, thus the results cannot be compared exactly one-to-one because the students may have valued different aspects. In addition, as McGonigal (2004) and Derounian (2017) and the teachers mentioned, inspiration is a collaboration between teacher and student, that explains why it is likely not possible to inspire each and every student.

Personal branding means marketing a person as a brand (Blaer, Frost, and Laing 2020). In this study the personal brands of physics teachers were discussed both in terms of brand identity (how teachers see themselves) and brand image (how students see their teachers) (Labrecque, Markos, and Milne 2011). Personal branding and its development should not be the main objective in a teacher's point of view. They rather focus on being themselves to emerge their personality and let the personal brand develop unconsciously, as Jacobson (2020) said, not everyone is aware of and manages their personal brand, which cannot be considered exactly wrong, as the proceleusmatic brand "story" accrues from a teachers' competencies and characteristics (Hagenbuch 2017).

The teachers believed friendly relationships, being “visible”, making learning interesting and being an expert in physics create their image in a positive way and there is no need to develop it in depth. Nevertheless, the teachers felt their school’s support towards them has a positive impact on their personal brands as well because it affects their ways of teaching. It stood out that new teachers considered youthfulness and the ability to identify with students their main distinctive factor but it did not seem to be decisive enough to be inspiring.

The study, inter alia, confirmed that a teacher’s brand identity consists of four main factors: product, person, symbol and organization (Aaker 1996; Brandabur 2012). Teachers mostly focus on the first three parts as these mainly design who they are, what they do and how they are seen but it occurred that the organization aka school can also play a big role in a teachers’ brand image because it greatly influences their teaching methods. The interaction between the teacher’s personal brand and the school’s brand can be a limitation and/or an opportunity for both of them, this link would need further investigation.

Based on the teachers’ views about themselves and their students’ views about them, the opportunities of developing the physics teacher’s personal brand to be more inspiring are:

- be yourself and express your values, do not try to imitate someone else,
- focus on developing positive relationships with students,
- work towards being an expert in physics and be enthusiastic about it,
- manage your behaviour in the classroom,
- engage students in discussions and provide them feedback,
- do not forget humour and the use of simple language in learning process.

In summary, there are some certain characteristics which help a teacher to become more inspiring but besides these is important the collaboration between the teacher and students. The modern teaching approaches do not necessarily make a teacher inspiring, rather do a teacher's will to teach in a simple language with plenty of examples and humour and developing positive relationships. Teachers do not find it too decisive to develop and manage their personal brands consciously, more significant is to stay themselves and express their true values because teachers' brands are developing over time.

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### Appendix 1. Interview questions for physics teachers

Category	Question	Source
General	Gender	-
	Age	
	Work experience	
	School level	
An inspiring teacher	What inspiring means to you?	Sammons et al. 2014
	How inspiring teacher you think you are?	
	How enthusiastic teacher you think you are?	
	How much enthusiasm can you transmit to students?	
	How much do you focus on developing positive relationships with students?	
	How flexible are you as a teacher?	
	How receptive are you to changes?	
	How important do you consider learning to be purposeful and relevant to students?	
	To what extent do you express expectations for students and their learning activities?	
	How much do you focus on creating a positive, safe and supportive climate for learning?	
	How clearly and positively can you manage the lesson?	
	To what extent do you take into account students' feedback and are ready to develop accordingly?	
Teacher's personal brand	How many different activities do you use in your lessons?	Kolodeznikova, Neustroeva, and Timofeeva 2021.
	How much innovative approaches do you use to teaching your subject?	
	Do you know what a personal brand is?	
	Should a teacher manage his/her personal brand? Why?	
	Do you develop your personal brand as a teacher? Why?	
	How do you develop your personal brand? What do (or would) you focus on?	
	Do you use social media? Which channels do you use?	
	What do you do in social media? What do you post or share? Do you have a certain style or is it rather occasional? What do you avoid doing/posting there?	
	Who do you communicate with in social media?	
	How much do you feel authoritative in the eyes of students? How important do you find it?	
	How much the school you work in and your colleagues influence the image of you?	Aaker 1996; Brandabur 2012.
	What are your values as a teacher?	
	How are you different from other teachers?	

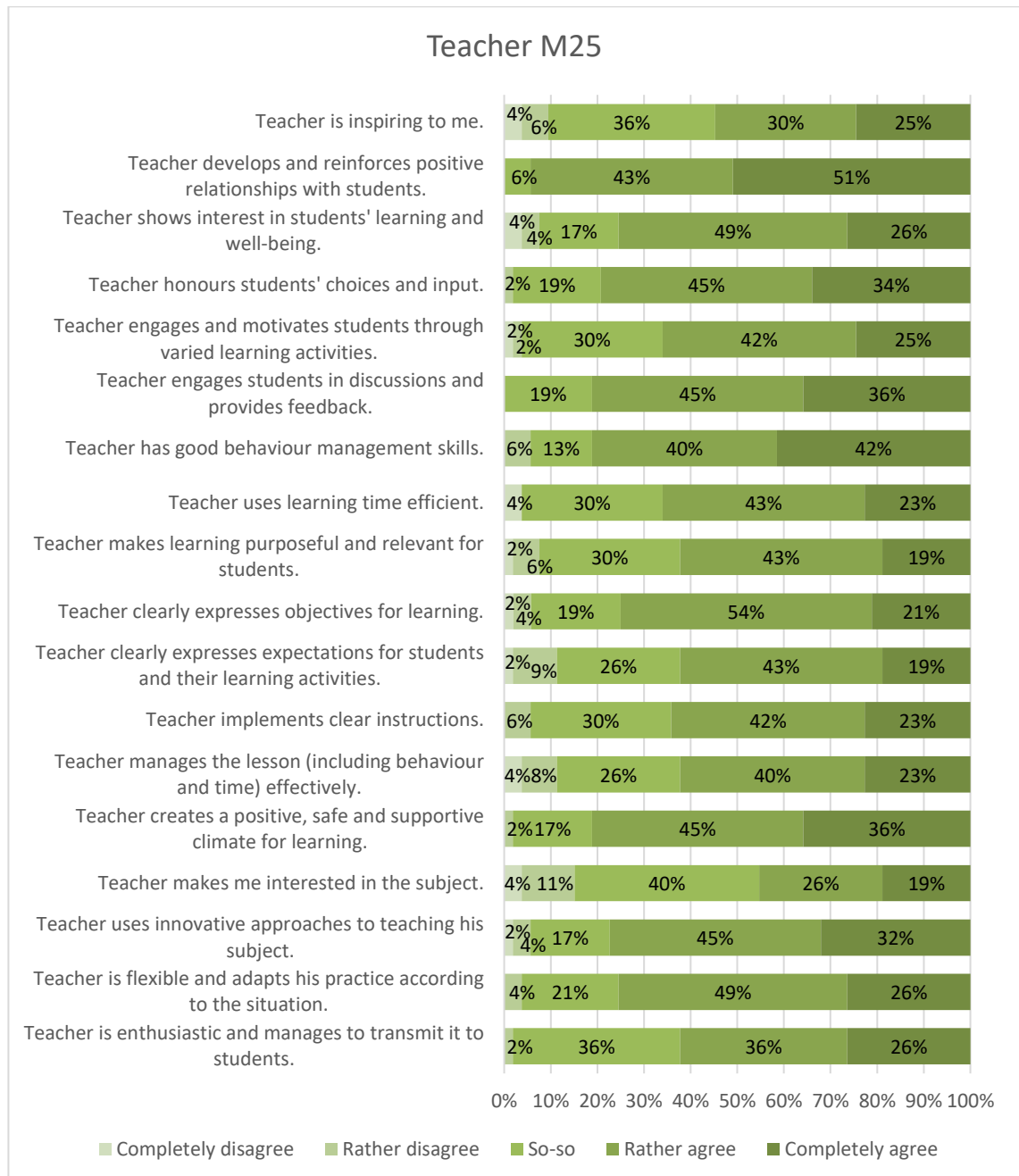


## **Appendix 2. Questionnaire survey for students (Sammons et al 2014)**

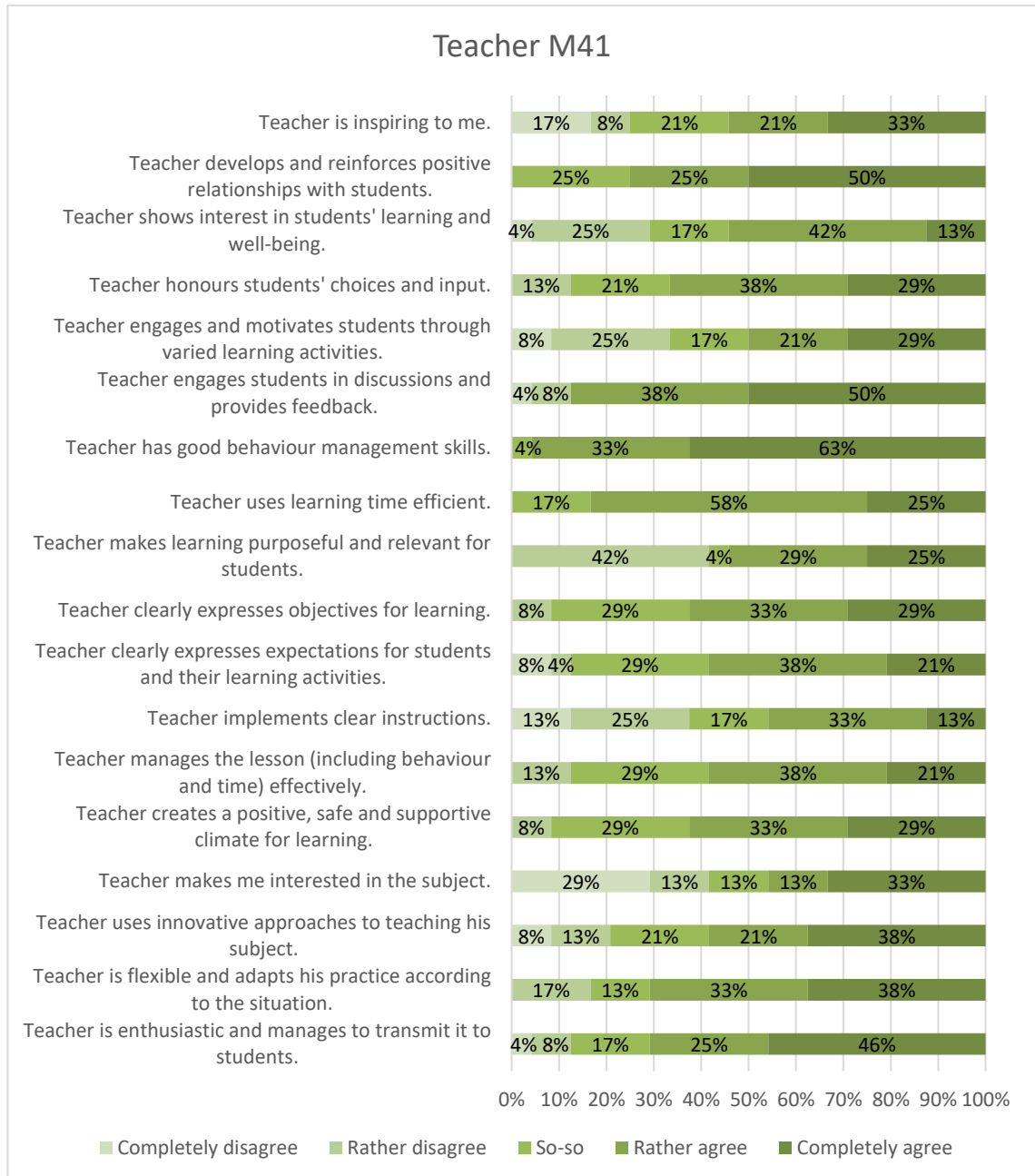
Statements are given, to which the student answers on a scale of 1-5, where “1” means “completely disagree” and “5” means “completely agree”.

1. Your physics teacher’s name
2. Teacher is enthusiastic and manages to transmit it to students.
3. Teacher is flexible and adapts his/her practice according to the situation.
4. Teacher uses innovative approaches to teaching his/her subject.
5. Teacher makes me interested in the subject.
6. Teacher creates a positive, safe and supportive climate for learning.
7. Teacher manages the lesson (including behaviour and time) effectively.
8. Teacher implements clear instructions.
9. Teacher clearly expresses expectations for students and their learning activities.
10. Teacher clearly expresses objectives for learning.
11. Teacher makes learning purposeful and relevant for students.
12. Teacher uses learning time efficient.
13. Teacher has good behaviour management skills.
14. Teacher engages students in discussions and provides feedback.
15. Teacher engages and motivates students through varied learning activities.
16. Teacher honours students' choices and input.
17. Teacher shows interest in students' learning and well-being.
18. Teacher develops and reinforces positive relationships with students.
19. Teacher is inspiring to me.

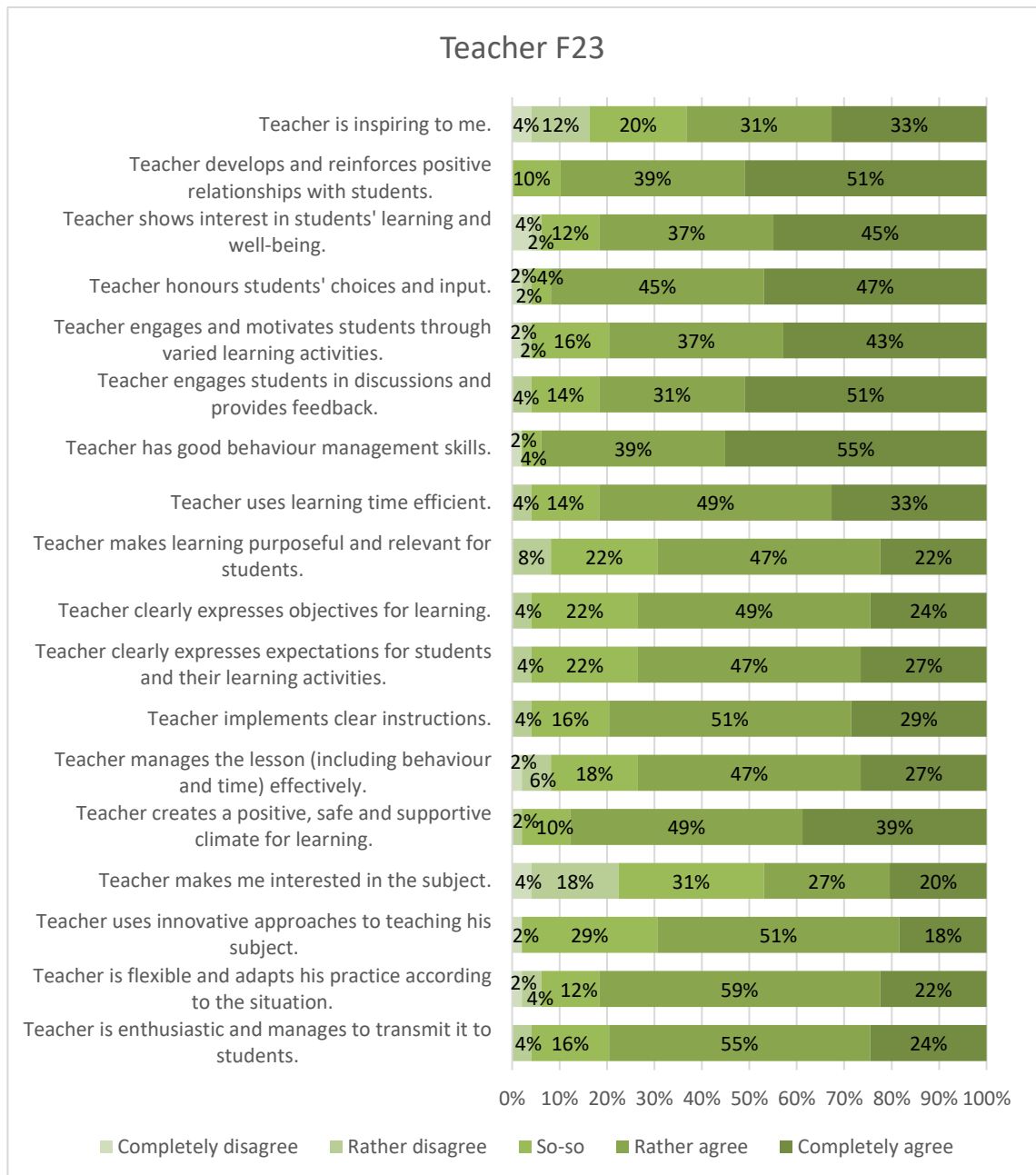
### Appendix 3. Students' opinions about Teacher M25



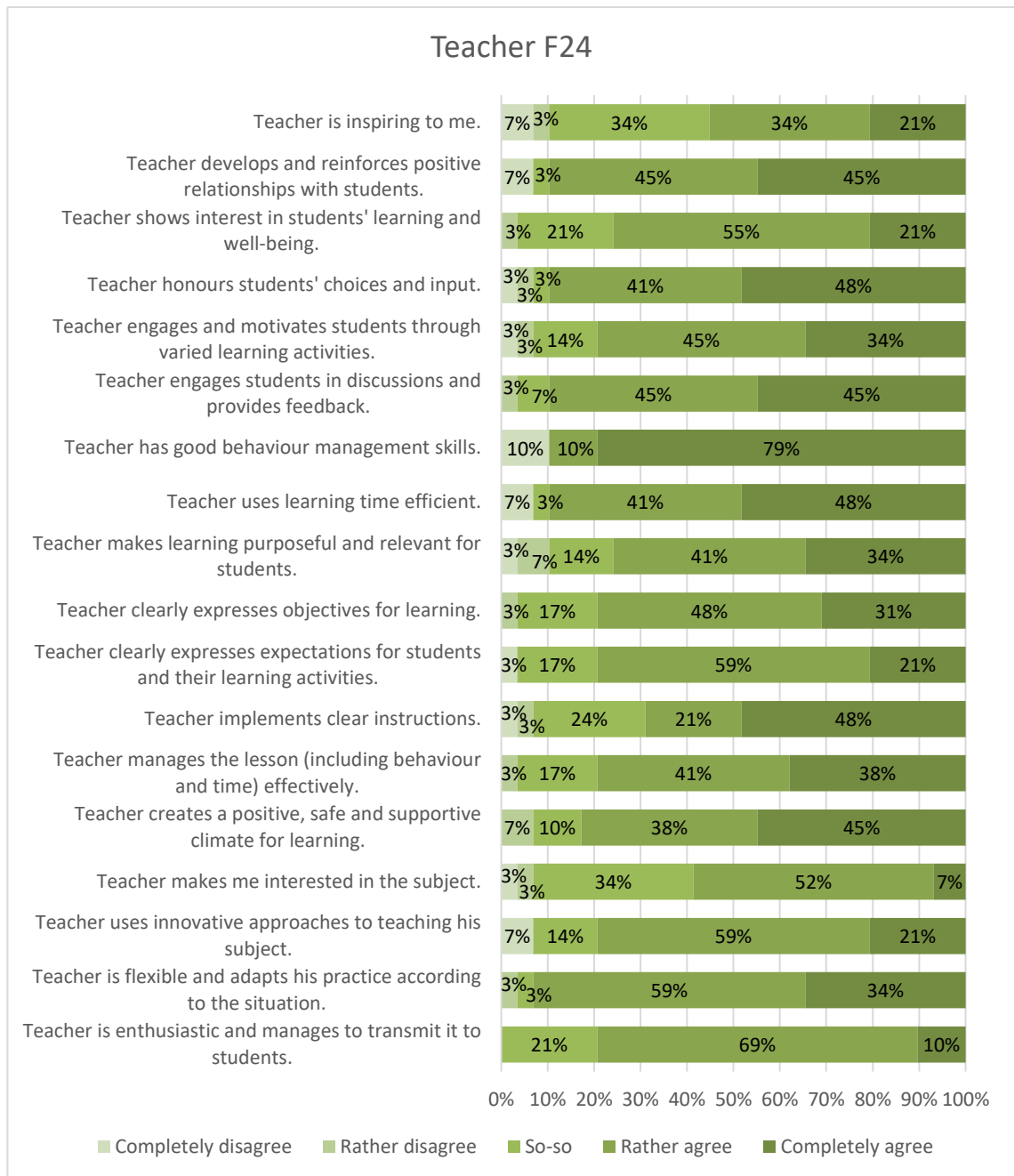
#### Appendix 4. Students' opinions about Teacher M41



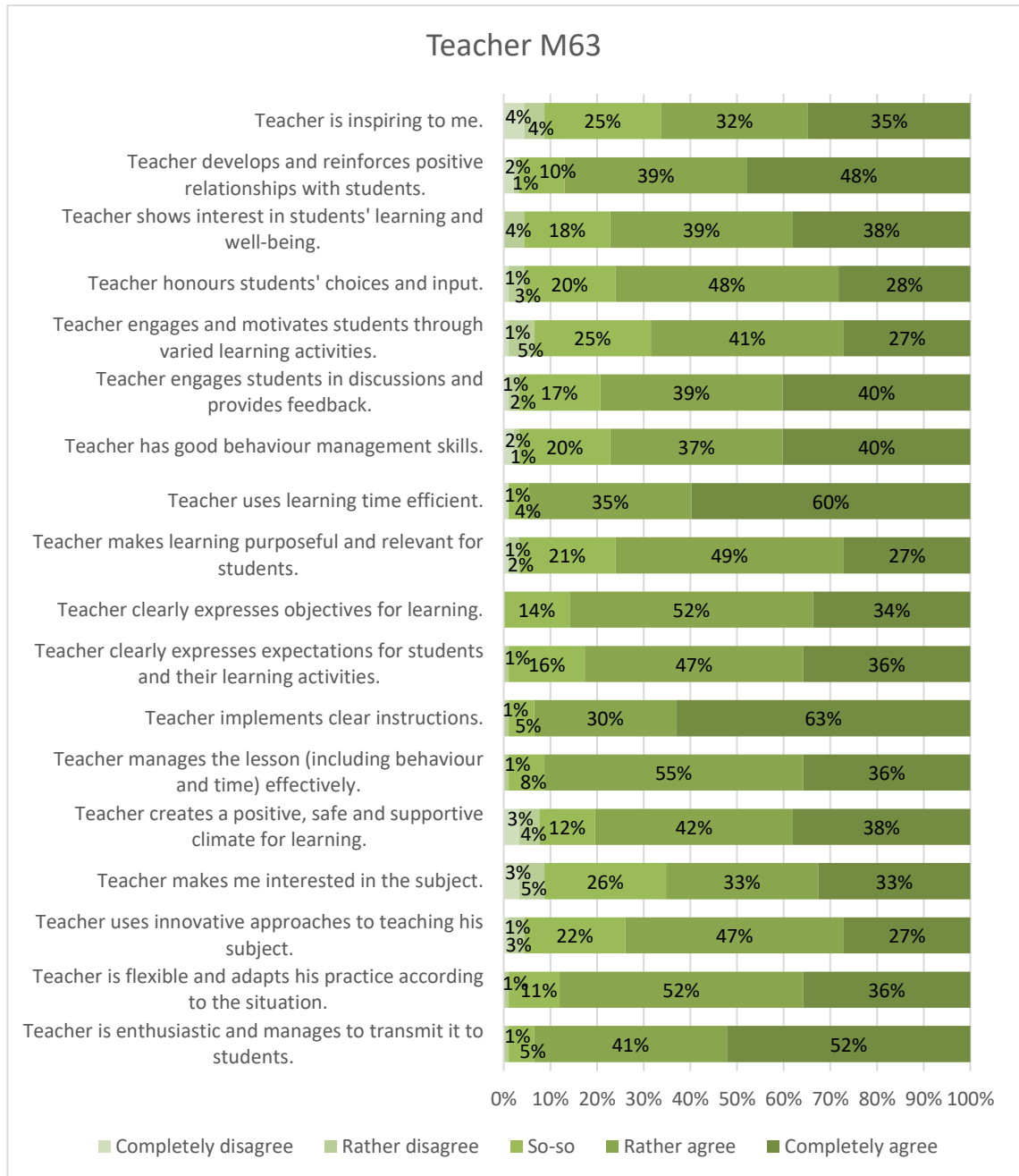
## Appendix 5. Students' opinions about Teacher F23



## Appendix 6. Students' opinions about Teacher F24



## Appendix 7. Students' opinions about Teacher M63



## Appendix 8. The means table of students' opinions about their physics teacher

	Teacher M25	Teacher M41	Teacher F23	Teacher F24	Teacher M63
Teacher is enthusiastic and manages to transmit it to students.	3,87	4,00	4,00	3,90	4,45
Teacher is flexible and adapts his/her practice according to the situation.	3,98	3,92	3,96	4,24	4,23
Teacher uses innovative approaches to teaching his/her subject.	4,02	3,67	3,84	3,86	3,96
Teacher makes me interested in the subject.	3,45	3,08	3,41	3,55	3,86
Teacher creates a positive, safe and supportive climate for learning.	4,15	3,83	4,24	4,21	4,08
Teacher manages the lesson (including behaviour and time) effectively.	3,70	3,67	3,90	4,14	4,26
Teacher implements clear instructions.	3,81	3,08	4,04	4,07	4,55
Teacher clearly expresses expectations for students and their learning activities.	3,68	3,58	3,96	3,93	4,17
Teacher clearly expresses objectives for learning.	3,88	3,83	3,94	4,07	4,20
Teacher makes learning purposeful and relevant for students.	3,72	3,38	3,84	3,97	3,99
Teacher uses learning time efficient.	3,81	4,08	4,10	4,24	4,52
Teacher has good behaviour management skills.	4,17	4,58	4,45	4,48	4,12
Teacher engages students in discussions and provides feedback.	4,17	4,21	4,29	4,31	4,15
Teacher engages and motivates students through varied learning activities.	3,85	3,38	4,16	4,03	3,88
Teacher honours students' choices and input.	4,11	3,83	4,33	4,28	3,99
Teacher shows interest in students' learning and well-being.	3,91	3,33	4,16	3,93	4,11
Teacher develops and reinforces positive relationships with students.	4,45	4,25	4,41	4,21	4,29
Teacher is inspiring to me.	3,66	3,46	3,76	3,59	3,88

## RESÜMEE

### VÕIMALUSED INSPIREERIVA PERSOONIBRÄNDI ARENDAMISEKS EESTI FÜÜSIKAÕPETAJATE NÄITEL

Margaret Lankots

Üks süvenevaid ühiskondlikke probleeme on õpetajate madal järelkasv. Õpilastel puudub huvi õpetajaks saada või jätkata töötamist õpetajana pärast eriala omandamist (OECD 2020). See puudutab rohkem loodusaineid, millele vihjab ülikoolis nendel erialadel vähene õppijate arv ning asjaolu, et Eestis on iga neljas füüsikaõpetaja vähemalt 60-aastane. Lisaks eelnevale kurdavad õpilased, et loodusained on igavad ning keerulised, sest suurem rõhk pannakse tunnis pigem teooriale kui praktilistele ülesannetele. (Mets and Viia 2018) See artikkel keskendub füüsikaõpetajate persoonibrändile.

Selleks, et inspireerida õpilasi rohkem huvituma füüsikast, on kõigepealt oluline mõista füüsikaõpetajat kui eeskuju ning inspireerijat. Tundmaks persoonibrändi arendamise kasutegureid ning inspireerimaks noori inimesi, on oluline õpetajatel mõista enda professionaalset identiteeti ning seejärel lõhet õpetaja ja tema õpilaste visiooni vahel õpetaja kohta. Persoonibrändi arendamine võimaldab õpetajatel kujundada enda brändi nii, et ta saaks olla selline õpetaja nagu ta soovib ning inspireerib noori. Varasemalt ei ole persoonibrändi teemat füüsikaõpetajate vaatenurgast laiemalt käsitletud. Persoonibrändi seostati esialgu avaliku elu tegelastega (nt lauljad, poliitikud, sportlased jne) (Chen 2013), kuid leidub ka mõningast teadustööd õppejõudude persoonibrändist (vt nt Bessette 2014).

Artikli eesmärk on leida võimalusi persoonibrändi arendamiseks, et olla inspireerivam füüsikaõpetaja. Autor püstitas kaks uurimisküsimust:

1. Kuidas näevad füüsikaõpetajad ise enda persoonibrändi?
2. Mida peavad õpilased oma füüsikaõpetajate juures inspireerivaks?



Õpetajad on õpilastele eeskujuks (Lashley and Barron 2006). Eeskuju austatakse ja jälgitakse teiste inimeste poolt ning tema moodi tahetakse olla (Bricheno and Thornton 2007). Inspireeriv õpetaja on motiveeriv, julgustav ja kirglik enda õpetatava õppeaine vastu (Derounian 2017). Õpetaja inspireerivust hinnatakse ka selle järgi, kuidas õpetaja kaasab õpilasi ning arendab nendes kirge ja huvi nii õppeaine kui ka üldiselt õppimise vastu. (Sammons et al. 2014; Solpuk Turhan et al. 2019) McGonigal (2004) tõi välja, et inspireeriv õpetaja paneb iga õpilase tundma end tema teadmiste ja arvamustega olulisena. Inspireerivuse mõõtmine on pigem intuitiivne kui kindlatel kriteeriumitel põhinev. Inspiratsioon on suuresti koostöö õpetaja ja õpilase vahel, seega inspireerivuse juures ei oma määravat rolli vaid õpetaja oma kompetentside ja oskustega, vaid oluline on ka õpilase suhtumine õpetajasse (McGonigal 2004; Derounian 2017).

Õpetajal on võimalik end inspireerivamaks muuta läbi persoonibrändi arendamise. Petersi (1997) kohaselt peaksid inimesed enda brändi kujundama ja arendama sarnaselt ettevõtetele ehk olema enda brändi n-ö turundusjuhid. Kuigi persoonibrändi seostati esialgu avaliku elu tegelastega, siis tänapäevase lähenemise kohaselt on igaühel võimalus arendada enda persoonibrändi (Chen 2013), kuid kõik ei oma selle üle kontrolli ning ei tegele sellega teadlikult (Jacobson 2020). Seega on igal õpetajal välja kujunenud enda persoonibränd tema õpilaste silmis, kuid see ei pruugi olla selline nagu õpetaja tahaks, kuna see on kujunenud juhuslikult. Igal brändil peaks olema üks haarav lugu ning persoonibrändi puhul tuleneb see lugu inimese kompetentsidest ja iseloomust (Hagenbuch 2017), seega persoonibrändi kandvaks jõuks on inimese põhiväärtused.

Uuringuga sooviti välja selgitada, kuidas füüsikaõpetajad näevad enda persoonibrändi ning kui inspireerivaks nende õpilased neid peavad. Kasutati nii kvalitatiivset uurimismeetodit õpetajatega intervjuude kujul ning kvantitatiivset uurimismeetodit õpilastega ankeetküsitluse kujul. Kasutatud andmeanalüüsimeetodid olid kvalitatiivne sisuanalüüs ning kirjeldav statistika. Uuringus osalenud õpetajad olid väga erineva tööstaažiga ning ilmnes, et uued õpetajad ei olnud enesekindlad õpilaste inspireerivuse osas. Samas kõige pikema tööstaažiga õpetaja oli üsna kindel enda inspireerivuse suhtes, lisaks kinnitasid seda ka tema õpilased. Vähemalt pooled iga õpetaja õpilastest pidasid enda õpetajat inspireerivaks. Nii õpetajad kui õpilased pidasid üheks olulisemaks aspektiks nendevahelisi positiivseid suhteid, kuna see on justkui põhi nende koostööle.

Teised peamised tugevused, mida hinnati ja võib inspireeriva õpetaja omadusteks pidada, olid: head käitumise juhtimise oskused, õpilaste kaasamine ja tagasiside andmine, positiivse ja toetava õhkkonna loomine klassiruumis. Kui üldiselt olid õpetajate puhul nende tugevamaid omadused sarnased, siis kõige pikema tööstaažiga õpetaja, kes sai ühtlasi ka peamiselt ainult positiivset tagasisidet ja oli uuringus osalenud õpetajatest kõige inspireerivam, tugevused erinesid teistest: efektiivne ajakasutus ja tunni juhtimine, selgete juhiste andmine ning entusiastlikkus.

Uuringus osalenud õpetajad ei tegelenud teadlikult enda persoonibrändi arendamisega ning nad arvasid, et see ei peakski olema õpetaja peamine eesmärk. Õpetajad pigem soovivad olla lihtsalt iseendid, et nende isiksus saaks silma paista ja lasta seeläbi enda persoonibrändil mitteteadlikult areneda. Õpetajad uskusid, et sõbralikud suhted õpilastega, n-ö nähtav olemine, õppimise huvitavaks muutmine ning füüsikas ekspert olemine kujundavad nende persoonibrändi positiivses mõttes ning ei ole vajadust selle arendamisega süvitsi tegeleda. Kuigi õpetajad peamiselt keskenduvad sellele, kes nad on, mida nad teevad ja kuidas neid nähakse, siis ilmnes, et ka kool, kus nad töötavad, avaldab suurt mõju õpetajate brändile, sest kool võib mõjutada õpetaja õpetamise meetodeid. Õpetaja brändi ja kooli brändi vastastikune toime võib nende mõlema osapoole jaoks olla nii piirang kui ka võimalus, kuid see seos vajab täiendavat uuringut.

Tuginedes õpetajate arvamustele iseenda ning õpilaste arvamustele õpetajate kohta on võimalused füüsikaõpetajate persoonibrändi arendamiseks, et olla inspireerivam, järgmised: jääda iseendaks ning väljendada enda väärtusi, mitte imiteerida kedagi teist, pöörata tähelepanu õpilastega positiivsete suhete loomisele, arendada end olemaks ekspert füüsikas ning olla entusiastlik selle suhtes, juhtida oma käitumist, kaasata õpilasi ning anda neile tagasisidet, mitte unustada huumorit ja kasutada õpetamisel lihtsat keelt.

On mõned kindlad omadused, mis aitavad õpetajal saada inspireerivamaks, kuid lisaks nendele on oluline õpetaja ja õpilase vaheline koostöö. Modernsed õpetamismeetodid ei tee õpetajat tingimata inspireerivaks, pigem teevad seda lihtne keelekasutus koos paljude näidetega, huumor ja positiivsed suhted. Õpetajad ei pea oluliseks enda persoonibrändi teadlikku arendamist ja juhtimist, vaid hoopis iseendaks jäämist ning enda tõeliste väärtuste väljendamist, sest õpetaja persoonibränd areneb aja jooksul koos õpetajaga. Magistritöö on koostatud teadusartikli vormis esitamiseks ajakirja *Teacher Development*.

## **Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks**

Mina,

Margaret Lankots,

1. annan Tartu Ülikoolile tasuta loa (lihtlitsentsi) minu loodud teose “The Opportunities of Developing an Inspiring Personal Brand on the Example of Estonian Physics Teachers”, mille juhendaja on Grete Männikus ning kaasjuhendaja Katrin Saks, reprodutseerimiseks eesmärgiga seda säilitada, sealhulgas lisada digitaalarhiivi DSpace kuni autoriõiguse kehtivuse lõppemiseni.
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**20.05.2022**