



Svitlana DORDA,  
Olga LESHCHENKO

## Excellent teaching: criteria and requirements

**Problem statement.** Present day world poses many different challenges to higher education in general and higher education teacher in particular. Present-day factors (globalization, the rapid development of technologies, campuses internationalization) contribute to the context within which university teaching is taking place. All these factors demand greater accountability for the quality of education the higher education provides its students. It is becoming more and more important for higher education to have a profound understanding of the concept of excellent teaching and what qualities lead to improved student outcomes. What are the criteria for excellent teaching? What makes excellent teachers, and what qualities and skills do they possess?

**The aim** of this article is to consider some of the research available to excellent higher education teachers.

**Analysis of the research and publications.** Many researchers have been interested in factors that make an excellent teaching. Early studies of this issue named fairness in grading, empathy, teaching skill [17]; clear explanations, encouraging student participation, teacher-student rapport,

quality of feedback given to students [7]. In their research, Faranda and Clarke [5, p. 275] found five categories according to student-cited importance: (1) rapport (approachability, personality, empathy); (2) delivery (communication, personal style); (3) fairness (evaluation, assignments); (4) knowledge/credibility (expertise, experience, intelligence); (5) organization/preparation (clarity, instructional materials. Barnes with colleagues [3] found quite similar descriptions of excellent teaching: preparedness, professionalism, fair and timely evaluation, rapport, enthusiasm, delivery. The literature on excellent teaching is consistent regarding two factors – one factor relates to the student-teacher relationship and the second one relates to teaching skills and expertise [8; 10].

We consider it appropriate to provide the Teacher Behavior Checklist (TBC) that was based on some researches [8].

### **The Teacher Behavior Checklist:**

#### **Item Teacher Qualities and Corresponding Behaviors**

1. Accessible (Posts office hours, gives out the phone number, and e-mail information)
2. Approachable/Personable (Smiles, greets students, initiates conversations, invites questions, responds respectfully to student comments)
3. Authoritative (Establishes clear course rules; maintains classroom order; speaks in a loud, strong voice)
4. Confidence (Speaks clearly, makes eye contact, and answers questions correctly)
5. Creative and Interesting (Experiments with teaching methods; uses technological devices to support and enhance lectures; uses interesting, relevant, and personal examples; not monotone)
6. Effective Communicator (Speaks clearly/loudly; uses precise English; gives clear, compelling examples)
7. Encourages and Cares for Students (Provides praise for good student work, help students who need it, offers bonus points and extra credit, and knows student names)
8. Enthusiastic about Teaching and about Topic (Smiles during class, prepares interesting class activities, uses gestures and expressions of emotion to emphasize important points, and arrives on time for class)
9. Establishes Daily and Academic Term Goals (Prepares/follows the syllabus and has goals for each class)

10. Flexible/Open-Minded (Changes calendar of course events when necessary, will meet at hours outside of office hours, pays attention to students when they state their opinions, accepts criticism from others, and allows students to do make-up work when appropriate)
11. Good Listener (Doesn't interrupt students while they are talking, maintains eye contact, and asks questions about points that students are making)
12. Happy/Positive Attitude/Humorous (Tells jokes and funny stories, laughs with students)
13. Humble (Admits mistakes, never brags, and doesn't take credit for others' successes)
14. Knowledgeable About Subject Matter (Easily answers students' questions, does not read straight from the book or notes, and uses clear and understandable examples)
15. Prepared (Brings necessary materials to class, is never late for class, provides outlines of class discussion)
16. Presents Current Information (Relates topic to current, real-life situations; uses recent videos, magazines, and newspapers to demonstrate points; talks about current topics; uses new or recent texts)
17. Professional (Dresses nicely [neat and clean shoes, slacks, blouses, dresses, shirts, ties] and no profanity)
18. Promotes Class Discussion (Asks controversial or challenging questions during class, gives points for class participation, involves students in group activities during class)
19. Promotes Critical Thinking/Intellectually Stimulating (Asks thoughtful questions during class, uses essay questions on tests and quizzes, assigns homework, and hold group discussion/activities)
20. Provides Constructive Feedback (Writes comments on returned work, answers students' questions, and gives advice on test-taking)
21. Punctuality/Manages Class Time (Arrives to class on time/early, dismisses class on time, presents relevant materials in class, leaves time for questions, keeps appointments, returns work in a timely way)
22. Rapport (Makes class laugh through jokes and funny stories, initiates and maintains class discussions, knows student names, interacts with students before and after class)
23. Realistic Expectations of Students/Fair Testing and Grading

- (Covers material to be tested during class, writes relevant test questions, does not overload students with reading, teaches at an appropriate level for the majority of students in the course, curves grades when appropriate)
24. Respectful (Does not humiliate or embarrass students in the class, is polite to students [says thank you and please, etc.], does not interrupt students while they are talking, does not talk down to students)
  25. Sensitive and Persistent (Makes sure students understand the material before moving to the new material, holds extra study sessions, repeats information when necessary, asks questions to check student understanding)
  26. Strives to Be a Better Teacher (Requests feedback on his/her teaching ability from students, continues learning [attends workshops, etc. on teaching], and uses new teaching methods)
  27. Technologically Competent (Knows how to use a computer, knows how to use e-mail with students, has a Web page for classes)
  28. Understanding (Accepts legitimate excuses for missing class or coursework, is available before/after class to answer questions, does not lose temper at students, takes extra time to discuss difficult concepts)

It is vivid that some behaviors overlap between categories. At the same time there is a remarkable consistency between two factors mentioned earlier, namely adequate interpersonal interaction (interpersonal factor) and student involvement (technical factor). The researchers found that students emphasize the interpersonal aspects of teaching more than faculty do. The faculty members in their turn rank the technical aspects of teaching (e.g. promoting critical thinking) higher than students do [8].

The analysis has shown that the vast majority of researches is focused on qualities, teaching strategies and program evaluations rather than on multicultural issues. In our opinion, it is a strong evidence of the fact that a significant number of higher education faculty avoid multiculturalism as multicultural issues create discomfort for them and because they lack a critical multicultural knowledge base [20]. Many people from higher education leadership consider that different kinds of oppression (racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ableism) are only manifested through the behavior of individuals and not a common practice within higher education; students' academic achievements are independent of their personal histories; the roots of students' academic failures are in the

family and community, but not in the academic environment.

Very often university teachers forget or ignore the fact of multicultural issues existence in higher education settings, and opt not to vary their classroom instructions. Arthur Chickering claims „we need to learn how to recognize, respect, and respond to the wide-ranging individual differences among our diverse learners. If we do this – and it is a big if – then many more of our students will achieve learning that lasts“ [4, p. 11].

Higher education has the potential to reduce or increase inequalities depending on the form of implemented policies [19, p. 2]. One of the ways to decrease inequalities is through implementation and further promotion of multicultural education. Although intercultural, multicultural, and antiracist education is overlapping to some extent, it should be made the distinction between them. In intercultural education the prefix *inter* describes the interactive aspect. In multicultural education, the prefix *multi* is used to describe “the multiplicity of different cultures which live on the same territory and/or taught in the same institution, for example, in school or higher education” [1, p. 135]. The other dichotomy between these two terms is in their focus, i.e. the focus of intercultural education is “mainly on migrants or ethnic minorities and the interaction with them as well as on their specific educational needs” [1, p. 141]. While “a major goal of multicultural education is to restructure schools so that all students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function in ethnically and racially diverse communities and nations, and in the world. Multicultural education seeks to actualize educational equality for students from diverse groups, and to facilitate their participation as critical and reflective citizens in an inclusive national civic culture. .... Increasingly, multicultural education has a global component that seeks to help students develop cosmopolitan attitudes and become effective world citizens” [2, p. 14]. Antiracist education arose as a critique of multicultural education: it was argued that multicultural education did not provide an analysis of racism, power, and capitalism. Nowadays the distinction between multicultural education and antiracist education is very rare as many ideas of antiracist education have been integrated into multicultural education [2; 12; 16]. Being an interdisciplinary field, multicultural education draws from a bunch of disciplines, namely, legal studies, sociology, economics, political sciences, philosophy, psychology, communication studies.

Educator’s personal/professional backgrounds and life experiences influence their teaching approaches and their behavior in the classroom.

However, the time of adopting a single-culture viewpoint and ignoring diversity has gone. University teacher of today should challenge their cultural assumptions forming their methods of teaching. „When considering the behavior of students from other cultures, we must be alert to the fact that they are products of their own experience. Accordingly, such judgments as „too reserved “, „insecure “, or „disengaged“ may say as much about our own cultural biases as they do about the behavior of the students“ [9, p. 166].

University classrooms are often lack of multiculturally-based discussion, leaving many students silenced and even ignored. International students are required to acculturate to the new educational environment, as university life exposes them to absolutely new aspects of culture and knowledge. An important difference between acculturation and assimilation should be stressed. Assimilation means the elimination of cultural differences and cultural identification, while acculturation is a culture modification through contact with other cultures and preserving its essence [18].

Much like international students, first-generation students may experience adjustment difficulties which can cause education and health problems. While class is often ignored and unseen, it can be found a correlation between students' academic achievements and their social and economic status. „To notice or make a fuss about class would, then, spoil the illusion; it would remind all that they came to a selective college in part to preserve or upgrade their class standing. It would call into question their individuality, uniqueness, and freedom. So they enact class without allowing its reality“ [13, p. 11].

Preparing teachers to be multiculturally sensitive to the needs of their diverse classroom should attract more attention. To be able to teach for multiculturalism and multicultural sensitivity among learners, educators have to be multiculturally knowledgeable and responsible citizens themselves. Are there ways in which we can assist them to become multiculturally knowledgeable, competent and sensitive educators?

Because of high relevance to multicultural education, we have exported and transformed the following questions from the paper of Schuerholz-Lehr [14, p. 184]:

- What factors in teachers' personal/professional backgrounds and life experiences influence on their cognitive framework as it relates to education for multicultural awareness and multicultural competence?

- In which ways do teachers' personal and professional backgrounds interact with their classroom practice regarding education for multicultural awareness and multicultural sensitivity and competence?
- To which extent are targeted interventions (e.g., professional development, study tours) effective in changing teachers' levels of multicultural competence and world mindedness? Do these changes influence on the teachers' approach to course design with respect to education for multicultural awareness and multicultural competence?

Manning and Baruth [11] stresses that educators for multiculturalism should have three complementary to each other competencies:

1. Knowledge and understanding of students' culture.
2. Skills in recognizing students' strengths and weaknesses and responding appropriately to their unique learning styles and culture.
3. Positive attitude toward cultural diversity and creating a learning environment that encourages respect and concern for people of all cultural, religious and racial backgrounds.

**Conclusions and final thoughts.** It is a critical time for higher education. Skelton stresses [15] that tradition is not an adequate criterion for defining what professors do and how they do it. University teachers must be challenged and guided to evaluate the efficacy of pedagogical practices in the context of effective and desirable outcomes of their students. Teachers must understand themselves because it will help them maximize their strengths and minimize their weaknesses as university teachers. Multicultural education must move beyond being merely buzzwords and become part and parcel of the practice in the university classroom.

It would be reasonable and useful to explore the perceptions of excellent teaching among Ukrainian faculty, students, and foreign students studying in Ukraine in an attempt to expand the present-day understanding of excellent teaching. More research must be conducted to understand and demonstrate the connections between excellent teaching and student outcomes.

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### Authors

Dorda Svitlana,  
Candidate of Philological Sciences,  
Associate Professor of Foreign Languages Department,  
ARI BT "UAB" Sumy State University,  
Sumy, Ukraine  
E-mail: s.dorda@uabs.sumdu.edu.ua

Leshchenko Olga,  
Candidate of Philological Sciences,  
Associate Professor of Foreign Languages Department,  
ARI BT "UAB" Sumy State University,  
Sumy, Ukraine  
E-mail: o.leshchenko@uabs.sumdu.edu.ua

### Abstracts

DORDA S., LESZCZENKO O. **Doskonałe nauczanie: kryteria i wymagania. Szkolnictwo wyższe stoi dziś przed wieloma wyzwaniami.** Świat staje się coraz bardziej globalną społecznością dzięki szybkiemu i nieokreślalnemu rozwojowi technologii. Współczesny obywatel świata musi być w stanie szybko i skutecznie przekazać swoje myśli i pomysły, krytycznie myśleć, dostosowywać się do okoliczności. W świecie, z prawie nieograniczonym dostępem do informacji, umiejętność odróżniania prawdziwych i fałszywych informacji staje się koniecznością. Równie ważny jest fakt, że środowisko akademickie staje się coraz bardziej wielokulturowe, a takie zmiany demograficzne wymagają ponownego spojrzenia na podejścia i postawy wobec nauczania. Ciężar dostosowania się do wymogów edukacji w wielokulturowym środowisku akademickim spoczywa na ramieniu wykładowcy. Jakie są dzisiaj kryteria dobrego wykładowcy? Jakie cechy ma idealny wykładowca, jakie cechy i umiejętności posiada dzisiejszy wykładowca?

*Słowa kluczowe:* szkolnictwo wyższe, wykładowca, strategie nauczania, umiejętności, wielokulturowe środowisko akademickie, edukacja wielokulturowa.

**ДОРДА С.В., ЛЕЩЕНКО О.І. Відмінне навчання: критерії та вимоги.** Вища освіта сьогодення стикається з багатьма викликами. Світ все швидше стає глобальною спільнотою завдяки стрімкому і нестримному розвитку технологій. Сучасний громадянин світу повинен вміти швидко і ефективно передавати свої думки і ідеї, критично мислити, адаптуватися до обставин. У світі, з майже необмеженим доступом до інформації, вміння і навички вирізняти правдиву і неправдиву інформацію стають імперативними. Не менш важливим стає і той факт, що академічне середовище стає все більше багатокультурним і такі демографічні зміни вимагають перегляду підходів та ставлення до викладання. Тягар адаптації до вимог освіти в умовах багатокультурного академічного середовища лягає на плечі викладача. Які ж критерії відмінного викладача сьогодні? Що створює відмінного викладача, які якості і навички притаманні викладачу сьогодення?

**Ключові слова:** вища освіта, викладач, стратегії викладання, навички, вміння, багатокультурне академічне середовище, мультикультурна освіта.

**ДОРДА С.В., ЛЕЩЕНКО О.И. Отличное обучение: критерии и требования.** Современное высшее образование сталкивается со многими вызовами. Мир все быстрее становится глобальным сообществом благодаря стремительному и безудержному развитию технологий. Современный гражданин мира должен уметь быстро и эффективно передавать свои мысли и идеи, критически мыслить, адаптироваться к обстоятельствам. В мире, с почти неограниченным доступом к информации, умения и навыки различать истинную и ложную информацию становятся императивными. Не менее важным становится и тот факт, что академическая среда становится все более многокультурной и такие демографические изменения требуют пересмотра подходов и отношения к преподаванию. Бремя адаптации к требованиям образования в условиях многокультурной академической среды ложится на плечи преподавателя. Какие же критерии отличного преподавателя сегодня? Что создает отличного преподавателя, какие качества и навыки присущи современному преподавателю?

**Ключевые слова:** высшее образование, преподаватель, стратегии преподавания, навыки, умения, многокультурная академическая среда, мультикультурное образование.

**DORDA S.V., LESHCHENKO O.I. Excellent Teaching: criteria and requirements.** *Higher education is facing many challenges. The world is becoming a global community due to the fast development of technology. A present-day citizen of the world must quickly and efficiently communicate thoughts and ideas, think critically, adapt to changing circumstances. In the world with almost unlimited access to information, the ability and skills to differentiate accurate and inaccurate information are becoming imperative. The higher education society is becoming more and more multicultural and this demographic change has created the necessity to review approaches and attitudes to teaching. The burden to adapt to the requirements of the multicultural education is on higher education teachers. What are the criteria for excellent teaching? What makes excellent teachers, and what qualities and skills do they possess?*

**Keywords:** *higher education, teacher, teaching strategies, skills, abilities, multicultural academic environment, multicultural education.*