

## Characteristics of an effective professor in the world educational practice

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**Abstract.** In the article the results of research for the combination of the personal qualities of a professor, making him an attractive image for students, were elucidated. The concept of “image” in Russia is defined in the narrow and broad sense. The image in the narrow sense is highly visual, external side of a professor’s activity. The image in the broad sense involves a complex interrelation of external manifestations and personal qualities and professional skills of a professor, which form its integral image. Thus image can be viewed as a part of professional skill of a professor. In the world’s educational practice, as a rule, the concept of “image of a professor” is not distinguished. However, the studies of personal qualities of an effective professor, highlighting the qualities affecting the skill of a professor are conducted quite often. The article presents the results of such studies conducted in the USA, Canada, and Australia. In the end of the researches there were determined the qualities, forming a positive image from the student’s point of view and the qualities, forming a negative image of a professor.

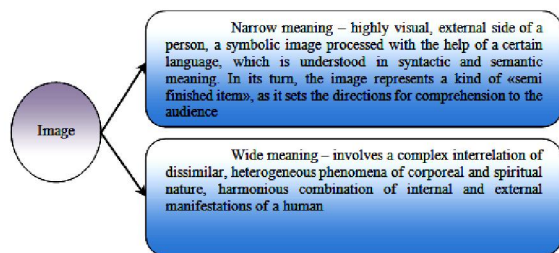
[Shibaev V.P., Shibaeva L.M. **Characteristics of an effective professor in the world educational practice.** *Life Sci J* 2014;11(8s):459-464] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 101

**Keywords:** professor of a higher education institution; the image of a professor of a higher education institution; professional qualities of an effective professor; qualities of a professor of a higher education institution, forming a negative image

### Introduction

The Russian word “image” comes from the English “image”, which derives from the Latin “imago”. Most experts from Russia define “image” as: the representation, the system of external characteristics of a person, which creates or emphasizes a unique identity of a person.

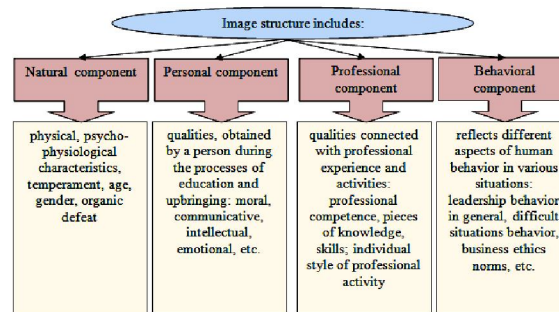
According to Yu. V. Sorokopud [1; 2], Shibaeva, L.M., and V.P. Shibaev [3], image can be understood in two meanings: a narrow one and a wide one (fig. 1).



**Fig. 1. The meanings of the concept “image”**

Such understanding of the phenomenon under consideration allows the authors M.I. Plugina and L.U. Donskaya [4] offer the General structure of the image (fig. 2)

All components of the structure are interrelated, form a unity and assume a harmonious organization of external and internal human’s side.



**Fig. 2. General image structure according to Plugina and Donskaya**

In English-speaking countries the meaning of the term “image” could be formulated as follows: “the human psyche’s reflection of an image of certain characteristics of an object or phenomenon”.

Many foreign scientists study the problems of the image and image-forming, for example, Lisa Marie Luccioni, M.A., AICI, CIP is a certified image consultant through AICI, the Association of Image Consultants International, and has the rare distinction of achieving CIP (Certified Image Professional) status. Fewer than 100 CIP’s exist in the United States, making this credential especially noteworthy in this specialized field [5].

However, each country assigns different personal characteristics of a professor. Canadian partnership of Alberta Government ministries provides the Alberta Learning Information Service which contains the section OCCinfo. OCCinfo

provides up-to-date information about occupations in a format called occupational profiles. According to it university professors need the following characteristics: a desire to learn and share their knowledge with others; critical thinking skills; an aptitude for art or research in a particular discipline; excellent oral and written communication skills including the ability to present complex, in-depth materials at a student level. They should enjoy coordinating information in innovative ways to prepare teaching materials, supervising and evaluating student progress, and helping others [6].

**Materials and methods**

Experimental study of personal characteristics, consisting the basis of an image of a modern higher education institution professor, took place on the basis of the Stavropol State Agrarian University in the 2013-2014 school year.

We used the following methods: observation, interrogation, written questionnaire, mathematical data processing.

The study was conducted in 2 stages. At the first stage we performed an oral questioning and asked students 2 questions - what qualities form a positive image of a professor and what qualities form the negative one?

All the responses were recorded, and there were created 2 questionnaires on their basis (table 1 and 2):

**Table 1. Dear friend, what characteristics in your opinion constitute the basis of a positive image of a professor of a higher education?**

Characteristic	Mark
General erudition	
High cultural level	
High level of information culture, communication tools	
Morality	
Responsibility	
Sincerity of a professor	
Creativity	
Exactingness, strictness	
Mobility	
Sense of humor	
Tact	
Sociability	
Justice	
Elegant appearance	
Emotionality	
Tolerance	

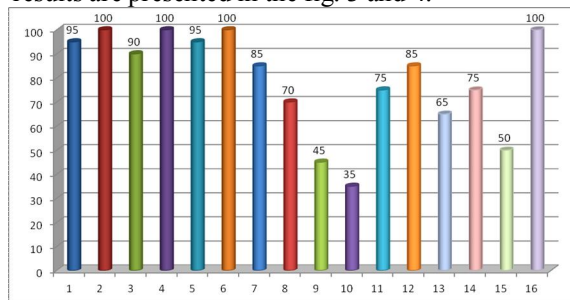
**Table 2. Dear friend, what characteristics in your opinion constitute the basis of a negative image of a professor of a higher education?**

Characteristic	Mark
A professor with lack of self-control	
Low level of General erudition	
Insufficiently deep subject's knowledge	
Reluctance of a professor for an informal communication	
Inability to interest students	
Inability to explain the educational material clearly	
Injustice	
Indifference to the students	
Inability to maintain discipline in the classroom	
Lack of clear criteria of evaluation of students' knowledge	

On the second stage 100 students took part in the poll. The obtained data were processed.

**Results**

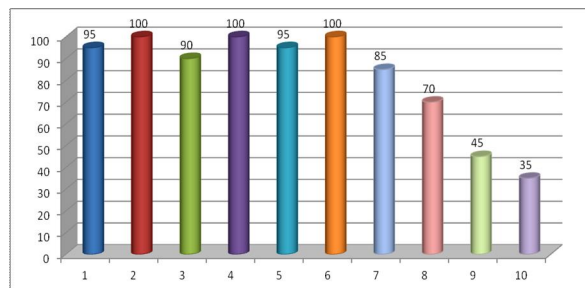
The survey was conducted among the 1-2-year students of the faculty "Service and tourism" of Stavropol State Agrarian University. 100 students took part in the poll. Processed and generalized results are presented in the fig. 3 and 4.



Notation conventions:

- 1 - General erudition
- 2 - High cultural level
- 3 - High level of information culture, communication tools
- 4 - Morality
- 5 - Responsibility
- 6 - Sincerity of a professor
- 7 - Creativity
- 8 - Exactingness, strictness
- 9 - Mobility
- 10 - Sense of humor
- 11 - Tact
- 12 - Sociability
- 13 - Justice
- 14 - Emotionality
- 15 - Elegant appearance
- 16 - Tolerance

**Fig. 3 The results of a survey of students "Most attractive qualities in the image of a higher education institution professor"**



Notation conventions:

- 1 - A professor with lack of self-control
- 2 - Low level of General erudition
- 3 - Insufficiently deep subject's knowledge
- 4 - Reluctance of a professor for an informal communication
- 5 - Inability to interest students
- 6 - Inability to explain the educational material clearly
- 7 - Injustice
- 8 - Indifference to the students
- 9 - Inability to maintain discipline in the classroom
- 10 - Lack of clear criteria of evaluation of students' knowledge

**Fig.4 The results of a survey of students "The qualities of a higher education institution professor, contributing a negative image"**

We chose the most encountered qualities. Since master students named several qualities, sometimes their number exceeded 10, which means that the total number does not equal 100 percent.

The survey shows that the most valuable qualities of a higher education institution professor for students are:

- General erudition;
- Tolerance;
- High cultural level;
- High level of information culture, communication tools;
- Morality;
- Responsibility;
- Sincerity.

The negative characteristics obtained in our own survey were:

- A professor with lack of self-control;
- Low level of General erudition;
- Insufficiently deep subject's knowledge;
- Reluctance of a professor for an informal communication;
- Inability to interest students;
- Inability to explain the educational material clearly;
- Injustice;
- Indifference to the students;

- Inability to maintain discipline in the classroom;
- Lack of clear criteria of evaluation of students' knowledge.

Dedicated qualities became the targets for future professors who are trying to form marked qualities in the process of professional training and professional activities.

Similar studies have been conducted in various universities of the world. Dr. Jerome Delaney, Albert Johnson, Dr. Trudi Johnson, Dr. Dennis Treslan in "Students' Perceptions of Effective Teaching in Higher Education" conducted alike survey among the students of the Memorial University. The purpose of the study was to establish, through the use of an open-ended survey instrument, students' perceptions of effective teaching. Participants were asked to identify five characteristics of effective teaching, describe them, identify instructor behaviours that demonstrate the characteristics, and rate them in order of importance. These nine behaviours are listed below: respectful, knowledgeable, approachable, engaging, communicative, organized, responsive, professional, humorous [7].

The negative characteristics obtained in our own survey were: A professor with lack of self-control; Low level of General erudition; Insufficiently deep subject's knowledge; Reluctance of a professor for an informal communication; Inability to interest students; Inability to explain the educational material clearly; Injustice; Indifference to the students; Inability to maintain discipline in the classroom; Lack of clear criteria of evaluation of students' knowledge.

The Australian professor Dr. Maryellen Weimer, a Penn State Professor Emeritus of Teaching and Learning; consulter of over 400 colleges and universities on instructional issues; author of eight books, highlights different characteristics of Good Teachers [8]:

- Good teachers are also good learners.
- Good teachers display enthusiasm for their subject and a desire to share it with their students.
- Good teachers know how to modify their teaching strategies according to the particular students, subject matter, and learning environment.
- Good teachers encourage learning for understanding and are concerned with developing their students' critical-thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and problem-approach behaviors etc.

Professors from different states in the USA include various characteristics in the image structure of a great teacher.

**Table 3. “Character” identifier**

PERSONAL	CLASSROOM
Humble – Admits mistakes or errors when he/she makes them.	Prepared – Reviews lecture notes and examples to ensure they are correct.
Honest – Always tells students the truth about the situation and explains actions with reasons.	Organized - Has course syllabi with grading method explained on first day of class.
Disciplined – Shows self-control and can be counted on to do the right thing in every situation.	Consistent – Teaches with no emotional outbreaks or unpredictable behavior patterns which intimidate students.
Compassionate – Shows he/she really cares about the student personally/professionally.	Work Ethic – Spends time to thoroughly prepare classes and laboratories.
Integrity – Always does what he/she says regardless of the consequences.	Prompt - Comes to class on time and does not run classes over allotted time.
Enthusiastic – Obviously believes in what he/she is teaching to include “living” it.	Flexible Attitude – Open to new ideas, suggestions and insights from students.
Good Motives – Best interest of students is always No.1 priority.	Interactive Dialogue – Classes are a two-way, meaningful communications experience.
Committed – Shows passion and zeal for teaching the subject material.	Learning Environment – Encourages a casual, and open setting vice a rigid/strict one.

For example, Robert Martinazzi, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Department of Mechanical Engineering Technology and Jerry Samples, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Division of Engineering Technology [9], revealed Characteristics and traits of an effective professor (table 3).

Maria Orlando, EdD in Philosophy of Teaching, a professor of the state Wisconsin, supposes that great teaching seems to have less to do with our knowledge and skills than with our attitude toward our students, our subject, and our work. She made a list of features of a great teacher. Although this list is certainly not all-inclusive, she has narrowed it to those to be the most essential, regardless [10]:

1. A great teacher respects students. In a great teacher’s classroom, each person’s ideas and opinions are valued.
2. A great teacher creates a sense of community and belonging in the classroom. The mutual respect in this teacher’s classroom provides a supportive, collaborative environment
3. A great teacher is warm, accessible, enthusiastic and caring. This person is approachable, not only to students, but to everyone on campus.
4. A great teacher sets high expectations for all students. This teacher realizes that the expectations she has for her students greatly affect their achievement.
5. A great teacher has his own love of learning and inspires students with his passion for education and for the course material.
6. A great teacher is a skilled leader. Different from administrative leaders, effective teachers focus on shared decision-making and teamwork, as well as on community building.

7. A great teacher can “shift-gears” and is flexible when a lesson isn’t working.
8. A great teacher collaborates with colleagues on an ongoing basis. Rather than thinking of herself as weak because she asks for suggestions or help, this teacher views collaboration as a way to learn from a fellow professional.
9. A great teacher maintains professionalism in all areas — from personal appearance to organizational skills and preparedness for each day.

Dr. Richard M. Felder, Hoechst Celanese Professor Emeritus of Chemical Engineering at North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina and Dr. Rebecca Brent, President of Education Designs, Inc., a consulting firm in Cary, North Carolina (areas of expertise are faculty development in engineering) [11] highlighted the following characteristics of an effective professor (table 4):

Robert E. Glenn, the founder and publisher of Teaching for Excellence, is the principal of Clifdale Elementary School in Spartanburg, South Carolina [12]. He highlights 15 key characteristics of a good teacher: Exhibit enthusiasm; Know your content; Be organized; Teach actively; Show a good attitude; Establish successful classroom management; Pace instruction; Maintain good people skills; Communicate clearly; Question effectively; Differentiate instruction; Build success into your class; Hold high expectations; Create a pleasant atmosphere; Be flexible.

Comparing to the foreign studies we see that they mostly pay attention on the mistakes teachers do, not the features. Richard M. Felder and Rebecca Brent have come up with a list of ten worst mistakes professors make: When you ask a question in class, immediately call for volunteers; Call on students cold; Turn classes into PowerPoint shows; Fail to provide variety in instruction; Have students work in

groups with no individual accountability; Fail to establish relevance; Give tests that are too long; Get

stuck in a rut; Teach without clear learning objectives; Disrespect students.

**Table 4. Characteristics of effective teachers**

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
<b>Organization and Clarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● explains clearly</li> <li>● well prepared</li> <li>● makes difficult topics easy to understand</li> <li>● uses examples, details, analogies, metaphors, and variety in modes of explanation</li> <li>● establishes a context for material</li> </ul>
<b>Analytic/Synthetic Approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● has a thorough command of the field</li> <li>● contrasts the implications of various theories</li> <li>● gives the student a sense of the field, its ideas and concepts</li> <li>● presents facts and concepts from related fields</li> <li>● discusses viewpoints</li> </ul>
<b>Dynamism and Enthusiasm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● is an energetic, dynamic person</li> <li>● conveys a love of the field</li> <li>● has an aura of self-confidence</li> </ul>
<b>Instructor-Group Interaction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● can stimulate interaction with the class</li> <li>● encourages independent thought</li> <li>● good public speaker</li> <li>● knows whether or not the class is following the material</li> </ul>
<b>Instructor-Individual Student Interaction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● perceived as fair</li> <li>● seen by students as approachable and a valuable source of advice</li> </ul>

### Conclusion

To sum up, as the analysis of the researches and our personal observations have shown, the more sociable and confident a professor is the faster adaptation takes place. At the same time, we believe that adaptation to the educational activity and the forming of image is faster, if:

- a professor knows a lot about the image structure and he has a certain ideal;
- a professor can adequately assess the level of development of required qualities, knowledge and skills;
- a professor can design a system of measures on improvement of his teaching activity, and carry out an appropriate work.

In our opinion the obtained results are best applied for professors of a higher education and high school teachers; we suppose that the characteristics for elementary school teachers could be different.

The obtained data were used for designing and realizing the Master's Degree Programs in Teacher Education [13; 14].

With regard to professional mobility, professors from different countries should take into account specific requirements to personal qualities, image of a professor. The study shows this specificity. However, the study showed that the main requirements to the personal qualities of the professor match – communicative, kind, interested in the success of the students, competent etc.

The main purpose of our research was to highlight the characteristics of an affective professor, but we didn't pay much attention on the typical mistakes of novice professors and negative characteristics which can prevent them to be successful. The other perspective branch of the researches is the creation of models of an effective professor from different countries and continents.

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5/23/2014