

Research Paper

An Explanation of the Architectural Education Model Based on the Concept of Human Position: The Case of Technical Design Students at Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch

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Abstract

Among the various components of the educational system, the instructor constitutes the most influential element; therefore, professors and teachers are regarded as the primary agents of pedagogical development and transformation. In architectural education, insufficient attention to the position of the human being has been identified as a limitation of traditional educational approaches. It is expected that this shortcoming can be addressed in contemporary architectural education through a deeper understanding of the human dimension, the profound perspectives and principles employed by master architects in resolving construction-related challenges, establishing meaningful relationships between new buildings and their environmental context, and accurately interpreting human relationships. The effective transmission of these principles to students is therefore of particular importance. This study aims to enhance the quality of higher education by explaining a model of a competent professor within the context of Iranian higher education. To achieve this objective, a qualitative research methodology based on the content analysis approach was adopted. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The principal research question explores students' perceptions regarding the characteristics of a competent professor among students enrolled in the Architectural Technical Design course at Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch. The findings indicate that a score range of 5–6 out of 6 was obtained for the dimensions of mastery of the Architectural Technical Design course, up-to-date knowledge, creativity, integration of theory and practice, professional experience, responsibility, high expectations of students, eloquence, and fair evaluation. A score range of 4–5 out of 6 was obtained for optimism and positive thinking, research capability, constructive interaction with students, approachability, enthusiasm, and well-organized course content. Furthermore, a score range of 3–4 out of 6 was recorded for flexibility. The findings highlight the significance of professional competence, pedagogical effectiveness, and human-centered educational approaches in architectural education and provide a framework for identifying and promoting the characteristics of competent professors in higher education.

Keywords: Human position, Competent professor, Traditional architecture education, Wisdom and knowledge, Skill.

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INTRODUCTION

Architecture education is a fundamental and influential subject in the future, progress, and development of architecture. With its emphasis on enduring and sustainable values, the traditional architecture of Iran has occupied a distinctive position. At the same time, in the contemporary era, it has encountered a degree of ambiguity and uncertainty due to the emergence of the dual concepts of tradition and modernity, ranging from a nostalgic view of the past to an excessive fascination with European models and patterns (Pelman, 2022)

The traditional architecture of Iran is rich in spirituality and aesthetic values, whereas contemporary Iranian architecture has gradually lost much of its identity and the underlying values embedded in traditional architecture. What factors have led to such a significant difference, and among these factors, what role does education play in shaping the character of architects as the principal agents responsible for the formation of architectural and urban spaces? (Taghi, 1996a)

Global changes have made it necessary for individuals to acquire knowledge and specialized skills to cope with emerging challenges. Consequently, greater attention must be paid to learning processes, as most contemporary advances are rooted in knowledge and expertise. Therefore, learning is essential for acquiring knowledge and skills. Accordingly, education and training systems must enhance the effectiveness of educational processes and promote higher levels of learning among individuals (Tabibzadeh & Parva, 2021)

The presence of competent professors who possess appropriate academic and ethical qualifications is undoubtedly one of the most fundamental factors influencing the quality of higher education systems. Professors contribute to student learning through their knowledge, teaching expertise, professional skills, and the

creation of an appropriate learning environment. The characteristics of a professor can facilitate the teaching-learning process and may even compensate for deficiencies in educational resources and facilities. Conversely, a lack of effective communication skills may transform even the most favorable educational conditions into an inactive and unattractive learning environment. Professors constitute one of the most respected social groups in society. A professor is not only an expert in a particular academic field but also serves as a role model and advisor for students, providing guidance and helping them overcome challenges encountered during the learning and research process. The professor is a key agent in creating optimal conditions for the achievement of educational objectives. It is not only the professional experience and academic perspectives of professors that are influential; their personal characteristics and interpersonal qualities also significantly affect the learning environment and contribute to students' development (Sameh & Izadi, 2014a)

Understanding the desirable characteristics of a professor is of paramount importance and should precede the examination of other educational factors, including learner characteristics. The personal attributes of professors may influence their academic performance and professional effectiveness because education is highly dependent upon the teacher's personality, characteristics, and competencies, all of which affect the educational process (Naghdishi, 2018)

A competent professor should possess a wide range of characteristics that contribute to enhancing the reputation and effectiveness of an educational institution. Improving the performance of faculty members requires not only expertise in a specific academic discipline but also the development of complementary competencies, including educational psychology, student assessment techniques, classroom management, and the organization of educational

and collaborative learning processes. However, most faculty members have not received systematic or comprehensive preparation in pedagogy or instructional methods (Seifi, Bolkhari Ghehi, & Mohamadzadeh, 2017a)

In many countries, including Iran, graduates are often recruited as university faculty members immediately after completing their studies, regardless of whether they possess such competencies. As a result, many professors acquire these skills gradually through observation, personal experience, and trial-and-error learning. Although this process may eventually contribute to the development of competent university professors, it remains a time-consuming approach to professional development, particularly in the contemporary era of globalization, where competition is intense, time is highly valuable, and many faculty members lack sufficient opportunities for prolonged professional growth and training (Nadimi, 2010)

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

This part of the study examines the subject accurately and determines its main area based on the previous research generations to review various databases recorded about the subject within different forms that have conceptual connections with specific research issues in this context. In the case of some subjects, like the topic considered in this study, that have been influenced by many theories and are now inevitably facing many opinions, literature review and summarization based on the available opinions help researchers to outline their attitude toward the topic background, then take a step to develop it.

Many researchers have attempted to introduce the role model of a competent professor. Lowman (1995) presents a model for effective academic teaching. He introduces two main dimensions for teaching based on his studies;

one dimension is the intellectual and logical aspect of teaching, and another is associated with emotional and interpersonal relationships. In his opinion, an extraordinary master or teacher is a person who is good at both aspects (Tabibzadeh & Parva, 2021)

O'Malley (2000) introduces a transformational professor as a person who develops students' intellectual aspect, helping them to be thinkers, searchers, and active. On the other hand, in the interpersonal dimension, the teacher provides the field for the development of students' talents by making emotional relationships, mutual respect, and admitting opposing views (O'Malley, 2000)

Recent studies on effective teaching in higher education similarly emphasize disciplinary expertise, the use of diverse instructional strategies, high academic expectations, students' trust, flexibility, and fairness in assessment as core characteristics of outstanding university professors. Contemporary research on architectural pedagogy highlights that university professors are expected to integrate teaching, research, professional practice, and institutional responsibilities while continuously developing their competencies to respond to emerging educational challenges (Seifi et al., 2017a)

In the study titled "Explaining the effective out-of-university factors of Architectural education on contemporary Iranian Architects from the Perspective of university professors," Gooran et al. aim to identify the effective factors in education and their effects on contemporary architecture from the perspective of architect professors. This study tends to clarify, reveal, and explain the factors and components considered by architecture professors

"Architectural education problems in Iran are not just limited to a certain field or official but all planners, engineering system, professors, and students must take steps to solve problems occurring in architecture education," Tabibzadeh (2021) explains in the paper titled "Architecture education in Iran and problems ahead of it."

The study under the title of “A study on the architectural education system in Iranian universities to solve the identity crisis of contemporary Iranian architecture aims to provide a model for architectural education to overcome the crisis and improve the identity of Iranian architecture by determining the relationship between architectural education and identity crisis in contemporary Iranian architecture (Tabibzadeh & Parva, 2021)

Recent studies have further emphasized the role of design thinking as a central pedagogical approach in architectural education. Design thinking enhances students’ creativity, problem-solving abilities, and capacity to address complex design challenges through reflective and iterative learning processes (Sameh & Izadi, 2014b)

More recent studies have highlighted the importance of learning environments that integrate physical and digital experiences, arguing that architectural knowledge is effectively constructed through interaction between learners, design environments, and human-centered educational processes (Pelman, 2022)

In the study titled “Analysis of Learning Styles to Improve Architectural Education (Case Study: Architecture Students of Urmia University),” Faizi and Dezhpasand express that dominant learning styles among architecture students are Assimilator and Converger styles. Also, the students are Assimilators in the first half of their academic program and are Convergents in the second half, and there is no significant relationship between learning styles and gender (Tabibzadeh & Parva, 2021)

The study “A Reflection on the relationship between master and Disciple in Art Education with an Emphasis on the Traditional System”, conducted by Seifi et al. (2017), examines the relationship between master and apprentice, which indicates the artists’ worldview in the past (Seifi et al., 2017b)

In the paper titled “A Look at Architecture Education in the Contemporary Era,” Taghi pays attention to the difference between the contexts of contemporary and traditional architecture and the difficulties that contemporary architecture faces. This study also points to evolutions in architecture education from traditional to modern education and their considerable consequences (Taghi, 1996b)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Traditional Education: Wisdom and Skill

Before modernization and the advent of contemporary schools, architecture education in Iran was an education based on tradition and two components: skill and wisdom. These skills and wisdom appeared during the construction of the building based on the master’s practice from the apprentice’s perspective. This technique was related to a closed society with stable norms and values, as well as given techniques and materials, with the presence of eligible masters and obedient apprentices. This education technique has lost its effectiveness due to wider information borders and dealing with other cultures, philosophies, and thoughts, development and diversity in construction techniques and materials, variety of living, environmental and livelihood conditions, minor role of the architect in the process, and disobedient apprentices.

Contemporary Education: Skill and Knowledge

Architecture education in contemporary schools of Iran has mimicked the European education system, becoming an uncertain education based on novelty and two components of skill and knowledge. These skills and knowledge. These skills and knowledge are provided for apprentices with various interests and thoughts in separate fields through different techniques and by masters

with different specialties. Regarding its global nature without overconcentration on the cultural, territorial, indigenous, and intrinsic characteristics of people, this method equips apprentices with new and modern sciences and techniques and gradually pushes them away from their ritual and territorial values and identity. The seven-decade experience of architecture education based on the contemporary method in Iran implies this cultural gap between architecture and community.

Good Education: Skill, Knowledge, and Wisdom

In an Iranian community that has broken its

traditional structures but remained loyal to its beliefs and values, architecture education must comprise three components of skill, knowledge, and wisdom, so that the trained architect who has the required skills and knowledge and is familiar with domestic and global experiences in this process can bring an outcome based on the wisdom and knowledge that are matched with precious norms and values of the society, and convert the separation between architecture and original cultural values in the country to a new connection.

Table 1. Present Perspective in Traditional Architecture Education

Traditional architecture education's perspective				
	Farabi	Ibn Jaldún	"Builders' Fotovvat - Nameh"	Risale-yi mimariye
Time interval	4 th century	8 th century	8 th , 9 th and 10 th centuries	11 th century
The title used for the apprentice	Architect	Builder	Builder	Architect
The main focus of education	Practical education of theoretical sciences	Practical education	Practical education, teaching ethical principles of education, mystical education, religious education	Practical education of theoretical sciences
Position in science classification	Skill	Technique and industry	Industry	Unknown

(Source: Entesari et al., 2015: 117)

Table 2. Evaluation of the Traditional Architecture Education System

	Theoretical education	Practical education	Spiritual education
Education technique	Workshop training Guild system Master and Student System	Written references Master and Student System	Fotovvat (generosity) system Sufism systems Guilds
Considered topics	Workshop topics Application of materials Static experimental debates Experimental knowledge of materials Professional construction and profession	Geometry Map Survey Astronomy Music	Professional ethics Social Ethics Religious topics Intuitive perception Sufism Artist's ideology

(Source: Entesarifar et al., 2015: 111)

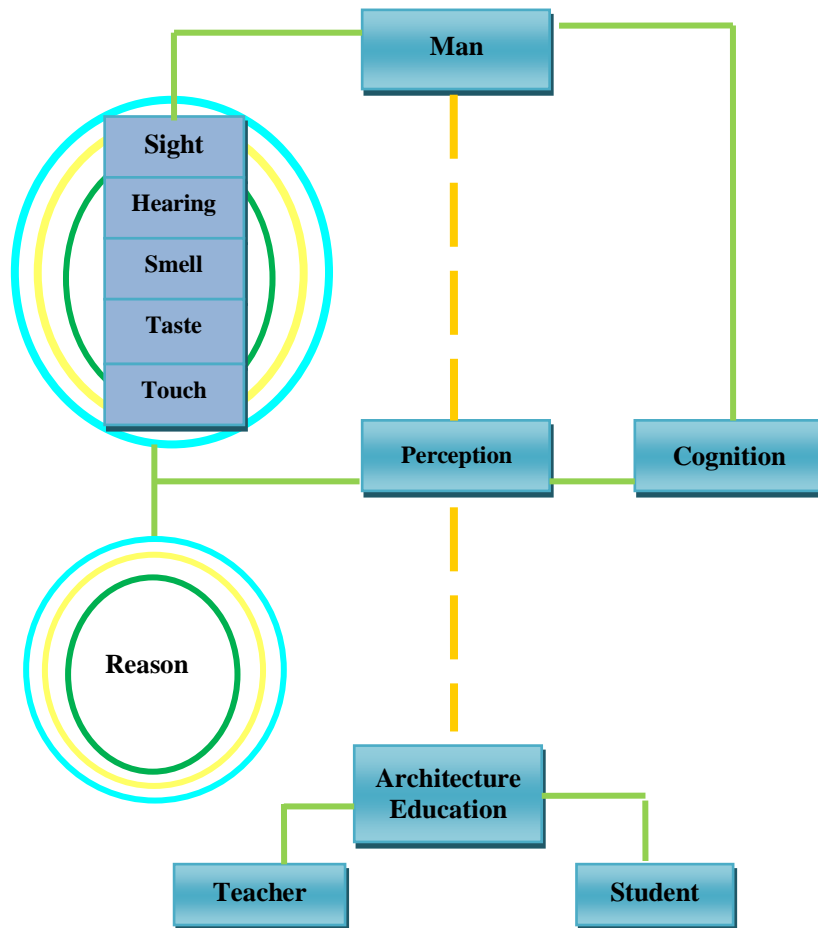


Fig 1. Good Architecture Education Model
(Source: Authors)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a fundamental developmental research conducted using a mixed-method approach based on descriptive-analytical methods and logical reasoning. Data were collected through both library and field research techniques. The data collection process was carried out using survey methods and questionnaires. The statistical population consisted of students enrolled in the Architectural Technical Design course at Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch. The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula. Data analysis was performed using SPSS software.

The results were measured using a six-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 6. Responses to the questionnaire items were classified according

to the following categories: 0 = No Response, 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Agree, and 6 = Strongly Agree. The statistical population comprised 299 individuals, and the sample size was calculated as 57 participants based on Cochran's formula.

The study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, competent professors were identified through interviews with students, graduates, faculty colleagues, and department administrators. The second phase constituted the main stage of the research, during which the characteristics of these professors were examined in order to develop a model of a competent professor for Iranian higher education based on qualitative inquiry.

Data collection in this phase was carried out through classroom observations and semi-

structured interviews with professors, students, graduates, and university staff. These observations and interviews were conducted by the researchers and their assistants. To ensure consistency in the observation process, a checklist and rating scale were developed based on the theoretical foundations of the study as well as the views of researchers and experts in the field.

For each professor, between 5 and 16 observation sessions, each lasting three hours, were conducted. In total, observations were carried out for 57 competent professors. The observation process continued until no new information emerged and theoretical saturation was achieved.

The interviews were semi-structured and conducted according to a predetermined interview protocol. Interviews with the competent professors began with the following question: “What characteristics have led your students and colleagues to identify you as the most competent and distinguished professor in your department?” Subsequently, the categories identified by the researchers were analyzed in accordance with the interview protocol.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study reveal that the characteristics associated with a competent professor in architectural education can be categorized into different levels based on the scores obtained from the participants' evaluations. The analysis of the collected data indicates that several dimensions received the highest level of agreement, reflecting their perceived importance in defining professional competence within higher architectural education.

According to the obtained results, a score range of 5–6 out of the maximum threshold of 6 was assigned to the dimensions of mastery of the Architectural Technical Design course, up-to-

date professional knowledge, creativity, integration of theory and practice, professional experience, responsibility, high expectations of students, eloquence in teaching, and fairness in assessment and evaluation. These findings suggest that students consider subject-matter expertise and the ability to effectively transfer knowledge as the most significant attributes of a competent professor. Furthermore, the high ratings attributed to creativity and the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge underscore the importance of bridging academic concepts with real-world architectural practice, particularly within design-oriented educational environments.

The results also demonstrate that responsibility, professional experience, and maintaining high academic expectations are regarded as essential indicators of instructional quality. Participants emphasized the importance of professors who not only possess extensive professional knowledge and experience but also encourage students to achieve higher levels of academic and practical performance. Likewise, eloquence and fairness in assessment emerged as highly valued characteristics, indicating the significance of effective communication and objective evaluation in fostering a productive learning environment.

A second group of characteristics received scores ranging from 4 to 5 out of 6. These dimensions included optimism and positive thinking, research capability, constructive interaction with students, warmth and intimacy, enthusiasm for teaching, and the systematic organization of course content. Although these attributes were evaluated slightly lower than the previous category, they nevertheless represent important components of effective teaching and contribute substantially to the quality of the educational process.

The findings indicate that positive interpersonal relationships between professors and students play a crucial role in enhancing the

learning experience. Characteristics such as warmth, intimacy, and constructive interaction were viewed as factors that facilitate communication, increase student engagement, and strengthen the educational atmosphere. Similarly, enthusiasm for teaching and the ability to organize educational content systematically were recognized as important factors that contribute to students' academic motivation and understanding of course materials.

The ability to conduct and apply research also received favorable evaluations, reflecting the importance of scholarly competence in higher education. Participants considered research capability as a valuable characteristic that enables professors to remain informed about contemporary developments in architecture and to enrich the educational process through the integration of current knowledge and innovative perspectives.

Among all evaluated dimensions, flexibility

received the lowest ratings, with scores ranging between 3 and 4 out of 6. Although this characteristic was still considered relevant, the findings suggest that participants assigned comparatively less importance to flexibility than to professional expertise, pedagogical competence, and interpersonal qualities. Nevertheless, flexibility remains a significant attribute that can support adaptive teaching practices and responsiveness to diverse student needs and educational circumstances.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that students primarily associate a professor's competence with professional expertise, pedagogical effectiveness, practical experience, and ethical responsibility. At the same time, interpersonal and affective characteristics, including positive interaction, enthusiasm, and approachability, are also recognized as important contributors to effective architectural education.

Table 3. Criteria of Competent Professors (Examining Criteria for a Professor of Architecture Technical Design in South Tehran University; Highest score: 6) (Source: Research Findings)

Criteria of competent professors (examining criteria for a professor of architecture technical design in South Tehran University in the opinion of students)		0-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6
Cognitive	Category						
	Mastery over content						*
	Presenting content in an organized and clear way					*	
	Being up-to-date						*
	Ability in the research scope					*	
	Creativity and initiative						*
	Theory-practice combination						*
	Being experienced						*
Emotional	Warmth and intimacy					*	
	Interested in a specialized major						*
	Commitment and responsibility						*
	High expectations from the student						*
	Optimism and positive thinking					*	
Behavioral	Eloquence						*
	Positive interaction with students					*	
	Movement and passion					*	
	Fair assessment						*
	Flexibility				*		

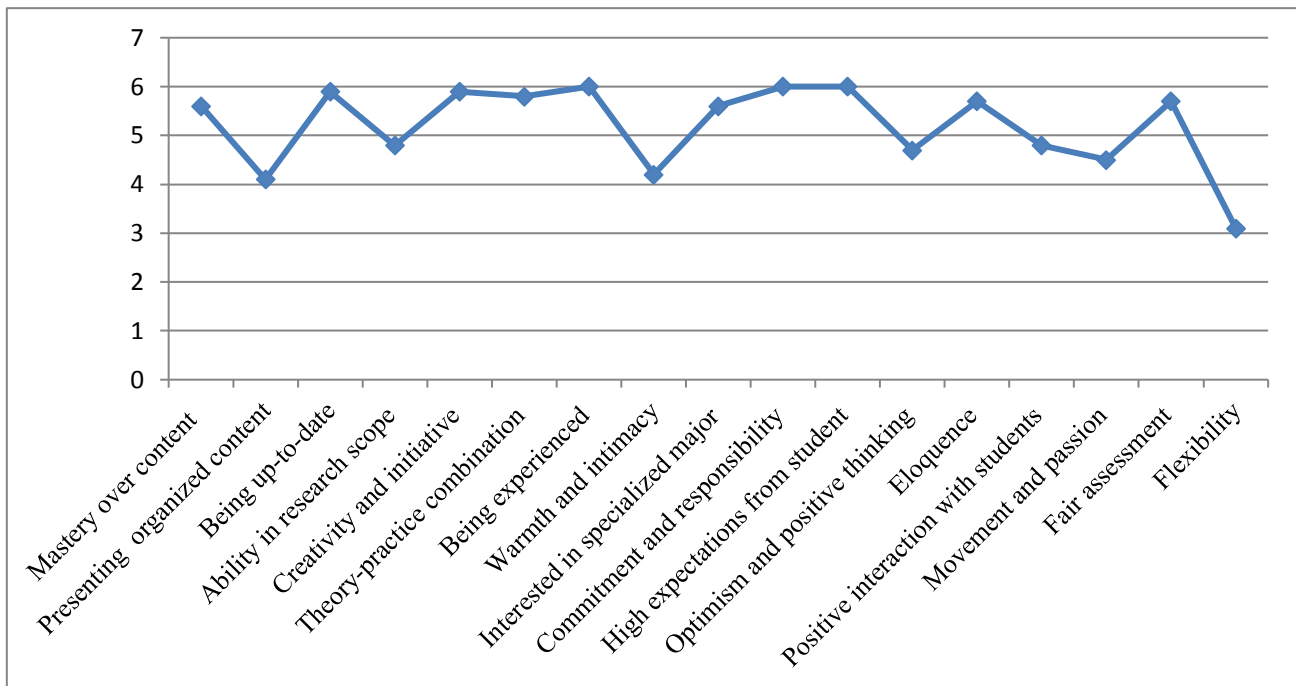


Fig 2. Criteria of Competent Professors (Examining Criteria for a Professor of Architecture Technical Design in South Tehran University; Highest score: 6)

Table 4. Rating a Competent Professor (Highest Score: 6)

Highest score of 6 on Likert Scale	
Mastery over content	5.6
Presenting content in an organized and clear way	4.1
Being up-to-date	5.9
Ability in the research scope	4.8
Creativity and initiative	5.9
Theory-practice combination	5.8
Being experienced	6
Warmth and intimacy	4.2
Interested in a specialized major	5.6
Commitment and responsibility	6
High expectations from the student	6
Optimism and positive thinking	4.7
Eloquence	5.7
Positive interaction with students	4.8
Movement and passion	4.5
Fair assessment	5.7
Flexibility	3.1

CONCLUSION

According to the findings mentioned above, interest in a subject creates curiosity and passion

in that case. This curiosity and interest make a person make an effort, and the outcome of this attempt finally leads to knowledge. This knowledge and information then make a person

hopeful and hope, in turn, enhances the attachment. In this way, the attachment-attempt-achievement cycle starts and goes on. On the other hand, these three dimensions are matched with each other. When the cognitive dimension is profound and depending on the important values, the emotional dimension is also formed and deep leading to more psychological preparedness for showing suitable behavior. Therefore, a person with a positive attitude toward a subject is ready to help, reward, admire, and support the feedback. On the contrary, a person with a negative attitude is ready to slander, hurt, punish, and destroy the matter.

College professor must handle their classrooms in a way that can nurture thinkers, creative, and autonomous students. This management requires flexibility and intimate or respectful behavior with students. Professors must see themselves from the view of students to find a vision of their expectations and develop their characters as professors based on such

insight. Moreover, a model comprising these two dimensions is essential for pre-teaching preparedness.

In response to the research question concerning the lessons that can be derived from the model of a competent professor within Iran's higher education system, it is important to recognize that the capabilities and potential of university faculty members extend far beyond the opportunities currently available for their effective utilization. As discussed previously, a range of structural and educational challenges within the Iranian higher education system has limited the ability of society, and particularly students, to fully benefit from the knowledge, expertise, and professional competencies of university professors. Maximizing the value and effectiveness of these academic resources requires a fundamental reconsideration of prevailing perceptions and approaches toward teaching and learning.

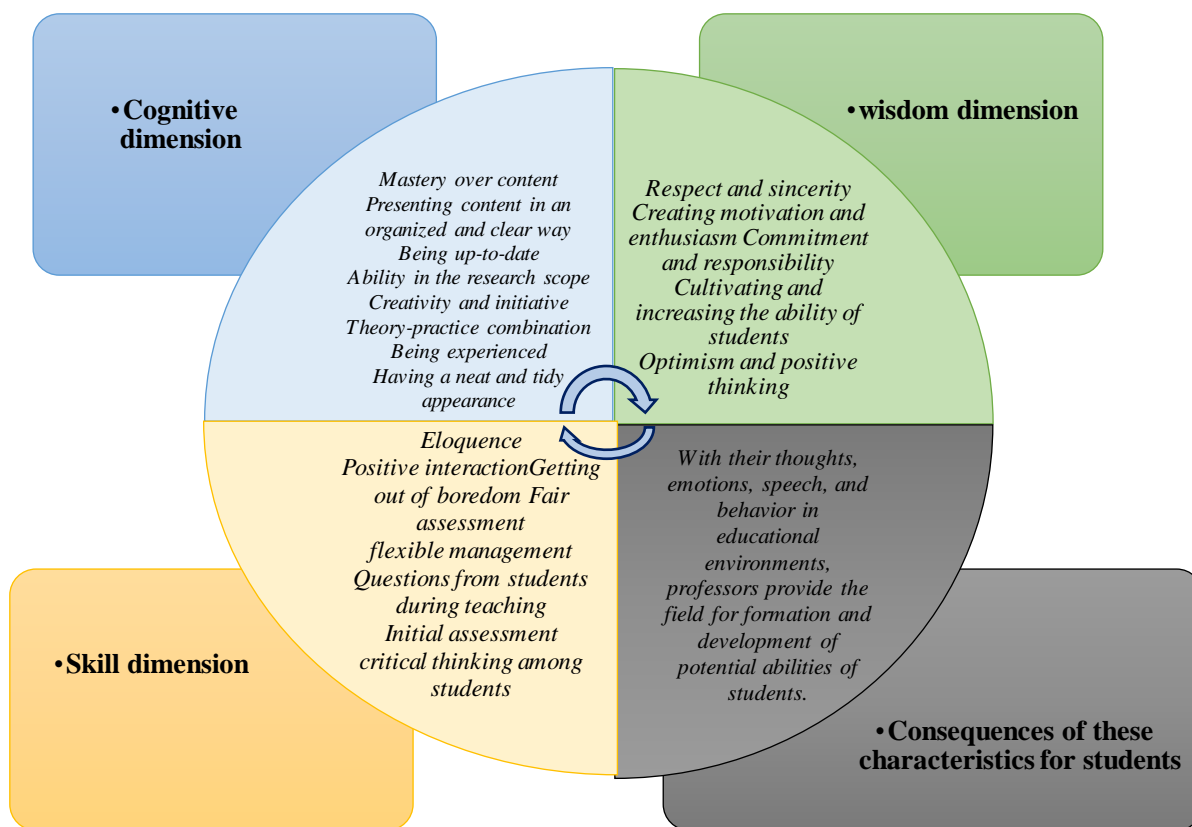


Fig 3. Summarization (Source: Authors)

The findings of this study indicate that the characteristics of competent university professors play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes toward the educational process. The presence of positive professional and personal attributes among faculty members can foster favorable perceptions and experiences among students. These positive attitudes may subsequently extend to other components of the teaching-learning environment, including interactions with other professors, engagement with different courses, perceptions of the curriculum, and attitudes toward the university as a whole. Consequently, such a process can contribute to the enhancement of educational quality and the overall effectiveness of teaching and learning within higher education institutions.

Furthermore, the proposed model highlights the importance of professional competence, pedagogical effectiveness, ethical responsibility, constructive interaction, and continuous professional development as key dimensions of effective university teaching. Strengthening these characteristics among faculty members can contribute to the creation of more dynamic, student-centered, and academically productive learning environments.

Finally, it is hoped that studies of this nature will encourage professors and instructors to engage in systematic and reflective evaluations of their teaching practices and instructional strategies. Such evaluations should be regarded as a meaningful, deliberate, and creative professional endeavor that is grounded in careful observation, critical analysis, continuous revision, collegial dialogue, and constructive peer feedback. Through this process, educators can continuously refine their teaching practices and enhance their professional effectiveness.

Ultimately, it is anticipated that the academic community will increasingly embrace the view that effective and high-quality teaching is not merely an inherent talent, but a competence that can be developed, strengthened, and learned

through continuous reflection, experience, and professional growth.

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