



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students

Representaciones sociales del buen docente universitario en estudiantes de Licenciatura en Educación Física

Thomas Pérez Restrepo¹; Noelva Eliana Montoya Grisales²;
Enoc Valentín González Palacio²

¹Tecnológico de Antioquia Institución Universitaria,
Facultad de Educación y Ciencias Sociales,
Medellín, Colombia;

²Universidad de Antioquia,
Instituto Universitario de Educación Física y Deporte
Medellín, Colombia

*Correspondence Author: Thomas Pérez Restrepo, thomas.perez@tdea.edu.co

Editorial Schedule: Article received: 11/05/2026 Accepted: 12/08/2026 Published: 01/09/2026
<https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

To cite this article use the following reference:

Pérez Restrepo, T., Montoya Grisales, N. E., & González Palacio, E. V. (2026). Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate physical education students. *Sportis Sci J*, 12(5), 1-35. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

Author contribution: Conceptualization: TPR, NEMG, EVGP; Data curation: TPR, NEMG, EVGP; Formal Analysis: TPR, NEMG, EVGP; Funding acquisition: TPR, NEMG, EVGP; Investigation: TPR, NEMG, EVGP; Methodology: TPR, NEMG, EVGP; Project administration: TPR, NEMG, EVGP; Resources: TPR, NEMG, EVGP; Software: TPR, NEMG, EVGP; Supervision: TPR, NEMG, EVGP; Validation: TPR, NEMG, EVGP; Visualization: TPR, NEMG, EVGP; Writing – original draft: TPR, NEMG, EVGP; Writing – review & editing: TPR, NEMG, EVGP

Funding: This research was not funded.

Conflict of interest: the authors declare that he does not have conflict of interest

Ethical aspects: This research was approved by a bioethics committee



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

Abstract

The evaluation of university professors has relied predominantly on research performance indicators and science communication metrics, overlooking the subjective perspectives of students and professors themselves regarding what constitutes a good university professor. This study aims to establish the social representations of a good university professor among undergraduate students in Physical Education in Medellín. A sequential mixed-methods design was conducted with 100 undergraduate students selected through simple random sampling, using Natural Semantic Networks. In-depth interviews were carried out with 5 prominent professors and analyzed using Atlas.ti version 25. Differences between groups were assessed according to semester of study ($p < 0.05$). The lexical richness used by students to define a good university professor consisted of 81 words. The Hegemonic Social Representation (87.9%) comprised 18 words, with "researcher" positioned as the central attribute, linked to didactic, pedagogical, and human dimensions. Differences were statistically significant according to semester of study ($p < 0.05$). The preeminence of "researcher" as the central attribute reflects the enduring influence of the Humboldtian model in higher education, which at times creates tension with pedagogical and teaching functions. A good university professor emerges as a multidimensional figure who integrates scientific rigor, didactic competence, and human warmth, suggesting the need to reconsider faculty evaluation models that prioritize research output over other equally relevant dimensions.

Keywords: social representations; higher education; physical education; university teaching; professor quality

Resumen

La figura del buen docente universitario ha sido evaluada predominantemente mediante indicadores de desempeño investigativo y divulgación científica, desatendiendo las perspectivas subjetivas de estudiantes y docentes. Este estudio busca establecer las representaciones sociales del buen profesor universitario en estudiantes de Educación Física en Medellín. Se empleó un diseño mixto secuencial con 100 estudiantes de pregrado seleccionados mediante muestreo aleatorio simple. Se aplicaron Redes Semánticas Naturales para el componente cuantitativo y entrevistas en profundidad a 5 docentes destacados para el componente cualitativo, analizadas con Atlas.ti versión 25. Las diferencias entre grupos se evaluaron según semestre académico ($p < 0,05$). La riqueza léxica utilizada por los estudiantes para definir al buen docente comprendió 81 palabras. La Representación Social Hegemónica (87,9%) estuvo conformada por 18 palabras, con "investigador" como atributo central, articulado a dimensiones didácticas, pedagógicas y humanas. Se encontraron diferencias estadísticamente significativas según el semestre de estudio ($p < 0,05$). La preeminencia del atributo "investigador" refleja la vigencia del modelo Humboldtiano en la educación superior, el cual genera tensiones con las funciones pedagógicas y de enseñanza. El buen docente universitario emerge como una figura multidimensional que integra rigor científico, competencia didáctica y calidez humana, lo que invita a repensar los modelos de evaluación docente que priorizan la producción investigativa sobre otras dimensiones igualmente relevantes.

Palabras clave: representaciones sociales; educación superior; educación física; docente universitario; calidad docente



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

Introduction

Incorporate Contemporary society is undergoing constant transformation in its social, political, and economic dimensions; consequently, higher education, in fulfilling its social mandate, seeks to respond to emerging global demands by adapting its goals, objectives, and management frameworks to promote sociocultural development. In this context of transformation, the university professor emerges as the fundamental mediator—an agent who shapes and transmits culture, establishing a dialectical pedagogical relationship aimed at shaping an ideal of the individual. Consequently, teleological perspectives on the aims of education are grounded in the idea that, according to [source], education consists of enhancing the capacity to discern and resolve gaps in established knowledge, teaching students to think autonomously and critically.

This perspective aligns directly with the university's mission, aimed at forming a gentleman: an individual characterized by a deep understanding of the world and intellectual versatility grounded in the arts, sciences, and humanities (Newman, 1956). Under this premise, the professor is positioned as a key actor in fulfilling the teleological objective of university and professional education, acting as a guide in the teaching and learning processes that lead to the generation and transmission of specialized professional knowledge derived from research and scientific inquiry. This practice demands constant epistemological reflection on the three core missions that academic staff at the university must fulfill: teaching, research, and outreach.

This leads to the question of pedagogy and didactics in higher education: The former is the discipline that comprehensively studies the process of training professionals in the university setting. It addresses education as a complex social phenomenon, seeking to develop stable qualities in the student's personality through the dialectical integration of instruction and education. For its part, the didactics of higher education is a branch of the pedagogical sciences whose specific object of study is the teaching-educational process, or the process of teaching and learning. This discipline is responsible for the conscious and optimal management of this process, systematically structuring its fundamental components: the objective (as a guiding category), content, methods, resources, forms of organization, and assessment. Thus, the



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

university instructor is responsible for carrying out both processes in higher education, and therefore their quality is essentially derived from their work in the classroom.

However, given that the university professor must carry out the university's core missions—teaching, research, and outreach—this likely results in a high degree of complexity in the shaping of their professional identity and a multifaceted demand that involves roles such as social agent (outreach), scientist (research), and subject matter expert for teaching (teaching). This reality requires that the professor be an academic intellectual capable of constantly updating knowledge and creating scientific communities, embodying an integral, moral, and inquisitive dimension. These approaches represent new challenges that demand skills and abilities different from traditional ones—such as the mere transmission of content—positioning the university professor as a high-level specialist who links research with the community and their own pedagogical practice.

Consequently, the question emerges regarding the definition of a good teacher in the context of higher education. This represents a fundamental epistemological and practical necessity for understanding the competencies that a university professor should possess in order to carry out their work as a teacher, researcher, and agent of social transformation. This implies dimensions that transcend disciplinary boundaries, including ethical, relational, and reflective aspects that shape the professional identity of faculty. This conception challenges traditional views focused exclusively on the transmission of content and opens up spaces to reflect on the methodological, affective, and contextual dimensions of teaching practice. Furthermore, investigating this category allows us to understand the perceptions that students and faculty construct regarding the excellence of the university instructor, which “directly influence academic satisfaction and the outcomes of the educational process” (Casero-Martínez, 2008, p. 204). Consequently, delving into this category provides empirical foundations for designing teacher training, support, and evaluation policies that are more relevant and contextualized to institutional realities.

Thus, university faculty require a high degree of specialization and an inquiring spirit that links research with teaching. Given that the quality of a higher education institution is directly proportional to the human and technical excellence of its faculty, teaching evaluation



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

becomes imperative for institutional improvement. However, to understand and improve academic quality, it is imperative to investigate the perceptions that stakeholders in the educational process hold regarding teaching work. Historically, faculty evaluation has focused on institutional and normative criteria, relegating to the background the characteristics that students consider essential for a good teacher. It is at this point that the Theory of Social Representations (TSR) acquires critical methodological and conceptual relevance.

The SRT proposed by Moscovici (1979) refers to the worldview or the structure of common-sense thinking that individuals and groups use to interpret, make sense of, and guide their social practices. These representations function as a set of organized beliefs and opinions regarding an object, in this case, the good university teacher. Therefore, investigating students' SRs is essential, as their assessments reveal the discourses derived from their educational process and the values they attribute to good teachers in their professional training.

Based on this, we can first establish that social sciences are a direct mode of knowledge that differs from scientific knowledge—not as something inferior, but rather as something that is consensus-based and depends on the interaction of individuals belonging to a social group, in this case, students in a Bachelor's program in Physical Education. That being the case, it is necessary to note that Social Representations Theory (SRT) has several approaches and that, depending on the approach selected, the study has a specific objective. In this vein, the following approaches are identified: the processual (Moscovici, 1979; Jodelet, 2001), the socio-dynamic (Doise, 1990), and the structural (Abric, 2001). The first aims to understand how representations are formed in everyday interaction, how they are negotiated through language, and how they influence social practices within a specific culture. Therefore, it seeks to analyze and interpret the social, historical, and cultural conditions that allow such representations to emerge. On the other hand, the socio-dynamic approach aims to analyze the relationships established between the social metasystem and the mental universe of the subjects, emphasizing that variations in representations originate in the structuring of existing social relationships between groups (Doise, 1990); that is, it seeks to establish the differences between social groups regarding the SRs of an object in their reality. Finally, the structural approach proposes that SRs are organized around a Central Core (CC) or hegemonic representation (HR), which are



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

concepts, words, or ideas that give sense, meaning, and coherence to the representation as a whole. Organized around this core are the elements of the Peripheral System (PS) or peripheral representations (PR), which fulfill distinct and complementary functions. Thus, HRs are characterized by being stable and generating meaning. Therefore:

The central core is the unifying and stabilizing element of the representation. It is the central core that determines the nature of the bonds linking the elements of the representation together, and it is the central core that gives the representation its overall meaning. Identifying the central core is essential for understanding the representation, as it governs its evolution and transformations. A modification of the central core entails a complete transformation of the representation, whereas a modification of the peripheral elements does not affect the central structure (Abric, 2001, p. 21).

This approach allows for the scientific determination of the non-negotiable and stable attributes (core) that Physical Education students associate with a good university instructor, distinguishing them from circumstantial or individual aspects. Methodologically, this approach commonly employs associative techniques, among which is the Natural Semantic Networks (NSN) technique. According to González Palacio (2019), NSNs allow access to the internal structure of social representation based on the subjects' semantic memory, and it is through this procedure that it is possible to obtain the "SAM Set" (the words with the greatest semantic weight), as well as peripheral elements, by establishing a breaking point (BP) derived from the semantic distance between the words defining a social object as a criterion. This lends statistical and conceptual rigor to the analysis of student subjectivity, making it possible not only to understand the structure of the representation but also its content, and to identify differences among the various subgroups of the studied population. It is important to note that Social Representations Theory (SRT) has been extensively developed for research in Physical Education, with the structural approach being the most widely used to understand and establish social representations in this specific field (Pérez Restrepo et al. 2026). In light of the above, the general objective of this research is to identify the social representations of a good university professor constructed by undergraduate students in the Physical Education program at a university in Medellín. The relevance of this study lies in the fact that, by revealing the representations held by this particular group of students, it generates situated knowledge



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

regarding the expectations, values, and pedagogical criteria that future graduates consider fundamental in their instructors.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that contemporary higher education calls for a reconceptualization of the teaching role that goes beyond the mere transmission of disciplinary content and integrates the three core functions of the university: teaching, research, and community engagement. By revealing the perceptions held by this particular group of students, situated knowledge is generated regarding how future professionals value and interpret these dimensions in their educators, which is essential for understanding the expectations, quality criteria, and pedagogical models that are being internalized within the university context.

Methods

Study Type

The empirical becomes the starting point and fundamental element in studies grounded in the theoretical inquiry into social representations, particularly those based on Abric's (2001) structural approach; however, it also takes into account content (Moscovici, 1979) and, from a socio-dynamic perspective (Doise, 1990), it accounts for the similarities and discrepancies in what is represented based on certain subgroups determined by social profile, thus constituting a complex approach that addresses social representation from the perspective of detail and individuality, subgroups, and, of course, the collective.

In this context, a specific study was conducted among a group of college students to explore what they think, believe, or know about what it means to be a good teacher in the context of higher education, with the aim of identifying the words that shape their perception of a good college teacher. That said, there is no established guide on how to research social representations; moreover, the choice of theoretical framework determines the methodological process by which social representations should be investigated. In this regard, the study presents a synthesis of the three approaches.

Thus, given the characteristics of the research, this investigation is an iterative, multimodal study (Polit & Hungler, 2005); that is, "the results of one method are used as a



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

foundation to advance to subsequent research using an alternative approach” (p. 256), in this case, two iterations were carried out: the first involved a descriptive study investigating students’ social representations of a good teacher; based on the analysis of the previous phase, a case study was then conducted, in which the teachers mentioned by the students as good university professors were interviewed, in accordance with the suggestion by Gaviria Cortés et al. (2023), who in their study, “What Good Teachers Are Like and What They Do,” first surveyed students from various educational institutions and, based on the results, interviewed the teachers identified by their students and documented their life stories; In this way, the characteristics and particularities of a good professor are revealed by the two main actors in the teaching-learning process; this approach allows for an understanding of the complexity of a phenomenon from both an empirical or positivist perspective and an interpretive or hermeneutic one. On the other hand, from the viewpoint of the theory of social representations, the process of verifying the representational core is carried out from the standpoint of the Other—the teacher—who was initially the object of the students’ representations. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify that the data collected in each iteration or phase were analyzed independently, and the results obtained in the first cycle with the students served as the basis for selecting the subjects to be studied in the second cycle—namely, the faculty members—who, in turn, provided their opinions or perceptions on what it means to be a good university professor; this information was analyzed separately and compared with the students’ responses.

Therefore, initially, a quantitative study was conducted using a descriptive, non-experimental design, since it did not seek to manipulate independent variables or alter any biological, physiological, psychological, or anatomical dimension of the subjects under study (Polit & Hungler, 2005); furthermore, its objective is to “observe, describe, and document aspects of a situation that occurs naturally” (Polit & Hungler, 2005, pp. 190–191). This allows the research to be grounded in a positivist approach, as it had a technical intent; consequently, it provides a description and analysis of reality based on the variables present within it (González Palacio & Montoya, 2024). The aim of this phase was, on the one hand, to identify the teachers whom the students considered to be good instructors and, on the other hand, to describe the characteristics that made them good teaching professionals.

Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

In the second phase, from a qualitative perspective, the study employed a case study design, which serves as a research strategy that addresses the complexity of a contemporary phenomenon in its natural setting (Stake, 1998). This strategy is relevant for addressing the complexity associated with the concept of a “good university professor” among students and faculty in a physical education program; It is qualitative because it sought to obtain unstructured data emerging from the lifeworld of the social subjects—that is, from their voices, experiences, and narratives present in everyday life (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984; Gadamer, 1992). From this perspective, it falls within an interpretive approach (Bolívar, 2004), as its objective is to understand “people’s lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings, as well as the organizational functioning of social movements, cultural phenomena, and the interaction between nations” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 12).

The purpose of this second phase was to learn and confirm, through the voices of the professors mentioned by the students in the previous phase, what their perceptions, opinions, or considerations were regarding what it means to be a good university professor, and which of those characteristics or traits they actually possessed

Population and Sample

The sample for the quantitative component was selected using the single random sampling technique (Grisales, 2001); the population (N) consisted of 216 students in grades 6 through 10 of the Bachelor’s Degree in Physical Education program at a university in the city of Medellín. The sample size (n) was calculated based on a 95% confidence level ($Z = 1.96$), a 50% probability, and a 3% margin of error. Using an adjusted sampling model ($\tilde{n}$), this determined a minimum sample size of 98 students (see Equation 1); ultimately, 100 students were surveyed. To select the students, a sampling frame was created based on institutional data, and each student in the population was assigned a code from 1 to 216. Then, using the Epidat 4.2 software, the 98 students to be surveyed were identified based on their assigned codes (Figure 1).



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

1	2	6	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	20	23	25
26	29	31	33	37	38	41
44	45	46	47	50	51	52
54	55	56	60	66	67	68
69	72	73	74	75	78	79
84	87	91	94	101	102	103
104	106	108	110	112	114	117
119	124	127	128	129	132	134
138	142	144	145	147	148	151
152	154	155	156	157	160	161
165	167	172	173	180	183	185
187	188	191	192	195	197	198
200	201	202	204	207	208	211

FIGURE 1. Number of selected participants. Probability of selection: 45.3704%. *Source:* Epidat 4.2.

The following inclusion criteria were considered for students: being of legal age, signing the informed consent form, being enrolled in the current semester (2025-2), being part of the bachelor's degree program in physical education, and being in level 6 or higher of the program's curriculum (10 levels). This was done to ensure that all participating students had taken classes with all faculty members in the program. The exclusion criterion was voluntary withdrawal from the research.

$$n = \frac{\frac{Z_{\alpha}^2 * pq}{2}}{E^2 + \frac{\frac{Z_{\alpha}^2 * pq}{2}}{N}}$$

EQUATIONS 1. Formulas for sample selection. *Source:* Grisales (2001).

For the selection of the qualitative sample, a purposive sampling procedure was used (Sandoval Casilimas, 1996). This technique aims to select individuals with characteristics that are relevant and typical for a specific study objective. Research participants are selected based on their presence in a population of interest, their characteristics, experiences, or other criteria.



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

In this case, the sample consists of five teachers from the same program who were considered good teachers according to the results from the first iteration or phase of the study, which was conducted with students. In this vein, the teachers who were mentioned most frequently by the students were selected; the order in which they were named was also taken into account: First, Second, or Third. Based on this, they were assigned scores of three, two, and one, respectively. Thus, the frequency with which each teacher was mentioned was multiplied by the sum of the assigned ranks, resulting in a specific weight or value that allowed for the identification of the teachers most highly rated by the students.

For the teaching staff, the inclusion criteria were: signing the informed consent form and, at the time of the interview, having an active contract with the university. The exclusion criterion was voluntary withdrawal from the study. Finally, this research was approved by the research committee of the university where the study was conducted, where it was classified, in accordance with Resolution 8430 of 1993 of the Colombian Ministry of Health, as risk-free (on April 25, 2023). This is because the research does not aim to manipulate the biological, physiological, psychological, or anatomical variables of the subjects under investigation. Furthermore, in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration (2024), the protection of the life, health, dignity, integrity, self-determination, privacy, and confidentiality of the research participants was prioritized and ensured.

Techniques and Tools

The data collection phase was based on the application of an adaptation of the sociodemographic profile instrument designed by González Palacio (2019) for research on Social Representations (SR) using the SRN. This adaptation allowed for the adjustment of the social and academic dimensions to the specific context of this study, incorporating assessments of what constitutes a good university professor. In addition, a subjective selection item was included in which students identified the program's educators they considered exemplary; based on this criterion, in-depth interviews were conducted with the five most highly recognized faculty members.



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

This methodological design facilitated the implementation of the Natural Semantic Networks (NSN) technique, which is a mixed-methods analysis procedure that allows for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative results. Using this methodology, the network's key indicators were determined: the J value (semantic richness or term diversity), which refers to the total number of distinct words used by the students; the M value (semantic weight and hierarchy assigned by the subjects), which is obtained by multiplying the frequency with which a word was mentioned by the sum of the ranks or weights assigned by the surveyed subjects; relative semantic weight (%M), which refers to the percentage value of each word relative to the total weight of all words in the SN; the FMG value (percentage semantic distance between the nodes of the core); this value refers to the percentage distance of each word in the representation relative to the main defining word or the term with the greatest semantic weight; the SAM (the Semantic Association Memory) set (central core and structure of the representation) refers to the words that denote the core of the social representation or SR; this was established based on the proposal by González Palacio (2019), who states that the SR consists of those words with an FMG value of 5% or more. This study also considered the proposal by Bustamante Castaño et al. (2025), who define the transient social representation (TSR) as those words with FMG values between 4.99 and 2.0; words with FMG values below 2.0 constitute the peripheral social representation (PSR) (Table 2).

To ensure the reliability of the instruments, both the NSN (Natural Semantic Networks) guide and the interview script were reviewed by three raters (content validity), all of whom held doctorates in education or educational sciences and had experience in university teaching; after two rounds of evaluation, 100% consensus was achieved for both instruments. Following this, a pilot test was conducted with 20 undergraduate students and two university faculty members.

Information Processing and Analysis

The data obtained from the survey were organized in Microsoft Excel (2025), and the analysis of social representations was conducted using the same software, following the cutoff point established by González Palacio (2019)—where words with an FMG value greater than



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

or equal to 5% constitute Hegemonic Social Representations (HSR)—and that of Bustamante Castaño et al. (2025) for transitional social representations ($FMG = 2\% \leq X < 5\%$).

To describe the social profile, the mode and mean were used, along with the standard deviation; for multivariate analysis, the chi-square test (X^2) and correspondence analysis were used, with a statistical significance level of 0.05 (p). The software used was SPSS version 30. Subsequently, the analysis of the interviews carried out with the five featured teachers was completed using an open-coding and axial coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 2002) with Atlas.ti software, version 25. The open coding procedure involved reading the texts collected during fieldwork word by word and line by line, which allowed for the fragmentation and in-depth examination of the testimonies in order to identify codes that were subsequently grouped into main or axial categories and associated with their respective subcategories, thereby enabling an understanding of what teachers consider to be a good university professor.

Triangulation and Criteria of Rigor

Regarding the criteria of rigor, we followed the recommendations of Guba and Lincoln (1998), particularly those related to credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability:

Credibility is achieved through the presentation of the study's results based on various triangulation processes. In the terms of Rodríguez (2005), a combination of “research approaches and instruments” (p. 2) was employed, in addition to different theoretical perspectives and stakeholders involved in the research procedure.

In terms of transferability, data collection was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods; the quantitative component was based on a representative sample, and the qualitative analysis involved a process of category saturation and contrast with theory. Furthermore, the adaptation of natural semantic networks carried out in this study can be applied to other investigations in similar higher education training contexts.

To ensure the reliability of the information, a detailed record was kept of all phases of the study in order to guarantee its consistency.

Finally, in terms of credibility, priority was given to the students' voices in the initial phase regarding what they perceived, believed, or thought about their instructors; this was then



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

contrasted with the opinions and perceptions of the instructors mentioned by their students, thereby constructing the presentation from two perspectives.

Results

Initially, regarding the characterization of the student population (n=100) (Table 1), it was found that: the mean age was 23.7 (SD=7.74) years, placing the sample in the early adulthood age group. However, the youngest student was 20 years old and the oldest was 40 years old. Furthermore, the vast majority belonged to socioeconomic stratum three (46%), which in Colombia corresponds to a lower-middle income level. With regard to gender, the sample consisted mostly of male students (70%). Finally, regarding the current semester, the majority were enrolled in their sixth (28%) and tenth (24%) semesters.

TABLE 1. Descriptive statics and sociodemographic profile

Semester	Frequencies	% of total
6	28	28.0 %
7	20	20.0 %
8	11	11.0 %
9	17	17.0 %
10	24	24.0 %
Gender	Frequencies	% of Total
Female	30	30.0 %
Male	70	70.0 %
Socioeconomic status	Frequencies	% of Total
1	6	6.0 %
2	29	29.0 %
3	46	46.0 %
4	15	15.0 %
5	4	4.0 %

The results are presented in accordance with the RSN analysis, which reveals that the sample of students surveyed exhibited a grammatical richness (J-value) of 81 words that the students used to define a good university professor. A semantic weight was assigned to each word, both in absolute terms (M) and relative terms, calculated as the product of the frequency



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

(number of times the word is mentioned) and the sum of the hierarchical order assigned to each word (1 to 5) based on its importance.

Accordingly, the word “researchers” had the highest semantic weight ($M = 3.772$); therefore, this word best describes what constitutes a good university professor for the group of students surveyed. Considering the total semantic weight (the sum of all M values) for a “good university professor,” which was 20.793, it was possible to determine that the word—or characteristic—“researchers” accounts for 18.14% of the total Hegemonic Social Representations (HSRs). Likewise, the SAM (the Semantic Association Memory) set of the HSRs accounts for 87.9% of the entire RS, which is very high and allows us to conclude that this HSRs is what defines what constitutes a good university professor. Thus, the SAM set consisted of 18 words, with “researchers” being the primary defining word, followed by: “inspiring,” “explain well,” “empathetic,” “master the subject matter,” “teaching method,” “responsible,” “academic,” “intelligent,” “committed,” “disciplined,” “expertise,” “respectful,” “demanding,” “patient,” “innovative,” “kind,” and “flexible” (Table 2). Consequently, following a qualitative analysis, each feature was linked to a category corresponding to the dimensions that constitute a good professor (Gaviria Cortés et al., 2023): didactic, pedagogical, and human; and the scientific dimension was added, given its importance to the university’s scientific mission in today’s society.



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

TABLE 2. HSR (Hegemonic Social Representations) on the ideal university professor, semantic weights, and categorization

RS	Word	Order	N	M	FMG	%M	Dimension
HSR (87,9%)	Researchers	92	41	3772	100,00	18,14	Scientific
	Inspiring	75	25	1875	49,71	9,02	Pedagogical
	Explain well	78	24	1872	49,63	9,00	Didactic
	Empathetic	73	23	1679	44,51	8,07	Human
	Master the subject matter	74	20	1480	39,24	7,12	Didactic
	Their teaching method	71	18	1278	33,88	6,15	Didactic
	Responsible	66	18	1188	31,50	5,71	Human
	Academics	55	21	1155	30,62	5,55	Pedagogical
	Intelligent	49	13	637	16,89	3,06	Scientific
	Committed	47	13	611	16,20	2,94	Human
	Disciplined	40	12	480	12,73	2,31	Human
	Expertise	38	12	456	12,09	2,19	Didactic
	Respectful	36	11	396	10,50	1,90	Human
	Demanding	35	10	350	9,28	1,68	Pedagogical
	Patient	32	10	320	8,48	1,54	Pedagogical
	Innovative	29	10	290	7,69	1,39	Didactic
	Friendly	25	10	250	6,63	1,20	Human
	Flexible	21	9	189	5,01	0,91	Pedagogical
	Practical	37	5	185	4,90	0,89	
	Formal	23	8	184	4,88	0,88	
RST (8,52%) transient social representation	Trained	22	7	154	4,08	0,74	
	Creative	23	6	138	3,66	0,66	
	Dedicated	23	6	138	3,66	0,66	
	Strict	21	6	126	3,34	0,61	
	Leaders	18	6	108	2,86	0,52	
	Charismatic	15	7	105	2,78	0,50	
	Passionate	20	5	100	2,65	0,48	
	Approachable	16	6	96	2,55	0,46	
	Playful	16	6	96	2,55	0,46	
	Understanding	18	5	90	2,39	0,43	
RSP (3,33%)	Listening	18	5	90	2,39	0,43	
	Vocation	18	5	90	2,39	0,43	
	Multidisciplinary	15	6	90	2,39	0,43	
	Ethical	14	5	70	1,86	0,34	
	Colaborative	16	4	64	1,70	0,31	
	Dialogic	11	5	55	1,46	0,26	
	Reflective	11	4	44	1,17	0,21	
	... 44 more words						

Likewise, the PSR was composed of 63 words that make up the remaining 12.10% (%M) of the RS. However, following , words with a value between 2.0% and 4.9% were



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

considered, based on their theoretical value, as Transitory Social Representations (TSRs), which allow them to give sense and meaning to the words comprising the Semantic Association Memory (SAM) set, such as: practical, formal, educated, creative, dedicated, strict, leaders, among others.

In this way, a tripartite structure is identified that reveals the tensions and priorities of the given representation; these TSRs denote words that possess such dynamism that at some point they may become hegemonic, or at least relevant, depending on the students' communicational logic and their context.

Given this context, when analyzing Hegemonic Social Representations (HSRs), it is possible to observe, within the central core (Figure 1), the predominance of the “researcher” characteristic as the main element of the social representation. This reveals that the student community identifies a good teacher's identity with their ability to produce or construct knowledge.

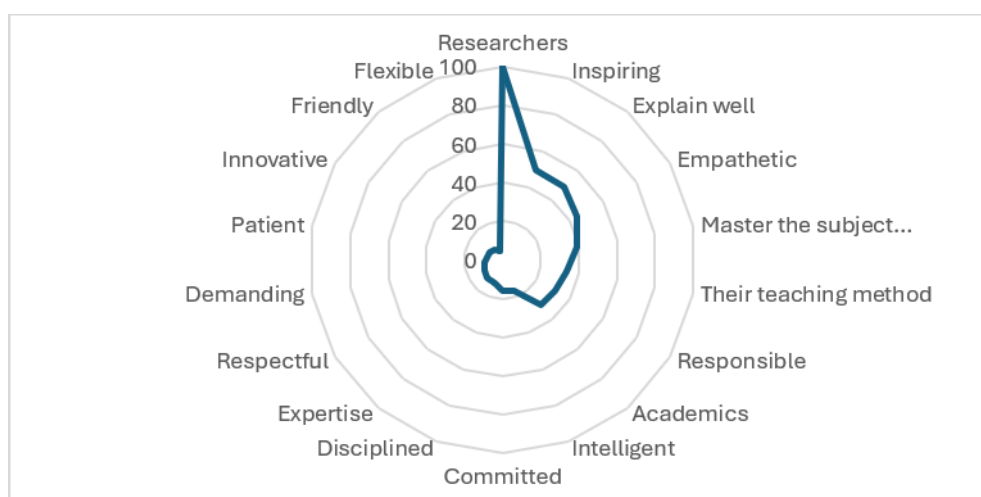


FIGURE 2. Hegomic Social Representations

This reveals that the academic community constructs the identity of a good university professor fundamentally based on their role as a producer and constructor of knowledge. This reflects the enduring influence of the Humboldtian model of the university, where research is considered one of its core missions. However, this preeminence also indicates a potential displacement of the teaching function by the research function, suggesting that the professional



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

legitimacy of the university professor is constructed primarily through their scientific output rather than their pedagogical performance. This representation may be reinforced by institutional evaluation systems, academic productivity metrics, and faculty promotion criteria that prioritize bibliometric indicators. Second, “inspirational” emerges, a trait intrinsically linked to the human dimension. This suggests that a good university professor not only conveys information but also generates enthusiasm, intellectual curiosity, and an academic vocation in their students. This characteristic reveals that the social representation of a good teacher includes a charismatic dimension that goes beyond technical competence. Inspiration implies the ability to model attitudes, awaken intellectual passions, and project an attractive vision of the disciplinary field. Now, the aspect of the word “explain” closely linked to the didactic dimension refers to the ability of a good university professor to make complex knowledge understandable, to translate expert knowledge into formats accessible to students, to logically sequence content, and to use rhetorical and didactic resources that facilitate conceptual understanding.

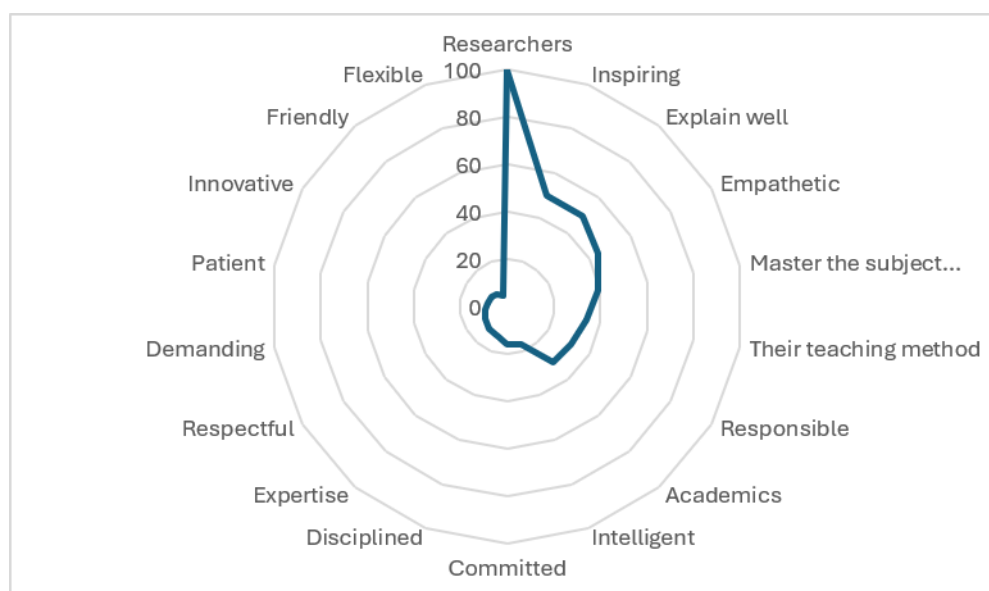


FIGURE 3. The dominant social perception of a good university professor.

Furthermore, the text highlights the presence of words such as empathetic, responsible, committed, disciplined, respectful, and kind, which are closely linked to the human dimension



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

of good university professors. These words refer to “all the attitudes, values, and personal characteristics that teachers bring to their educational work and that help provide higher-quality teaching” (Gaviria Cortés et al., 2023, p. 170). This suggests that regardless of the educational level, teachers bring their humanity to the classroom. For its part, the pedagogical dimension, understood as the “forms of interaction in the classroom between teachers and students (tact, closeness, kindness, trust, and friendship); outlines relationships between pedagogy and the presence of experiential knowledge (educating for life, living example, transformation, social context)” (Gaviria Cortés et al., 2023, p. 223). This category consisted of words such as “inspiring,” “academic,” “demanding,” “patient,” and “innovative,” which reflect all the attributes exhibited by university teachers that allow them to give a formative and situated meaning to the relationship between the teacher, knowledge, and the student. On the other hand, the category of the didactic dimension emerges, which is perhaps the most prominent within the Hegemonic Social Representations (HSRs); this refers to “all those practices carried out by the teacher with the aim of making teaching student-centered, seeking to ensure that students take ownership of the knowledge being presented to them and facilitating their learning” (Gaviria Cortés et al., 2023, p. 135). In this dimension, one can identify terms such as: explain well, master the subjects, teaching method, expertise, and innovative. When analyzed theoretically, these form part of the different components of the didactic system: problem, objective, content, method, medium, form, and evaluation. All of this allows for the structuring of instruction and training so that the teaching and learning process, through social and individual action, meets the needs arising from society through professional training. Finally, the scientific dimension encompasses the mission of the university professor as a researcher and scientist who draws upon their research work to enrich their teaching; this dimension includes the terms “researchers” and “intelligent.” The latter term is placed in this dimension because it is associated with the cognitive capacity for analysis and logical reasoning necessary for scientific research.

Turning to the Transitory Social Representations (TSRs) (Figure 2), although they do not meet the threshold to be classified as Hegemonic Social Representations (HSRs), they possess sufficient theoretical relevance to help understand and complement what is established



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

in the HSRs. Following the same categorization process used previously, each transitional characteristic was linked to the four fundamental dimensions of the university professor: didactic, pedagogical, human, and scientific. Regarding the didactic dimension, the terms formal, practical, playful, and multidisciplinary were identified. The characteristic “formal” received the highest rating within the Transitory Social Representations (TSRs) and refers to the teacher’s ability to rigorously structure the teaching and learning process through systematic planning, adherence to schedules, clarity in assessment expectations, and maintenance of consistent academic standards. This rating suggests that students recognize the professionalization of teaching practice as an expression of academic seriousness. Meanwhile, “practical” introduces a particularly significant dimension in the context of Physical Education, linking to all the practices the teacher carries out to make teaching student-centered, specifically in the ability to build effective bridges between academic theory and professional application. The aspect of playfulness refers to the teacher’s inherent ability (within the teaching system) to convey knowledge based on play, enjoyment, and fun. Finally, multidisciplinary refers to the breadth of the teacher’s knowledge and their ability to integrate knowledge from various disciplinary fields, thereby enriching the comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

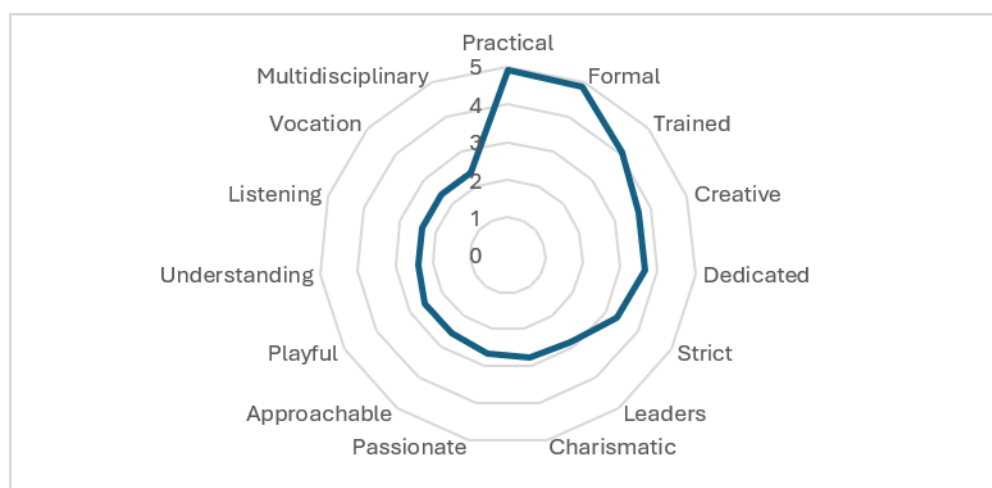


FIGURE 4. A transitional social representation of a good university professor.

The pedagogical dimension encompasses the following terms: strict, leaders, passionate, understanding, approachable, and attentive. These characteristics shape the practices that come



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

together in the classroom and enable students to grasp their educational purpose. From these dimensions, the higher education classroom is configured as a space for listening where a leader, the teacher, who is understanding and passionate, facilitates a professional training process based on academic rigor and high standards. These Transitory social representations (TSRs) evoke the vocational dimension and the teacher's emotional commitment to their discipline, manifesting in enthusiasm when communicating knowledge and the ability to convey disciplinary knowledge. For its part, the word "Close" refers to relational proximity and communicative horizontality, which align with a non-hierarchical vision of the teaching and learning process. Finally, "listening" refers to pedagogical empathy and a willingness for genuine dialogue, taking into account the biographical, emotional, and cognitive particularities of each student.

The human dimension encompasses the greatest number of attributes within the TSRs, including creativity, dedication, charisma, approachability, empathy, and a sense of vocation. These terms refer to the attitudes and values that shape those who are part of the HSRs. However, it is worth noting that teaching in higher education is, above all, a vocation. To begin with, the word "creative" manifests itself in the ability to design innovative methodological strategies and create stimulating environments. "Dedicated," on the other hand, refers to the temporal, emotional, and intellectual commitment invested in the educational work, transcending contractual obligations to align with the social mission to which one is contributing. "Charismatic" introduces the intersubjective and affective dimension, evident in the ability to forge emotional connections.

Finally, the scientific dimension includes only the term "educated," which refers to the teacher's institutionalized cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2012): advanced academic degrees, postgraduate training, and ongoing professional development in their disciplinary field. These characteristic reveals that students value the academic legitimacy of their instructors, recognizing that university teaching must be backed by a rigorous academic background that guarantees both disciplinary and pedagogical mastery.

However, Peripheral Social Representations (PSRs) consist of 65 words that account for the remaining 12.10% of the total semantic weight (Figure 3). Although these representations

Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

enjoy less consensus than the hegemonic core and the transitional representations, they fulfill important complementary functions by enabling the adaptation of social representations to specific contexts and individual experiences. Following the same categorization process, each peripheral characteristic was linked to the four established dimensions.

In the didactic dimension, terms such as “classroom management,” “organized,” “guidance,” “feedback,” “methodologist,” and “dynamic” are identified. These characteristics appear to complement the discussion of the teacher’s ability to manage classroom dynamics, maintain environments conducive to learning, and coordinate effective interactions among students. The pedagogical dimension includes terms such as “reflective,” “proactive,” “well-mannered,” “motivating,” “positive,” “critical,” “transformative,” and “scholarly.” These characteristics reflect the teacher’s ability to critically analyze their pedagogical practice and promote analytical thinking among students, generating innovative solutions and alternatives. The human dimension presents the highest concentration of peripheral attributes, including ethical, collaborative, dialogic, charismatic, friendly, courteous, diligent, cordial, inclusive, empathetic, fair, sociable, and many others (see Figure 3).

These terms help to elaborate on the coherence between moral principles and teaching practices, forming the ethical foundation of the profession in higher education. Finally, the scientific dimension includes terms such as “publisher,” “informed,” “methodical,” and “scholarly.” These characteristics refer to the research role of the university professor and their commitment to the production and dissemination of knowledge. The configuration of the RSPs reveals a fundamental paradox: while the human dimension contains the greatest number of peripheral attributes, these do not achieve sufficient consensus to be integrated into the hegemonic core or the transitional representations. This suggests that the social representation of the good university teacher prioritizes technical-scientific competencies over ethical-political and socio-affective dimensions. This distribution reproduces instrumentalist conceptions of university teaching in which the comprehensive educational function is subordinated to academic productivity and didactic effectiveness.



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

0.517). Furthermore, it was evident that the first two dimensions explain 69.% of the total variance, which highlights the significance of the differences found (Table 3). Furthermore, it can be seen that dimension one explains 42.8% of the variability ($1 = 0.097$) and dimension two explains 26.3% ($2 = 0.060$).

TABLE 3. Correspondence analysis between the HRS (Hegemonic Social Representations) of a good university professor and the semester taken.

Dimension	singular value	Inertia	Chi-square	Sig.	Inertia proportion		Confidence interval for eigenvalue	
					Accounted for	Cumulative	Standard Deviation	Correlation 2
1	,311	,097			,428	,428	,044	-,015
2	,244	,060			,263	,691	,042	
3	,194	,038			,166	,857		
4	,180	,032			,143	1,000		
Total		,226	107,077	,011a	1,000	1,000		

In Figure 4, in the first dimension (42.8%), it can be seen that eighth-semester students favor characteristics such as expertise, the ability to explain concepts well, and high standards, in contrast to tenth-semester students, who prefer attributes such as being inspiring, kind, innovative, and flexible in their instructors; in the second dimension (26.3%), seventh-semester students highlight aspects such as being empathetic and disciplined, in contrast to the ninth-semester group, which prioritizes their teachers' mastery of subject matter, intelligence, and commitment. Finally, on the central axis, the group of sixth-semester students is located, and they emphasize traits such as respect, patience, and a spirit of inquiry.

This does not indicate an evolution in the perception of the RS of what constitutes a good teacher according to the level of education, but rather that each specific group prioritizes certain characteristics over others. Therefore, it can be inferred—or at least suspected—that a good teacher should adapt their pedagogical relationship with students based on the experience the students have gained over time and throughout their time at the university.

Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

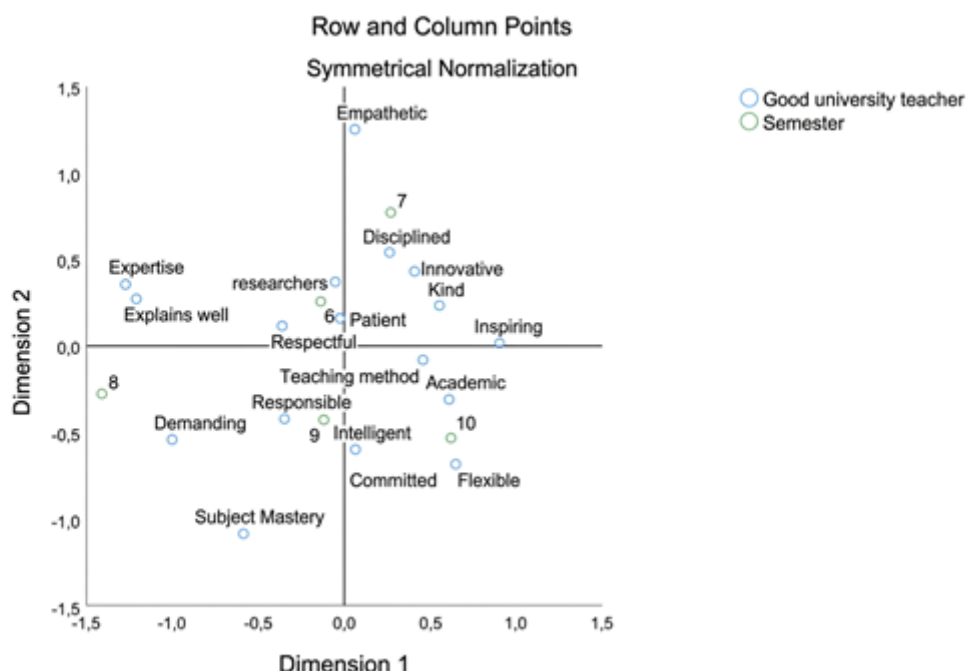


FIGURE 6. Bispatial scatter plot showing the relationship between the HSR of a good university professor and the semester of study.

Finally, from the perspective of TSR, particularly the structural approach, we sought to verify the representational core through the voices of the faculty members who were identified as exemplary university professors—based on their nomination by students—by analyzing the frequency of their statements and the degree of importance assigned to them (First, Second, Third). Thus, when conducting the interviews with the teachers, it is possible to highlight the integration of the different dimensions mentioned by the students (Table 4). They are intrinsically linked, and a level of cohesion is achieved between the students' SR and the teachers' perceptions and experiences. In this regard, faculty place greater value on the didactic dimension, which is considered the most predominant and prominent category in the faculty interviews. There is a notion that a good university teacher is one who can adapt their teaching methods, approaches, and resources to their students, integrating the context and demands inherent in higher education and professional training. Likewise, the integration of active teaching strategies and the idea of hierarchical decentralization of the teacher are matters of vital importance for the construct of a good teacher.



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

TABLE 4. *Categorization of interviews with good teachers in the program*

Category	Theoretical Framework	Testimonials
Instructional/didactic dimension	These are all the practices that teachers employ in order to effectively adapt specific content for instructional purposes. Furthermore, they encompass all references to the various components of the instructional system that form part of the teaching-learning process (Álvarez de Zayas & González Agudelo, 2002)	Being flexible in my teaching methods, being innovative, and constantly adapting the way I convey knowledge (Ent 2:1) Since I've started approaching my classes with the mindset of always wanting to help, I've found some really cool, dynamic, and inclusive ways to structure my lessons (Ent 1:2) I'd say I'm known for incorporating some slightly more active teaching methods (Ent 4:2)
Pedagogical Dimension	Pedagogy, insofar as it refers to the concept of education, encompasses everything that humanizes the teaching and learning process; moreover, it encompasses all the factors that shape classroom interaction.	The concept of reciprocity is of the utmost importance, since learning is always a two-way process; I am not the one who possesses the knowledge—I am simply a guide who draws on the context in which it unfolds (Ent 5:4) Closeness, tact, and listening are fundamental. I believe that is something students see in me, because they feel confident that they can ask me whatever they need, and being approachable makes things much easier to understand (Ent 2:15)
Human Dimension	This is what defines the teacher as a human being. It refers to the teacher's awareness of the student's uniqueness, otherness, and the ability to understand them through the values and attitudes the teacher embodies. It enables the teacher to bring harmony to daily life and to understand both their own and their students' lived experiences in a humane way. It also encompasses all the socio-emotional aspects necessary for teaching at the university level.	I believe a good university professor is someone who cares about how they can contribute to students' lives—not only in their profession but also in their personal lives. What do students see in me that enables them to make the world their own, based on the values and attitudes I embody in the classroom? (Ent 1:14) A good teacher recognizes their students' skills and full potential, and also provides a space that fosters closeness, active listening, and living in harmony with others. Furthermore, they are an empathetic person who understands everything that is happening with the other person and within the context in which it unfolds (Ent 5:20)



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

Scientific Dimension

These are all the skills and abilities that enable a university professor to connect their knowledge, their educational work, and their field of practice with the demands of society, facilitating their own transformation and that of their students through research and the construction of scientific knowledge.

A good teacher must be at the forefront of knowledge; that is, they must constantly stay up to date, and to do so, they need research skills. Research is a priority because one must provide students with up-to-date tools and knowledge so that their education is successful (Ent 3:5) Research is the foundation of knowledge; it is the solidity of knowledge, and that is what I convey to students (Ent 5:5) I have the opportunity to apply what I research in my life as an athlete, in my life as a trainer of physical educators and coaches (Ent 1:6)

The pedagogical dimension emerges as a space for human mediation where reciprocity and closeness supplant the traditional vertical hierarchy of knowledge, recognizing the teacher as a guide who draws strength from the dialogical context. The human dimension delves into otherness, where accounts of empathy, active listening, and living in harmony with others reveal an ethic of care that humanizes the educational process beyond the academic realm. Finally, the scientific dimension links continuous updating with research as an epistemological foundation, establishing a bridge between rigorous knowledge and its contextualized application. Together, these categories portray the university professor as a holistic being who fuses the technical, the relational, the ethical, and the epistemological into a coherent and humanizing praxis. However, by delving deeper into each of these categories, it is possible to establish subcategories that enrich our understanding of what it means to be a good university professor (Table 5).



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

TABLE 5. Relationships between categories and subcategories of a good university professor, as described by faculty members.

Category	Subcategory	Testimonials
Teaching Dimension	Planning	The lessons follow a logical order, as there is a sequence, and this should be reflected in the lesson preparation (Ent 3:14)
	Use of Technology	The use of these technological tools makes the subject a little more interesting; they can also be integrated into assessment, making it more engaging and practical (Ent 2:16)
	Teaching style	Good teachers are those who don't just lecture, but share ideas (Ent 4:12)
Educational Dimension	Understand the context	It's about learning to understand the context—specifically, your target audience—because if you know the people you're working with, you know what they like and what their needs are (Ent 1:16)
	Two-way	Being approachable, making sure they really understand what I'm saying. And listening to the students—I always learn from them (Ent 2:18)
Human Dimension	Vocation	I can't see myself in any other field, I can't see myself in any other situation; I'm happy being a university professor (Ent 1:12)
Scientific Dimension	Graduate education	I believe that one of the most important things is graduate education; that is what allows you to gain a much deeper understanding that can only be achieved through research and engagement with those processes during your studies (Ent 5:16)
	Research	You have to do research; you're always researching. That's what allows me, as a teacher, to master the subject matter and try to meet the demands of the professional profile I'm helping to shape (Ent 4:13)

In summary, the testimonies of the interviewed faculty members help corroborate and further explore the findings obtained through Natural Semantic Networks, revealing a convergence—though not necessarily in the same order—between the students' RS and the meanings and interpretations that faculty members ascribe to the construct of a good teacher in



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

the context of higher education. Through this analysis, we come to understand that the ideal of a good university teacher is not limited solely to didactic and technical skills, but is grounded in a balanced integration of the human, scientific, and pedagogical dimensions. These results indicate that teaching in today's higher education requires a multifaceted professional identity—one capable of linking research to the classroom and inspiring processes of social transformation in students. Seeking to holistically integrate the core missions of teaching, research, community engagement, and well-being.

Discussion

The physical education students understanding of the construct of a good university professor reveals a perspective that is not limited solely to the instruction of theoretical and scientific content that underpins a discipline. The baseline study describes the university professor as a mediator in the professional training process, responsible for guiding processes of independent and critical thinking. This vision aligns directly with the approaches of Clavijo Cáceres (2018), who emphasizes the urgency of transforming the traditional lecture-style class into a space for active participation in knowledge construction. Teaching excellence lies, therefore, in the ability to facilitate a shared learning space that integrates diverse competencies responsive to the challenges of a globalized and constantly changing society.

When delving into the personal qualities that define a good university teacher, the findings align with Alonso Martín's (2019) research in the Spanish context. In both perspectives, students place a high value on respect, clarity in explanations, and empathy. There is a clear demand for a humanized pedagogy where the ability to listen is as relevant as mastery of the subject matter. This convergence suggests that, in education faculties, the identity of the university professor is built on an affective-communicative foundation that allows students to feel recognized as whole individuals, beyond their strictly numerical academic performance.

A contrasting perspective emerges when comparing these results with the Brazilian study by Souza Domingues et al. (2025). In that context, there is a very strong emphasis on the use of technology and the direct link between theory and practice. While Colombian students also value the application of knowledge, their social representation seems to be more firmly



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

rooted in the teacher's transformative role. The universality of certain traits of excellence is demonstrated by the cross-cultural study by Alshare et al. (2024). Despite geographical differences, the encouragement of intellectual effort and the projection of integrity and professionalism are consistent in the perception of an effective teacher.

The complexity of the teaching profession is accurately summarized by van Dijk et al. (2020), who propose frameworks of expertise based on diverse tasks. Being a good teacher, therefore, involves mastering teaching, research, and the management of student well-being. This holistic view is shared by the students in this study, who see their teacher as a multifaceted guide. In line with Sardareh et al. (2023), interpersonal communication emerges as the cross-cutting competency that enables all these tasks to be successfully carried out, serving as the linchpin that articulates the transfer of clinical and pedagogical skills in the university classroom.

Finally, it is imperative to frame the discussion around research and the scientific dimension of the university professor's role. The supposed integration of teaching and research fades away in daily practice, becoming a juxtaposition of tasks or, in the worst-case scenario, a choice that undermines both functions. As Bolívar (2025) describes it, "faculty members with strong publications, particularly papers in highly ranked journals, will enjoy greater recognition and professional prestige than those who have dedicated time and effort to high-quality teaching" (p. 8). In this model, a faculty member's ability to perform their work stems directly from their disciplinary expertise and research output. The very structure of the academic career has reinforced the faculty member's capacity as a researcher over their role as an educator focused on student learning. This prioritization is evident in hiring, promotion, and tenure criteria, which have traditionally placed disproportionate weight on publications and securing research funding. This is closely aligned with the finding that, for both students and faculty, research has become an imperative for teaching excellence.

Conclusions

The research leads to the conclusion that the social representation of the "good teacher" among Physical Education students is configured as a multidimensional figure. In this



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

construct, disciplinary competence and technical mastery converge with a profound demand for human warmth and ethical sensitivity.

The professor is perceived as a mediator capable of going beyond rote instruction to foster independent thinking, serving as a model of integrity who inspires social transformation. It can also be stated that the HSR (hegemonic social representation) of the ideal university instructor, in the case of undergraduate physical education students at a private university in the city of Medellín, is similar regardless of the students' gender and age; however, depending on the semester or academic level, students prioritize certain characteristics and qualities over others. What is a common element, however, is that the descriptions always reflect a combination of traits and attributes that a teacher must possess; that is, a good university professor is never described from a single perspective. In fact, the findings confirm that a teacher identified as “good” by students possesses a comprehensive profile that encompasses various dimensions, including the human, didactic, pedagogical, and/or scientific aspects.

In terms of limitations, the study is confined to a specific institutional and geographic context, which limits the ability to generalize the results to all physical education bachelor's degree programs at the local, national, or international levels. Furthermore, as this is an analysis based on social representations, the findings capture a static view of a phenomenon that is inherently dynamic and sensitive to changes in educational policies and global trends in higher education; this is also a result of the specific nature of a quantitative cross-sectional design, which provides a snapshot of a specific moment and place; Another methodological limitation is that the study examines only positive aspects, derived from the use of a single data collection technique—social representations—and, furthermore, only professors selected as exemplary were interviewed, which offers only one perspective on the reality of the educational process.

For future research, we suggest conducting longitudinal studies to observe how these perceptions evolve as students progress in their professional practice and confront the realities of the workplace. It is also worthwhile to explore the impact that the integration of digital tools and artificial intelligence has on the nature of the teacher-student relationship. Finally, it is recommended to explore these representations from the perspective of practicing teachers,



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

fostering a comparative dialogue that enriches our understanding of academic excellence in the 21st century.

References

Abric, J. C. (2001). *Prácticas sociales y representaciones*. Ediciones Coyoacán.

Alonso Martín, P. (2019). El perfil del buen docente universitario desde una perspectiva del alumnado. *SECCIÓN: ARTÍCULOS*, 1-15.

<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=7305323>

Alshare, K. A., Al-Sholi, H. Y., Shadid, O. R., & Moqbel, M. (2024). College professor perceptions of effective professor characteristics: A cross-cultural study. *Journal of Education for Business*, 99(4), 237-252.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08832323.2024.2306245>

Álvarez de Zayas, C. M. (1996). *Hacia una escuela de Excelencia*. alsi coleccion.

Álvarez de Zayas, C. M., & González Agudelo, E. M. (2002). *Lecciones de didáctica general*. Editorial Magisterio.

Ariza Leon, E. (2006). La misión del profesor universitario en siglo XXI. *Revista Docencia Universitaria*, 7, 1–11.

<https://revistas.uis.edu.co/index.php/revistadocencia/article/view/770>

Biggs, J. (2006). *Calidad del aprendizaje universitario* (2nd ed.). NARCEA.

Bolívar, A. (2004). El conocimiento de la enseñanza: explicar, comprender y transformar. *Mimesis-Ciencias Humanas*, 25(1), 17–42.

https://secure.unisagrado.edu.br/static/biblioteca/mimesis/mimesis_v25_n2_2004_art_01.pdf

Bourdieu, P. (2012). *La distinción*. TAURUS.

Bustamante Castaño, S. A., González Palacio, E. V., Chaverra Fernández, B. E., & López-Pastor, V. M. (2025). Representaciones sociales sobre evaluación en formación inicial del profesorado en Educación Física. *Retos*, 65, 673–685.

<https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v65.110341>



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

- Casero-Martínez, A. (2008). Propuesta de un cuestionario de evaluación de la calidad docente universitaria consensuado entre alumnos y profesores. *Revista de Investigación Educativa*, 26(1), 199-216. <https://revistas.um.es/rie/article/view/94091>
- Clavijo Cáceres, D. (2018). Competencias del docente universitario en el siglo XXI. *Revista ESPACIOS*, 39(20), 22.
- Creswell (2009). *Qualitative. Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. SAGE
- Cruz-Delgado, D., Torres-Ramírez, E., López-Hernández, J., & Lira-Urbe, J. E. (2021). La percepción del buen profesor en universitarios: el caso de una universidad politécnica de México. *RIDE Revista Iberoamericana para la Investigación y el Desarrollo Educativo*, 12(22). <https://doi.org/10.23913/ride.v11i22.934>
- Czerniewicz, L., & Cronin, C. (Eds.). (2023). *Higher Education for Good: Teaching and Learning Futures*. Open Book Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0363>
- Doise, W. (1990). Les représentations sociales. En R. Ghiglione, C. Bonnet y J. F. Richard (Eds.), *Traité de psychologie cognitive* (Tome 3, pp. 111-174). Dunod.
- Finkelstein, C. (2022). La contribución de la investigación al campo disciplinar de la Didáctica Universitaria: aportes para su consolidación. *Revista Argentina de Educación Superior*, 14(25), 48–60. <https://revistas.untref.edu.ar/index.php/raes/article/view/1524>
- Gadamer, H.G. (1994). *Verdad y método*. Ediciones Sigueme.
- Gaviria Cortés, D. F., Chaverra Fernández, B. E., Ospina Ospina, E. V., Uribe Pareja, I. D., Muriel Echavarría, J. M., Moreno López, J. D., Cardona Mejía, L. M., & Bustamante Castaño, S. A. (2023). *Cómo son y qué hacen los buenos profesores. Sus voces y las de sus estudiantes*. Fondo Editorial FCSH. <https://doi.org/10.17533/978-628-7592-65-0>
- González Palacio, E. V. (2019). *Representaciones sociales sobre la formación inicial y ser maestro en estudiantes de educación física del departamento de Antioquia* [Doctorado]. Universidad de Antioquia.
- González Palacio, E. V., & Montoya Grisales, N. E. (2024). Ámbito metodológico. De las múltiples posibilidades de la investigación. *VIREF Revista De Educación Física*, 13(2), 60–77.
- Grisales, H. (2001). *Muestreo en estudios descriptivos*. Universidad de Antioquia.



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1998). *The landscape qualitative research*. SAGE Publications.

Jodelet, D. (2001). *Les représentations sociales* [Las representaciones sociales]. Presses Universitaires de France.

Merchán, F. M., & Díaz, A. H. (2015). La formación pedagógica del docente universitario: un reto del mundo contemporáneo. *Revista Cubana de Educación Superior*, (3), 140–154.

Morin, E. (1999). *Los siete saberes necesarios para la educación del futuro*. UNESCO.

Moscovici, S. (1979). *El psicoanálisis, su imagen y su público*. Huemul. (Obra original publicada en 1961).

Newman, J. H. (1959). *The Idea of a University*. Image Books

Nushi, M., Momeni, A., & Roshanbin, M. (2022). Characteristics of an Effective University Professor From Students' Perspective: Are the Qualities Changing? *Frontiers in Education*, 7, 842640. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2022.842640>

Perez Restrepo, T., Montoya Grisales, N. E., & González Palacio, E. V. (2025). The Meaning of Pedagogical and Research Practice in Physical Education and Sports Degree Programs in the City of Medellín. *Physical Education Theory and Methodology*, 25(5), 1153–1162. <https://doi.org/10.17309/tmfv.2025.5.15>

Pérez Restrepo, T., Montoya Grisales, N.E., González Palacio, E.V. (2026). La implementación de la teoría de las representaciones sociales en el campo de la Educación Física. *Sportis Sci J*, 12 (1), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.17979/sportis.2026.12.1.12528>

Polit, D., & Hungler, B. (2005). *Investigación científica en ciencias de la salud* (6 ed.). México: Mc Graw-Hill.

Sandoval Casilimas, C. A. (1996). *Investigación cualitativa*. ICFES.

Sardareh, M., Gholizadeh, M., & Bahraini, R. (2023). The Characteristics of a Good Professor from the Perspective of Students of the Faculty of Medical Information and Management of Tabriz University at Medical Sciences in 2021. *Horizon of Medical Education Development*, 14(4), 31-42. DOI: [10.22038/hmed.2023.69278.1245](https://doi.org/10.22038/hmed.2023.69278.1245)



Original article. Social representations of the ideal university professor among undergraduate Physical Education students.

Vol. 12, n.º 5; p. 1-35, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/q0trft17>

Souza Domingues, M. J. C., Beckhausert, S. P. R., Ganga-Contreras, F., & Alarcón-Henríquez, N. (2025). ¿Qué distingue a un buen profesor universitario? Mirada de estudiantes de una universidad brasileña. *Revista Colombiana de Educación*, (95). <https://doi.org/10.17227/rce.num95-18911>

Stake, R. E. (1998). *Investigación con estudio de casos*. Ediciones Morata.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (2002). *Bases de la investigación cualitativa: técnicas y procedimientos para desarrollar la teoría fundada*. Editorial Universidad de Antioquía, Facultad de Enfermería de la Universidad de Antioquía.

Taylor, S., & Bodgan, R. (1984). *Introducción a métodos cualitativos de investigación*. John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Torra Bitlloch, I., & Esteban Moreno, R. M. (2012). Presentación del monográfico: Competencias docentes en la Educación Superior. *REDU. Revista de Docencia Universitaria*, 10(2), 17. <https://doi.org/10.4995/redu.2012.6095>

Van Dijk, E. E., van Tartwijk, J., van der Schaaf, M. F., & Kluijtmans, M. (2020). What makes an expert university teacher? A systematic review and synthesis of frameworks for teacher expertise in higher education. *Educational Research Review*, 31, 100365. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2020.100365>