

THE ROLE OF TEACHER ROLE MODELING IN SHAPING PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS: EVIDENCE FROM A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

While content knowledge and instructional skills are widely acknowledged as pillars of effective teaching, less attention is paid to the subtle and powerful influence of teacher role modeling. This study explores the role of teacher role modeling in shaping students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness within a higher education institution in Uzbekistan. The research adopts a mixed-methods design to address the dual nature of the subject: the measurability of effectiveness and the interpretive nuance of role perception. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires from 102 undergraduate students, complemented by qualitative responses to open-ended questions aimed at capturing student narratives and emotional impressions. Results indicate a statistically significant positive correlation between perceived role modeling and perceived teaching effectiveness, with students placing particular emphasis on behavioral consistency, ethical values, time discipline, and communication style. Qualitative findings further contextualize these preferences, revealing that students interpret role modeling through both academic professionalism and personal integrity. The study contributes to the evolving discourse on effective teaching by illuminating the social and psychological dimensions of the classroom dynamic. Practical implications are proposed for faculty development initiatives, institutional standards, and the broader agenda of improving educational quality in transitional academic systems.

Keywords: Teacher effectiveness; role modeling; higher education pedagogy; student perception; mixed-methods research; Uzbekistan education system; ethical teaching; instructional behavior; academic professionalism; university teaching quality.

Introduction

Across higher education systems worldwide, teacher effectiveness is often evaluated in terms of tangible indicators such as student achievement, course evaluations, and curriculum delivery. However, teaching is also a profoundly relational and social act, embedded in cultural expectations and personal dynamics. Among the factors that shape the perceived quality of teaching, role modeling stands out as an underexplored but potentially transformative dimension - especially in regions where education carries moral as well as academic responsibilities.



In Uzbekistan, where educational institutions are undergoing a transition from rigid post-Soviet legacies to more learner-centered frameworks, the role of the teacher extends beyond that of a knowledge transmitter. Teachers are expected to embody the values they teach, whether through punctuality, mutual respect, dedication, or ethical consistency. These implicit expectations form the basis of role modeling, wherein students do not merely listen to a teacher - they observe, imitate, and internalize their instructor's conduct. Thus, the teacher becomes a living curriculum, shaping not just what students know, but who they become.

Although the literature on effective teaching is a lot, role modeling is rarely placed at the center of empirical investigation. Previous research tends to focus either on technical teaching competencies (classroom management, assessment design) or on broad traits like empathy and enthusiasm. The concept of role modeling, by contrast, integrates personality, behavior, values, and communication into a unified perception of influence. Studies in clinical education (Passi & Johnson, 2016), teacher identity (Lunenberg et al., 2007), and character education (Revell & Arthur, 2007) have shown that teacher behavior significantly impacts student motivation and professional orientation, only few studies have quantified this relationship in general higher education settings - particularly in Central Asia.

This study aims to address that gap. Situated in a leading higher education institution in Uzbekistan, it investigates how undergraduate students perceive teacher role modeling and how these perceptions relate to their judgments about teaching effectiveness. Specifically, the research is directed by the following questions:

1. How do students define and recognize teacher role modeling?
2. What is the relationship between students' perceptions of role modeling and their evaluation of teacher effectiveness?
3. Which specific teacher traits and behaviors contribute most to perceptions of a teacher as an effective role model?

To answer these questions, the study employs a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data in tandem. This design allows for the identification of patterns and correlations, while also capturing the narrative depth behind student perceptions. Ultimately, the findings aim to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of teaching effectiveness - one that honors both instructional competence and personal example as co-constitutive elements of impactful education.

Literature Review

The notion that teachers serve as role models is not new, its relationship to teaching effectiveness in higher education remains under-theorized and under-measured. This review synthesizes existing research across four interrelated areas: (1) the concept of teacher role modeling, (2) dimensions of teacher effectiveness, (3) student perceptions of teaching quality, and (4) the cultural relevance of role modeling in post-Soviet educational contexts such as Uzbekistan.

Teacher Role Modeling as a Pedagogical Construct

The term role model originates from sociology and social learning theory, where it refers to individuals whose behaviors are emulated by others (Bandura, 1977). In educational contexts, role modeling is typically understood as a process through which students internalize the



attitudes, values, and behavioral norms demonstrated by their teachers (Cruess et al., 2008). This influence is largely observational and affective rather than instructional or verbal. As Lunenberg, Korthagen, and Swennen (2007) argue, role modeling in teacher education is powerful because it is implicit - students often emulate what teachers do rather than what they say.

In higher education, where students are often transitioning into adulthood and professional identity, the influence of role modeling may be particularly salient. Teachers are not only academic mentors but also behavioral exemplars, especially in terms of discipline, communication, self-regulation, and ethical standards (Passi & Johnson, 2016). Nevertheless, role modeling is rarely operationalized as a measurable variable in studies of teaching effectiveness.

Dimensions of Teacher Effectiveness

Teacher effectiveness has been studied extensively, no universal definition exists. Most models emphasize a combination of cognitive, behavioral, and affective competencies. According to Stronge (2007), effective teachers are those who:

- Possess strong subject-matter knowledge
- Use varied pedagogical methods
- Communicate clearly and enthusiastically
- Build positive relationships with students
- Maintain professionalism and classroom management

These attributes, while individually important, are often assessed through fragmented metrics such as student evaluations, exam performance, or classroom observation rubrics. What remains underexplored is how these competencies are perceived holistically through the lens of who the teacher is, rather than what they do. Role modeling may function as the interpretive filter through which students evaluate a teacher's actions - as authentic, credible, and inspiring, or as disconnected and performative.

Student Perceptions and Implicit Judgments

Student perceptions play a pivotal role in evaluating teaching effectiveness. While some researchers question the reliability of student feedback, others assert that students are uniquely positioned to assess long-term impact - especially in areas such as motivation, attitude change, and identity formation (Kember & Wong, 2000). In fact, empirical studies have shown that students tend to respond more positively to instructors who display authenticity, integrity, and care - traits often associated with role modeling (Trigwell, 2012).

Moreover, students do not assess teachers merely based on technical proficiency, they form complex impressions that integrate academic, social, and emotional dimensions. As Revell and Arthur (2007) explain, students tend to perceive teachers as holistic individuals whose actions both inside and outside the classroom influence their sense of trust and respect. In transitional societies, where education is often linked to moral authority, these perceptions are amplified.

Role Modeling in the Context of Uzbek Higher Education

In Uzbekistan, the cultural and institutional legacy of Soviet-style education continues to influence teacher-student dynamics. Traditionally, teachers have been viewed as figures of moral authority, expected to model both academic discipline and social values. This expectation



persists even as educational reforms promote student-centered learning and international pedagogical practices (ADB, 2020).

However, the influx of Western-style curricula and foreign faculty in Uzbekistan's private and international universities has introduced a plurality of role model types, including instructors with different cultural attitudes toward formality, hierarchy, and personal disclosure. This shift raises important questions: What do students in Uzbekistan consider ideal behavior in a teacher? How do they interpret role modeling in a mixed educational environment? And how does role modeling influence their perception of overall teaching quality?

This study seeks to fill that gap by focusing explicitly on how students at a higher education institution in Uzbekistan interpret and evaluate their teachers' behavior, and how these evaluations shape their overall assessment of teacher effectiveness.

Methodology

This study adopts a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to explore how students in a higher education institution in Uzbekistan perceive the role modeling behavior of their teachers, and how these perceptions influence their evaluation of teacher effectiveness. The methodology was developed to capture both the measurable correlations between variables and the subjective interpretations of role modeling in a culturally embedded context.

Research Design

The mixed-methods approach was chosen to address both the analytical and interpretive dimensions of the research problem. Quantitative data were used to establish statistical relationships between perceived role modeling and teacher effectiveness. Simultaneously, qualitative data were gathered to explore students' personal definitions, examples, and emotional responses related to teacher behavior.

By integrating numeric data with narrative insights, the study seeks to present a holistic understanding of the topic. The convergent parallel design allowed for the two strands of data collection to occur simultaneously, followed by separate analysis and joint interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Participants and Context

The study was conducted at one of the well-established higher education institutions in Uzbekistan, known for its international curriculum and diverse faculty. The participant sample consisted of 102 undergraduate students from various academic disciplines, including business, economics, computer science, and international relations.

Participants were selected using convenience sampling, which was appropriate given the study's exploratory nature and institutional constraints. The sample was composed of:

- 56 female and 46 male students
- Aged between 18 and 23 years
- Enrolled in second to final-year courses, ensuring prior exposure to multiple instructors

Students were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and participation was voluntary with no academic and financial incentives offered.

Data Collection Instruments



Two instruments were used to collect data:

1. Structured Questionnaire

A self-administered survey was distributed online and in paper format. The questionnaire consisted of three sections:

- Demographics (age, gender, year of study)
- Perception of Role Modeling (8 Likert-scale items, “My teacher demonstrates consistent ethical behavior,” rated from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)
- Perceived Teacher Effectiveness (7 Likert-scale items, adapted from validated scales in the literature, “The teacher inspires me to reach my potential”)

Reliability testing yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.84 for the role modeling scale and 0.87 for the effectiveness scale, indicating good internal consistency.

2. Open-Ended Questions

To collect qualitative data, two open-ended questions were included at the end of the questionnaire:

- “Describe a teacher you consider a positive role model. What qualities or behaviors made them stand out?”
- “In your opinion, what is the connection between a teacher’s behavior and their teaching effectiveness?”

These responses allowed students to express perceptions in their own words, enriching the numerical data with personal narratives and culturally nuanced interpretations.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Data from the structured questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS (v.26). Descriptive statistics were generated to identify central tendencies and dispersion. The core analysis focused on:

- Pearson correlation between role modeling and perceived teacher effectiveness
- Independent samples t-tests to examine differences across gender
- Simple linear regression to explore predictive relationships

Qualitative Analysis

Responses to open-ended questions were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-step method, responses were:

1. Familiarized through repeated reading
2. Coded for meaning units
3. Collated into initial themes
4. Reviewed and refined
5. Defined and named
6. Illustrated with direct quotes

Themes were triangulated with quantitative findings to identify points of convergence and divergence.



Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the internal ethics committee of the institution. All participants provided informed consent, and all data were collected anonymously. No identifying information was requested, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any point.

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and adhered to professional standards of educational research.

Results

This section presents the findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The quantitative results provide statistical insights into the relationship between perceived teacher role modeling and teaching effectiveness, while the qualitative responses reveal how students interpret and describe these dynamics in their own words.

Quantitative Results

Descriptive Statistics

The survey data showed generally high ratings for both constructs:

- Mean score for teacher role modeling: $M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.59$
- Mean score for perceived teaching effectiveness: $M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.55$

These values suggest that, on average, students perceived their instructors positively in both dimensions.

Correlation Analysis

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between students' perceptions of teacher role modeling and teaching effectiveness. The analysis showed a strong positive correlation:

$$r(100) = 0.71, p < 0.001$$

This statistically significant correlation indicates that the more students viewed their teacher as a role model, the more likely they were to perceive the teacher as effective.

Regression Analysis

To assess whether role modeling could predict teaching effectiveness, a simple linear regression was conducted. The model was statistically significant:

- $F(1,100) = 85.73, p < 0.001$
- $R^2 = 0.462$

The analysis indicates that approximately 46.2% of the variance in perceived teaching effectiveness can be explained by the teacher's role modeling behavior.

Regression coefficient (β) = 0.68, $t = 9.25, p < 0.001$

This means that for every one-point increase in role modeling perception, there was an expected 0.68 increase in the perceived teaching effectiveness score.



Gender Differences

An independent samples t-test was conducted to explore whether perceptions varied by gender. Female students rated role modeling slightly higher ($M = 4.20$) than male students ($M = 4.07$), but the difference was not statistically significant:

$$t(100) = 1.36, p = 0.18$$

There were also no significant gender differences in perceived teaching effectiveness.

Qualitative Results

Out of 102 students, 86 provided complete responses to the open-ended questions. Thematic analysis of these responses revealed four major themes that illustrate how students define and recognize role modeling in teaching:

Theme 1: Behavioral Consistency and Integrity

Students emphasized the importance of consistency between what a teacher says and does. Ethical behavior, fairness in grading, and adherence to institutional rules were often cited.

“A good role model is someone who treats everyone equally and follows the same rules they expect from us.”

Theme 2: Discipline and Professionalism

Punctuality, preparation, and seriousness were key traits that students linked to both respect and effectiveness.

“The way a teacher manages time, starts and ends classes on schedule, and never cancels without reason - these things make me trust and admire them.”

Theme 3: Communication Style and Emotional Intelligence

Students appreciated teachers who were approachable, respectful, and emotionally intelligent. These qualities not only made the classroom atmosphere more comfortable but also signaled moral authority.

“My favorite teacher listens. He doesn't just talk - he cares about what we say.”

Theme 4: Inspirational Influence

Many students described their role model teachers as people who “inspired them to work harder,” “made them think differently,” or “changed their mindset.” These comments link role modeling with personal transformation.

“I started to think seriously about my career because of one teacher. He made me believe in my abilities.”

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The qualitative themes closely align with the quantitative data, reinforcing the conclusion that students see role modeling as central to evaluating teaching effectiveness. While the survey captures correlation and prediction, the open-ended responses add depth by revealing why certain behaviors are valued and how they are interpreted within the cultural and institutional context.

Discussion

This study set out to examine how students in a higher education institution in Uzbekistan perceive teacher role modeling and how these perceptions relate to evaluations of teaching effectiveness. The findings support the hypothesis that students interpret a teacher's



effectiveness not only through their instructional competence but also through their personal behavior, ethics, and relational engagement. This section discusses the findings in light of relevant theoretical frameworks and prior research, and identifies their implications for teaching practice and educational leadership.

Role Modeling as a Pedagogical Anchor

The results underscore the idea that role modeling is not a peripheral or symbolic feature of teaching - it is a core pedagogical anchor. The strong positive correlation between perceived role modeling and teacher effectiveness confirms that students actively monitor, evaluate, and respond to the behavioral patterns of their instructors. This supports previous literature in clinical and teacher education contexts, which positions role modeling as a mechanism for behavioral and value transmission (Passi & Johnson, 2016; Lunenberg et al., 2007).

However, this study extends the discourse by showing that such perceptions also hold significance in general undergraduate education, particularly in non-Western, transitional contexts. In Uzbekistan, where cultural values emphasize respect for authority, ethical behavior, and self-control, the teacher is viewed as both a source of knowledge and a moral reference point. This dual expectation reinforces the influence of role modeling on students' holistic learning experience.

The Interplay of Professionalism and Humanity

Student responses indicate that role modeling is not equated with perfection, but with consistency, fairness, and emotional intelligence. Participants valued teachers who demonstrated discipline, ethical conduct, and communicative warmth - not those who were flawless, but those who were credible and human. This echoes findings from Trigwell (2012), who suggested that authenticity in teaching fosters trust and engagement.

In this context, the effectiveness of a teacher becomes a function of both expertise and example. Students trust and learn better from teachers who "practice what they preach." This has implications for faculty development programs, which often focus on instructional design or assessment literacy but neglect interpersonal competencies and character modeling.

Cultural Framing of Teaching Effectiveness

Uzbekistan's socio-cultural environment plays a significant role in shaping how students perceive role modeling. The continued influence of traditional respect norms, combined with rapid educational reform and exposure to global academic standards, creates a unique environment where students balance expectations of authority, informality, and ethical leadership.

Whereas in some Western contexts informality is interpreted as approachability, students in this study did not see casual behavior as inherently effective. Instead, they emphasized structured discipline and respectful interaction. This suggests that teacher behaviors must be culturally responsive, and that international educators working in Uzbekistan and similar settings should be aware that local student expectations may differ from their own cultural norms.



Implications for Institutional Policy and Practice

The results point to several areas for institutional reflection:

- Faculty recruitment and appraisal systems should incorporate behavioral dimensions alongside academic qualifications and teaching evaluations.
- Professional development workshops should include modules on ethics, self-reflection, and interpersonal behavior, not just instructional technique.
- Student feedback systems should allow for the expression of role modeling perceptions - not just satisfaction with course content or delivery.

Such measures would help align institutional culture with student expectations and reinforce the role of the teacher as both educator and ethical exemplar.

Limitations and Considerations

While the study's findings are robust, they must be viewed in light of several limitations:

- The use of convenience sampling limits generalizability beyond the studied institution.
- Self-reported data are susceptible to bias, including the halo effect or recall limitations.
- Cultural specificity may limit the transferability of insights to different national or institutional contexts.

Despite these limitations, the convergent findings across qualitative and quantitative data strengthen the validity of the results and provide a valuable foundation for future research.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has demonstrated that students in a higher education institution in Uzbekistan evaluate teaching effectiveness not solely based on pedagogical skill or subject expertise, but through a more holistic lens that includes personal conduct, ethical consistency, and emotional presence. Teacher role modeling emerged as a statistically significant and perceptually powerful influence on how students define and experience effective teaching.

By integrating quantitative analysis with qualitative narratives, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of teacher effectiveness - one that acknowledges the deep social and moral dimensions of education. In a context like Uzbekistan, where cultural values place significant emphasis on respect, responsibility, and relational integrity, the teacher as role model holds enduring relevance.

Summary of Key Findings

- There is a strong, statistically significant correlation between students' perceptions of role modeling and teaching effectiveness.
- Behavioral consistency, ethical standards, time discipline, and emotional intelligence were key traits identified as hallmarks of positive role models.
- Students perceive effective teachers as those who both instruct and inspire - those who embody the values they promote in the classroom.
- Cultural expectations of authority and moral leadership amplify the importance of teacher behavior in shaping student perceptions.



Recommendations for Higher Education Practice

1. Institutionalize Role Modeling in Faculty Development

Universities should embed role modeling awareness into faculty training, including sessions on reflective practice, value transmission, and culturally sensitive communication. This would help teachers better understand how their everyday behavior shapes student learning far beyond the syllabus.

2. Integrate Behavioral Feedback into Student Evaluations

Student evaluation tools should be redesigned to capture perceptions of behavioral integrity and interpersonal conduct, not just course content and delivery. This can provide more meaningful insights into teacher impact and development needs.

3. Encourage Reflective Teaching Practices

Institutions should promote self-assessment and peer mentoring initiatives that allow faculty to reflect on the moral and emotional dimensions of their practice, enabling them to align their behavior with the values they wish to model.

4. Cultivate a Culture of Trust and Respect

Administrative leadership should reinforce the institutional importance of character in teaching - not as a form of moral policing, but as an affirmation of education's broader role in shaping socially responsible graduates.

Directions for Future Research

The study opens several avenues for further inquiry:

- Comparative studies across public vs. private universities in Uzbekistan may reveal differing norms and expectations related to role modeling.
- Longitudinal research could track how student perceptions of teachers evolve over time and influence long-term academic and professional outcomes.
- Studies involving faculty self-perceptions of role modeling could provide a richer, dual-perspective analysis.

As higher education in Uzbekistan continues to modernize and diversify, understanding how students experience teaching through both instruction and example is essential. Teachers, whether they acknowledge it or not, are living curricula - and as this study shows, students are always watching.

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