

Discussion-Based Teaching: Experiences of University Teachers and Students

Romana Imran

Lecturer, Institute of Education
Lahore College for Women University
romanarafi@yahoo.com

Muhammad Saeed

Associate Professor & Chairman, Department of Educational Research & Evaluation
Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.
drsaeed1961@hotmail.com saeed.ier@pu.edu.pk

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to explore the experiences of university teachers and students about using discussion as a teaching method. A phenomenological approach was used in this study. Two types of instruments were used to collect information: Interviews and focus group discussions (FGD). Two FGDs of the Bachelors (4-years) students of Institute of Education were conducted in the two public universities. Sample for the interview was five university teachers. The sample of the teachers was drawn purposively in the sense that those university teachers were taken who were using discussion as a teaching method in their classes. Narrative analysis was used to analyze the FGDs and interviews. The findings revealed through FGD show that the students differ in their perception regarding what is discussion, yet they agree that it is a useful method of teaching. The teachers reported that they use classroom discussion to teach their students. Some of the teachers think that specific skills like time management, organizing thoughts and involving students in classroom discussions are required for conducting classroom discussions and it needs to be a planned activity. Therefore, it is recommended to train teachers in ways to conduct discussions in the classroom context to promote students' learning.

Romana Imran is currently working as a Lecturer in Education in Lahore College for Women University, Jail Road, Lahore, Pakistan. Her areas of interest includes Educational Psychology and Assessment

Dr. Muhammad Saeed is working as Associate Professor and Chairman at the Department of Educational Research, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. He has widely published research in the field of science curriculum, teacher education, and educational assessment.

Introduction

Discussion is a teaching technique involving an exchange of ideas with active learning and participation by all concerned” (Orlich, Harder, Trevisan, Brown & Miller, 2016, p. 258). In classroom discussion, teachers and students get involved in a two way exchange of ideas about the subject matter under discussion (Henning, 2008). The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of university teachers and students about classroom discussion as a teaching method.

Howard (2015) contends that classroom discussions keep students engaged in active learning and provide them an opportunity to think about and apply what they are learning. Participating in classroom discussions develops motivation and communication skills among learners. In classroom discussions, the teacher develops a standpoint and facilitates the process of exchanging a wide range of ideas. It provides an opportunity to students to develop their own point of view rather than repeating the content or following what the teacher has presented. Besides developing personal opinion, participation in classroom discussions promotes learning of content, skills, attitudes and processes. It also can be a means of improving the thinking abilities of students as well as enhancing their analytical skills (Orlich *et al.*, 2016).

In discussion-based teaching, discussions are done in a systematic manner to accomplish curricular objectives. Benefits have been demonstrated across multiple subject areas, including social studies, English, science, and mathematics. More specifically, discussion-based teaching has led to gains in general subject mastery, reading comprehension, conceptual understanding, problem-solving ability, moral development, and attitude change and development, and communication skills. The acceptance of discussion-based teaching as a sound pedagogy has led to the introduction of numerous instructional approaches for improving the quality of teacher and student dialogue, such as indirect instruction, dialogic instruction, conversational teaching, and instructional conversations (Brookfield & Preskill, 2011).

Probing questions motivate students to interact and encourage them to present their point of view on the basis of a rationale. Abstract learning might be facilitated by discussing a specific topic. Bridges (2009) contends that discussions enhance comprehension ability of the discussants by providing them opportunities to exchange information with their peers, presenting different perspectives, providing opportunities for other discussants to criticize, accept, or refute these alternative ideas and encouraging mutual adjustment among discussants' opinions to produce a group decision or consensus. The results of a study on Discussion-Based Approaches to Developing Understanding indicate that students, experiencing emphasized discussion-based approaches in their teaching learning process tend to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to

engage in challenging literacy tasks on their own (Adam, Arthur, Judith & Martin, 2003). Morton (2012) found increased student participation in discussion format when he compared the effect of four different teaching methods: cooperative learning, discussion, concept mapping, and lecture in a chemistry course with 94 students.

Marling (2013) argues that classroom discussion leads towards high student participation and engagement and, ultimately student learning. Opportunities to participate in class discussions may differ across disciplines. Csomay(2005) concluded that students studying Education courses were most likely to have opportunities to participate in discussions in their classes as compared to engineering students. The theoretical foundation for this study is social constructivism. Students learn and construct meaning by interacting with others. This is the case with classroom discussions. In classroom discussions, students interact and discuss with their teachers and peer and get better understanding of the concept.

The objectives of this study were to explore university teachers' and students' experiences about classroom discussions. The research questions were:

1. What are university teacher's experiences about classroom discussion?
2. What purposes do they believe classroom discussion serves?
3. What are students' experiences about classroom discussions?
4. Do students think that discussion serves the purpose of clarifying concepts?

This study is significant in the reference as classroom discussion is widely used as a method of instruction at higher education institutions. This study would help teachers to better understand the use of classroom discussion. It would also support teacher in motivating learners to activate their higher order thinking skills by involving them in classroom discussions.

Methodology

Research Design

This study was a phenomenological study. "In phenomenological research, respondents are asked to describe their experiences as they perceive them. They may write about their experiences, but information is generally obtained through interviews" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). This approach was selected because the purpose of the study was to understand the meaning of experience from the perspectives of teachers and students about discussion based teaching. The phenomenological approach in fact helped seeking insight into the experiences and attribute meaning to those experiences. Paley (2017) has explained the methodological distinctiveness of phenomenological approach from other qualitative methods used to study experiences. He contends that phenomenological approach is that form of

qualitative research that focuses on experience and that engages in meaning attribution. It means that it clarifies the meaning of the phenomenon and aims at attribution of meaning to individual units of data.

Participants

For focus group discussions, two groups of students of Bachelors (4-years) of Institute of Education were selected as a sample. Students for focus group discussion were selected by using convenient sampling and on voluntary basis. In each focus group, there were 5-7 students as Rabiee (2004) and Krueger and Casey (2000) have consensus that focus group discussion might consist of different number of participants but small group ranging from 6-8 can show greater potential. Further on the identification of students, teachers who frequently use discussion as a method of instruction were selected for interviews. Five university teachers from the faculty of social sciences were interviewed. The justification for this was that there were approximately 500 teachers in the university and 25% teachers were selected as a sample.

Instrumentation

Two types of instruments were used in this study; semi-structured interview and focus group discussion. Questions for focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews were developed by reviewing the existing literature. These questions were discussed with subject experts and were refined. These instruments were validated through expert opinion of two experts. There were 6 questions for focus group discussions and 11 questions for semi-structured interviews.

For focus group discussions, first of all group members were identified and a list of their names was prepared. Then they were contacted and at the initial meeting, date, time and venue for the focus group discussions were decided. Students were told about the purpose of the research and focus group discussion. They were also informed about the type of questions to be asked in the focus group. In the second sitting, students were given an informed consent form and then they were asked to give their views and express their experiences about classroom discussions. Two focus groups discussions were done with students of two public universities and there were 5-7 students in each group. All the participants were female. The discussions were recorded through audio recorder.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the university teachers. Students in focus group discussions were asked to identify faculty members who were frequently using discussion as a method of instruction. Semi-structured interviews were arranged at the convenience of the participants. There were 5 participants and all were females. In the first sitting the participants were requested to tell about the convenient time and place for interview. In the second sitting, informed consent was given and the purpose

of study was told. Then interview was recorded by a voice recorder.

Results

Analysis of Focus Group Discussion

Narrative analysis was used to analyze the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. "Narrative analysis is a form of qualitative analysis in which the analyst focuses on how respondents impose order on the flow of experience in their lives and thus make sense of events and actions in which they have participated" (Silverman, 2007).

In this study the students were asked that what they think about classroom discussions? They expressed different perceptions about classroom discussion.

Table 1
Students' Perceptions about Classroom Discussions

	Member 1	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4	Member 5
Focus Group No.1	Content- related and interactive talk	knowing others' point of view	Rapid way of learning	Developing critical thinking	Exploring own abilities by exchanging views
Focus Group No.2	Enhances thinking abilities	Clarity of concepts	Looking things from different perspective	Problem solving technique	Develops sense of competition

One participant said that it is an interaction between teacher and student or group members. *Discussion is a content-related or interactive talk in which concept can be explained in different dimensions.* Some of them linked discussion with active learning and clarity of concepts. One participant shared, *Well...I think....Discussion is a major aspect of teaching learning process that enables students clarify their concepts. It also enables them to express their feeling about what they have learnt*

Few of them considered it as a way of developing and enhancing critical thinking and having knowledge of different dimension of the specific concept. *I think... discussion enhances students' thinking ability. When student with less confidence is appreciated by his peers and teachers, he will*

definitely be a part of discussion

However, some of the students said that classroom discussions are source of developing personal qualities like confidence level and communication skills. They said that it develops a sense of competition among them and make them learn how to be tolerant. *Discussion is something that enhances our confidence level and communication skills. When we are interacting with others, we are actually exploring our abilities that we have. Through discussions, we exchange our ideas with others*

The students were asked that how do they feel when they participate in classroom discussions?

Table 2
Students' Feelings about Participating in Classroom Discussions

	Member 1	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4	Member 5
Focus Group No.1	Fear of being insulted for wrong answer	Feeling confident when appreciated	Sense of superiority	Active participation	Impressing others
Focus Group No.2	Excitement	Anxiety and restlessness	Wait and explore others' view point	Feeling shy	Excitement

They expressed that they had some sort of negative feelings and some of them said that they feel positive when they have to participate in classroom discussions. Positive feelings included excitement, feelings of confidence when appreciated, sense of superiority, active participation and feeling of happiness when impressing others. On the other hand negative feelings were fear of being insulted for wrong answer and feeling shy of participating in classroom discussions. One point of view was quite different and that was waiting and exploring others' point of views and then taking participation in classroom discussions. The student said,

At first I feel excitement, but then I use to wait and observe that which thing or point of view is appreciated by the teacher, and then I decide what to say. I do wait and explore what is in the mind of other students.

In this focus group discussion, the researcher found the feelings of anxiety and restlessness as positive feelings. As one of the student said, *when discussion starts, I feel anxious. I feel restlessness and try to tell and share my point of view quickly. I love discussion. I love interaction and listening to teacher and want them to listen to me as well.* Some students talked about active participation, feeling of superiority and confidence. One

of them said, *Interaction in classroom discussions is life. It keeps you active.* The other one expressed, *Sense of superiority develops when I participate in discussions. It enables me to impress others.*

While expressing her feelings, one student said, *I feel shy. When any other student shares the same point of view that was in my mind, then I think that she has better communicated her thoughts as compared to me.* So, students had a blend of positive and negative feelings about participating in classroom discussions.

The third question of focus group discussion was that what motivates students to participate in classroom discussions?

Table 3

Motivating Factors to Participate in Classroom Discussions

	Member 1	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4	Member 5
Focus Group No.1	Sense of competition	Getting prominent in the eyes of teacher	Getting prominent in the eyes of teacher	Getting prominent in the eyes of teacher	Getting appreciation
Focus Group No.2	To get good marks	Getting prominent in the class	Satisfy the need of expressing	To get good marks	Desire of expressing

Majority of the students said that they do participate in classroom discussions to get prominent in the eyes of their teachers.

One of the students said, *Real motivation or psychological motivation is to be prominent in the eyes of the teacher. Students usually do not have enough knowledge to express yet they have to participate to get prominent in the class.*

Desire to get good grades is the second major motivation of participating in the classroom discussions. One of the students responded, *I participate in classroom discussion if participation is made compulsory or Mam has said that your participation is conditioned to your marks.*

Students participating in focus group discussion had different point of view about conditioning participation in classroom discussions with marks. One of them said as *If discussion is conditioned with marks, students will be reserved and feel threatened that if he has something irrelevant, her marks will be deducted. It lowers the validity of discussion and forces students to share only bookish knowledge.*

Another student said, *I have different point of view that when teacher conditions participation in classroom discussions with marks, students who usually do not participate, start participating. They try to speak up.*

One different point of view was that to satisfying the need of expression motivates students to participate in classroom discussions. One student said, *it's psychological need of a man that he wants to express. In classroom discussions, this need of a man is satisfied. Students feel happiness and keep on showing interest.* Hence, students expressed different reasons of motivation towards participating in classroom discussions.

The fourth question was that what students think about discussion as a teaching method?

Table 4
Students' Perceptions about Discussion-Based Teaching

	Member 1	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4	Member 5
Focus Group No.1	Clarity of concepts	Distracted discussion wastage of time	New ideas and concepts	Knowing about others' experiences	Constructive conclusions
Focus Group No.2	Clarity of concepts	Clarity of concepts	Sharing real life experiences	Getting feedback	Check previous knowledge of students

Majority of the students responded that they think classroom discussions as a means of clarifying concepts. They said that when students discuss, they share new ideas and concept, they share their real life experiences, they get knowledge about others' experiences and thus constructive conclusion related to the topic under discussion makes the concept clear.

One of the students expressed, *when students learn by discussion, they grasp more knowledge. They tend to have clear concept when they discuss*

Some of them think that classroom discussions are useful for teachers as well as one student shared; *Teacher can check previous knowledge of students through discussion. Teacher can take students to the topic through generating discussion about the specific concept. Discussion can also be used as a feedback.*

However, students think that classroom discussion as a method of teaching has certain negative aspects. For example one student said in this reference, *Well...I think...discussion is a good method of teaching but if discussion gets distracted, it becomes cause of wastage of time. Good*

discussion is that which is kept on track and content is covered by using it. In this way student expressed their thoughts about discussion as a method of instruction.

The fifth question was that what types of skills are needed for students to participate in classroom discussions.

Table 5
Skills Needed to Participate in Classroom Discussions

	Member 1	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4	Member 5
Focus Group No.1	Confidence and communi- cation skills	Listening skill	Freedom to express in native language	Communi- cation skill and command over the content	Confidence
Focus Group No.2	Listen and respect others' opinions	Confidence and communi- cation skills	Focus of mind	Confidence and communi- cation skills	Open- mindedness

Majority of the students thought that confidence and communication skills are the most needed skills that students should have to be participative in classroom discussions.

One of the students' expressed, *Main thing is confidence and communication skill. Sometimes students cannot participate because they do not have words to communicate.* Another student, in the same reference said, *Communication skill and command over the topic or concept of discussion are very important.* Two students referred towards the need of listening skills to be participative in classroom discussions. One of them said, *For me....no doubt, communication skill is important but listening skill is more important. If student listens carefully, she can raise question. If she has listening power, she will definitely have confidence and ultimately understanding of concept.*

One student talked about the language of communication and said, *Language of communication hinders participation in classroom discussions. If teacher asks students to discuss in English, they would avoid participation. On the other hand, if they have to participate in their native language, they tend to be more motivated and ready to participate in class discussions.*

Two students talked about unique skills needed for discussion: open-mindedness and focus of mind. One of them said, *I view open-mindedness important for discussion. If student is not open minded, she will keep on sticking to her point of view and would be reluctant to learn more from others' point of views.* The other student expressed, *focus of mind is very important. Concrete ideas come through focus of mind. During classroom discussions, you have to respond immediately. If you have focus of mind, you will be able to respond.*

Analysis of Interviews

The study participants were asked that how would they define classroom discussion or what are classroom discussions for them? The consensuses of the respondents lead to the following themes. Interpretation of themes along with excerpt is given below:

Table 1
Teachers' Perceptions about Classroom Discussions

Constructive activity	Focused talk	Student engagement	Sense of ownership
1	1	2	1

Teachers have multiple conceptions about classroom discussion. However, they think that it has positive influence on student learning. They take it as creative activity and a best way of student engagement. They think that it keeps student active and involved. When student share his/her point of view and participate in classroom discussions a sense of ownership develops in her. One teacher expressed, *Well, I think that discussion is quite healthy and constructive activity. It enables students to build up confidence, communication skills and brain storm.*

The other teacher said, *Discussion means that you involve students to present their ideas. It is a learning phenomenon. You know....we want students to learn this. Discussion enables student learn how to discuss, how to remain focused and how to irrelevant things. So, this is how the class becomes interactive and lively*

Two of the study participants viewed classroom discussion as a way of engaging students in a productive activity. One of them said, *Discussion isI think...student engagement. Making them conscious about the topic and making them take the ownership of the topic being discussed in the class. Otherwise, they are just passive listeners. But once you involve, it sets pace for class to learn.* The study participants were asked that what purposes they believe classroom discussions serve? The consensuses of the respondents lead to the following themes. Interpretation of themes along with excerpt is given below:

Table 2
Purposes of Classroom Discussions

Build up self confidence	Making students good discussants	Listen others' point of view/tolerance
2	1	2

The participants mentioned various purposes that they believe classroom discussions serve. They think that classroom discussion develop good personal qualities in students like self-confidence and tolerance level. It enables them to develop as good discussants. As two of the participants talked about building self-confidence and said, *The main purpose is to build up confidence of the students. If they build up confidence, they can use it any level. They can present, speak and do the things in a good way.* The other teacher said, *The most important purpose for me is to enable students to become good discussants. I think I prefer students learn how to discuss. Because students in class usually act as a crowd in which everybody is speaking with no focus. So, with regular use of classroom discussion student can develop this ability.*

The other two participants talked about developing tolerance as purpose of classroom discussion and one of them said, *It [classroom discussions] makes them think, it makes them question and it makes them critical also about the specific concept that we should not blindly accept what is written in the text. So, they look at other resources, other perspectives and when they are looking at diversity, it also teaches them tolerance eventually. They have to listen and sometimes accept different point of views.*

The study participants were asked that how do they teach students to become competent discussants? The consensus of the respondents lead to the following themes. Interpretation of themes along with excerpt is given below:

Table 3
Strategies Used to Make Students Good Discussants

Involving students in discussion and use of Pair-share	Organizing thoughts
4	1

The participants talked about different strategies they adopt to teach students to become competent discussants. The major theme was involving students in discussions. They said that until and unless students do not participate in classroom discussions, they cannot able to develop as good and competent discussants. One of the participants said, *I just say...just think about one question from the content for which you think you need an answer*

of it today. So, every student has to write a question. Then we use pair-share in which they write an answer and discuss it with each other in a pair and share it with the whole class. Then the whole class comment. In this way everyone is involved in the discussion and concluding those comments we have a concluding and constructive answer.

The other participant shared that she teaches students to organize their thoughts to become competent discussants. She said, *well... I make them organize their thought, that's the most important. So, I make them learn English pauses, making sentences, that opening of the discussion should be very strong, giving attention to what they are discussing and making an argument based on facts. So, in this way discussion is made stronger.*

The study participants were asked that what type of activities they incorporate in classroom discussions? The consensuses of the respondents lead to the following themes. Interpretation of themes along with excerpt is given below:

Table 4

Type of Activities Incorporated in Classroom Discussions

Brain storm and comparison	Role play and simulations
3	2

The study participants shared that they use different types of activities in classroom discussions. They said that they adopt those activities through which all students can participate in classroom discussions. They ask student to brainstorm about the specific topic or concept under discussion and compare different point of views to find relevancy with the topic under discussion. They also use role plays and simulations so that students can have better understanding of the concept and to enable them to discuss about different roles. One of the participants said, *Activities....sometimes I get them to brainstorm about various aspects and then I ask them to compare their thoughts, so, you know.. One is always adding and complementing.*

Another participant shared, *As I am teaching research in education, so I planned an activity that how a person can conduct an interview and we planned a role play. One student became an interviewer and the other was an interviewee. The rest of them were just watching. Then we discussed that how the interview was conducted? What were the gestures of the interviewer and the interviewee? Who was the most confident? Interview questions were relevant or irrelevant? So, it was a bit of simulation.*

The study participants were asked that how do they encourage students to participate in classroom discussions? The consensuses of the respondents lead to the following themes. Interpretation of themes along with excerpt is given below:

Table 5
Motivation Strategies Used for Students' Participation

Extrinsic motivation	Intrinsic motivation
2	3

The participants said that they use extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation for students to make them participate in classroom discussions. One of the participants using extrinsic motivation said,

I use different strategies. Although sometimes it looks awkward, but I say if you speak today, I will give you one extra mark, if you positively participate in the class and your point of view is valid, your effort is very much serious that you want to be the part of the discussion. I say...I will keep it in mind while evaluating your test and assignments etc. So, in this way student become interested to participate in the classroom discussions.

Majority of the participants use appreciation and recognition to encourage and ensure students' participation in classroom discussions. one of them shared, *I use verbal appreciation and recognition to the students so that they feel easy to communicate and participate*

The study participants were asked that what they think about classroom discussion as a method of teaching? The consensuses of the respondents lead to the following themes. Interpretation of themes along with excerpt is given below:

Table 6
Teachers' Perceptions about Classroom Discussion as Teaching Method

Need of skilled teachers	Appropriate only for higher levels of education	Appropriate for all levels
3	1	1

The participants think that classroom discussion is a good method of teaching. However, they think that it cannot be used for teaching all types of contents. They said that specific skills are required on the part of the teacher to conduct classroom discussions. There are different points of views about the appropriateness of adopting classroom discussion at different levels of education. Talking about the need of skilled teachers one participant said, *Well...if the teacher is skilled enough and he/she is able to probe the discussion in the class and conduct discussion in a productive way, then it is good. But all teachers cannot do this, especially novice teachers who have just started their careers.*

Another participant, supporting the appropriateness of using classroom discussion just for higher levels of education said, *It [classroom discussions]*

cannot be used for every subject. There are some specific contents for which there must be discussion. So, it should not be used blindly. I think it's more appropriate for the higher level. From my point of view, it should be started from masters and its peak should be the PhD class. Another different view was that I think that we have a concept that discussion is effective only for college students but I had the opportunity to teach at kindergarten and I have seen that story discussion was done beautifully with young children. The study participants were asked to tell about the limitations of classroom discussion as a teaching method? The consensuses of the respondents lead to the following themes. Interpretation of themes along with excerpt is given below:

Table 7

Limitations of Classroom Discussion as Teaching Method

Limited class time	Communicative people dominate discussion	Untrained teachers
1	1	3

The participants were of the view that classroom discussion is a good method of teaching but it has certain limitations. They said that the duration of class time in educational institutions is not ideal for conducting discussions and it becomes difficult to cover the content by using it as a teaching method. They also said that it is a challenging situation for teachers to keep balance between discussants. Majority of the participants said that teachers are not trained enough to apply this teaching strategy in teaching learning process.

One of the participants said, *one limitation is the class time that if are more concentrating on covering the course it might require twice of the time as compared to lecture method to have discussions.* Another participant said *One disadvantage of the discussion method is that mostly those people dominate the discussions who are already you know...much active and participative in the class and people who are shy, sometimes they had great ideas but they are not able to convey it.* Another participant said, *all teachers are not perfect to make healthy discussions. Students are also not motivated if they are not appreciated.*

The study participants were asked that what they think about skills needed for conducting classroom discussions. The consensuses of the respondents lead to the following themes. Interpretation of themes along with excerpt is given below:

Table 8

Skills needed for Conducting Classroom Discussions

Plan discussion	Content mastery	Good listener	Engage students
1	1	1	2

The participants mentioned personal and professional qualities and skills

that teachers must have to conduct classroom discussions. They said that they should know how to plan discussion and how to engage students effectively. They also said that the teacher must be a good listener and know how to have good command and control of the classroom discussions. The teacher must also be competent in the content to be discussed.

One of the participants said, *First of all, if I want to use classroom discussions as a teaching strategy, then there is need of planning. There should be some objectives, time plan and output. I do ask students that how they feel the difference about specific concept after having classroom discussion.*

Talking about having good command on the content or topic under discussion, the participant said, *Teacher must be very much prepared and have content mastery. I think that there must be an impression that the teacher knows the situation very well. Sometimes students get the impression that the teacher just want to pass the time. Teacher should not allow this happen.* One of the participants stressed on the importance of listening power and said, *Teacher should be a good listener. Usually teacher intervenes, when people try to answer question and be the part of discussion, teacher interferes that no...no...it's not like that, it's like this. So, teacher should be a good listener, if he wants to use a classroom discussion as a teaching method.*

One of another participants said, *Teacher should have the ability to engage everyone. That's again a very difficult task to engage everyone in the discussion. Mostly what happened is that when you ask the students to give comments and be part of the discussion, most of the students use to repeat other students' point of views. Being a teacher you have to interfere at time and ask student to present some new idea or own point of view. Discussion should be fruitful for everyone in the class.*

Discussion

This study explores the experiences of university teachers and students about classroom discussion as a teaching method. As far as the perceptions of students about classroom discussions as a teaching method were concerned, they were very anxious to express their feeling and experiences about the particular phenomenon. They had diverse thoughts about classroom discussions. But they agreed that it is a useful teaching strategy when it comes to clarify concepts and develop confidence and communication skills. As Guetzkow et al. (2000) described *discussion* as a place “where students feel free to expose their misconceptions so they can be corrected”.

Some of the participant students emphasized the importance of participation in classroom discussion to clarify concepts yet they also said that they are not ready by themselves to participate in class. They lack self-confidence. They have fear of being wrong and insulted by the teacher. In a

study, Fritschner (2000) also found that students consider participation in classroom discussions as an important element for their learning. A significant co-relation between increased classroom participation and high grades has been reported by Handelsman (2005). In spite of realizing the importance of participating in classroom discussions, research indicated that only few of them tend to do it on regular basis.

In another study, Hyde and Ruth (2002) while exploring the reasons of low participation among students noted that students may feel anxious or apprehensive in front of their classmates and professors, and thus choose not to participate.

Talking about teachers' attitude they shared that teachers encourage them to participate in classroom discussions. They use different strategies to motivate them yet there are few teachers who use to degrade students. Moreover, students said that some teachers tend to divide the topics of course outline among students and ask them to prepare presentation and then they conduct a question answer session at the end of presentation and call it a classroom discussion. Students said that there should be such type of discussion. Discussion should be very much focused and enriched with expert opinion. It should be pre-planned.

Teachers who participated in this study, view classroom discussions as a purposeful teaching strategy yet they have a variety of concept about what is classroom discussion. They think that classroom discussions develop higher order thinking skills among students but they face a problem of non-participative attitude of students. Watts and Becker(2008) reported that, although discussion-based teaching is supported to be employed in post secondary classes yet the available research indicates that discussion in postsecondary classrooms is used infrequently and, when opportunities are provided for discussion, relatively few students tend to participate.

They said that some students feel lack of confidence and rarely participate in classroom discussions yet they also said that they apply different strategies to motivate students towards participating in classroom discussions. Hyde and Ruth (2002) on the basis of a survey concluded that nervousness and lack of preparation were the main reasons students chose not to participate in class discussions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Classroom discussion as a teaching method is mostly used at higher education levels in Pakistan. However, the researcher has noted and observed that there are few examples where classroom discussions are applied as a teaching strategy in its true spirit. The number of teachers using classroom discussion in its actual essence is rare. The reason behind it might be the lack of training in this reference. One positive thing that students shared during focus group discussion was there is a paradigm shift in the role of the teacher in the classroom. Students said that now, teacher is no

more like that of a dictator; he/she acts as a co-learner. It was recommended that teachers should be given training to how to conduct a constructive classroom discussion. Classroom discussions should be applied at secondary and higher secondary level of education so that students learn and practice how to participate in discussions.

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