

The Perceptions of University Teachers About Commonly Used Teaching Practices and Effective Methods

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ABSTRACT

Teaching is an art of transferring knowledge, information and skills from one person to another. It is mandatory for teachers to use variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of students and high-quality Education. However, most of the institutes in Pakistan use a limited range of methods for instructions. There is an urgent need to evaluate the current practices of Instruction adopted by most of the teachers in general institutes. The core purpose of this study was to scrutinize the perception of university teachers concerning the usage and effectiveness of teaching practices in terms of particular strategies, methods and casual activities. A case study methodology was adopted to attain the objectives of the study. Hence, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan was carefully chosen as a case. Approximately, 619 teachers were teaching at Bahauddin Zakariya University and selected as population. The researcher combined eight of the faculties and divided into four sections. Total 45 departments were nominated using Simple random sampling. Furthermore, 395 teachers were chosen through lottery method

of simple random sampling. Data was collected through Questionnaire and the questionnaire reliability was also computed through Cronbach's Alpha Model (e.g.,0.96). The value explicitly indicated the scale's consistency and reliability. Data was composed in tables to be analyzed, comparisons were made and interpreted according to the to the study objectives. For the interpretation of Questionnaire data descriptive statistics i.e., Mean and SD were applied, and thematic analysis was used for open-ended research question responses. According to the study findings, lecture method, project method, demonstration method, problem-solving method, discussion, brainstorming and quiz were described as occasionally used teaching practices at universities. While other selected methods/strategies/activities were rarely used. Likewise, the final conclusion of the research also specified teachers' opinion regarding the selected teaching practices (methods/strategies/activities) that they were effective mainly due to their own observations at university. The study also recommended that teaching practices must be evaluated occasionally for the improvement of teachers' teaching practices, which is vital for quality education and teaching-learning process.

Introduction

Imparting knowledge, teaching skills and sharing of information is considered teaching-learning process. Teaching-learning is reciprocal in which interaction between an experienced and less experienced person takes place (Rajagopalan, 2019). The words like nursing, mentoring, leading, supervising, giving feed-back, empowering formal and informal learning can best describe the word 'Teaching'. It is a totality of hands-on activities grounded on mutual understanding of sharing, accepting and appreciating the interaction during teaching-learning process (Doung, 2021).

A teacher must be creative in his/her style by using variety of instructional methods and tactics. Ramos (2015) splits teaching practices in four different categories e.g., teaching approaches, methods, strategies and casual

activities. Refining teaching-learning procedure by means of a variety of methods has become a universal phenomenon (Bhardwaj, 2019). Now there have been many educational practices i.e., methods and strategies which are adopted world-wide for high quality of education. According to educational researchers, using variety of teaching practices into education is far more effective for teaching than sticking to fewer and outdated methods. Abdu-Raheem (2010) suggested that instructions through inquiry method, problem-solving, discussion, discovery and role playing are among the most effective instructional methods. Abdu-Raheem (2012) also defined that problem-solving is one particular way of teaching in which learner can be able to take part vigorously in the instructions. Henard and Roseveare (2012) recognized that method of instruction has a significant part in quality teaching at any institute. Thus, instructors must adopt pragmatic approaches of teaching that cover active contribution of learners and empower them.

A method is an organized way of studying any particular concept, idea, or subject matter. Teaching method is a way deliberately adopted to accomplish certain teaching and learning goals (Akdeniz, 2016). Instructional Methods relies on effective presentation of content and to have command over it. It is a sequential process, a step-by-step display of content from easy to difficult or par to whole etc. Method is the practical understanding of educational philosophy. Teaching method is the proper body of actions in right order. It comprises the choices of what is to be transferred, and in which direction, it is to be transferred (Gill & Kusum, 2017). The most effective teaching methods are successful only, when they can bring opportunities to learners' participation, and let them share ideas and skills for self-learning (Al-Rawi, 2013).

Educational strategy is the arrangement of a plan before hand, offering the content with the help of particular process through which teaching objectives are to be accomplished. Strategy changes in accordance with the situations and conditions. Instructional strategy is a way to conquer educational objectives (Gill & Kusum, 2017). An instructional strategy is based on decisions regarding shaping people, arranging resources and developing opinions to offer learning in the educational setting (Nwachukon, 2005; Muna & kalam, 2021). It is only an instructional strategy that helps to create a healthy classroom environment which is essential for quality learning. The strategies should also echo instructional objectives along with the subject matter of the curriculum (Akdeniz, 2016). It is expected from professional and good teachers to bring diversity in their instructional strategies to achieve learning goals and objectives of the program. This can be the best way to help in addressing individual students' needs (Saskatchewan, 2009).

Non-formal activities can be described as activities particularly, devised or designed for students to voluntarily take part in these activities. Such activities can be adjusted or adopted in various situations and educational settings other than routine class room activities or formal learning as learning is not always their core objective (Ramos, 2015). Non-formal activities can be arranged in any institution to improve particular personality traits, communication skills or ethical values in the learners. When students with different backgrounds, abilities and learning experiences share their knowledge with other people, then these non-formal activities conform changes in their behavior (Bolt-Lee, 2021).

Rational of the study

A quality of teaching is highly dependent on its variety of techniques, methods and styles, adopted by the teachers to meet the individual needs of the students. Whereas, in Pakistan most of the educational institutes adopt very few, common and old methods of instruction. In order to bring change and adjustment in the teaching styles, it is vital to re-evaluate teaching practices, widely adopted by university teachers, and their point of views regarding the effectiveness of different instructional methods and strategies. Although, some of the research studies have already identified commonly adopted teaching practices, still there is not any countrywide study on the usage and effectiveness of commonly used teaching practices and their effectiveness. Particularly, at university level, the usefulness and efficiency of teaching practices is a critical for high quality education. Therefore, the following research study pacts with the investigation of teachers' views regarding use and effectiveness of multiple teaching practices and making valuable inferences.

Statement of the Problem

This study was conducted mainly to examine the commonly used instructional approaches at universities and their opinion regarding the efficacy and usefulness of various teaching practices. The core purpose of the study was solely to delve deep into university teachers' perspectives toward the use and effectiveness of selected teaching practices and to segregate the difference of opinion between male and female teachers. In a nutshell, the study mainly investigated "Use of instructional methods and their Effectiveness" according to the study participants' viewpoints.

Research Questions

1. Which are the most commonly used instructional practices and teaching-methods, adopted by teachers at universities?
2. Which teaching practices and methods are the most effective according to the viewpoint of university teachers?

3. Is there any difference of opinion between male and female university teachers?

Significance of The study

- Initially, the present study will be substantial for policy makers to provide them with sufficient evidence of current and major practices adopted by teachers for teaching at university level
- Additionally, this study will be helpful for university teachers to improve their teaching strategies by providing them an insight into their general and limited kind of Instruction method.
- Furtherly, the study will be helpful for teachers, heads of the departments, education officers, decision-makers, and government authorities to take clear stance on the betterment of educational system. They can decide upon how to adjust their instructional methods and strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning process.

Research Methodology

The nature of the present study was descriptive. The quantitative survey questionnaire was adopted to scrutinize university teachers' observations and opinion for the usefulness and efficiency of teaching practices in terms of teaching-methods, strategies and casual activities. According to best suitability of the study objectives, a case-study design was applied. The university of BZU was nominated as the case-study. The study population was all the faculty teachers of BZU. Total faculties at BZU are eight. Eight-faculties comprise sixty-five departments, and total 619 teachers of BZU were selected as population of the study. The researcher combined eight faculties into four divisions. And total of 45 departments were selected out of those eight faculties using Simple Random Sampling Technique. In those selected departments, total 453 teachers were teaching. Out of those 453 teachers, 395 teachers participated as sample of the study, using lottery method of simple random sampling technique. In accordance with the research objectives, this study used quantitative data collection approach followed by qualitative data-collection techniques, which was based on open-ended items. Quantitative questionnaire was developed through literature review. For this study, questionnaire was designed for university teachers, which included three sections. The first section was about Demographic information of the participants. The second section of the questionnaire was further split into two halves (A & B). First half (A) comprised 4 segments i.e., a, b, c, and d. Part A comprised the analysis of teachers' views regarding the usefulness and efficiency of teaching practices (methods, strategies and casual activities). Part B contained seven teaching practices to be ranked on the scale of 1 to 7 by respondents on the basis of

their effectiveness. The final section comprised two open-ended questions to analyze the observations of university teachers about commonly used and effective teaching practices (methods/strategies). All of the statements were analyzed through five-point Likert scale. The (five-point Likert) rating-scale used for university teachers' viewpoints regarding the usability and efficiency of the teaching practices was ranging from never-to-always. The scale used for analyzing the observations of teachers about the effectiveness of teaching practices i.e., teaching-methods, strategies and casual activities was ranging from not effective to very effective. Descriptive statistics (i.e., Mean and SD), inferential statistic (independent simple t-test) and thematic analysis (open-ended item) were applied by using the SPSS software version 20 to analyze the collected data taking into consideration the nature of survey questionnaire and the suitability of responses.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1

Teachers' views on commonly Used and Effective Methods of Teaching

Sr.	Methods Statements	Usage <i>M(SD)</i>	Effectiveness <i>M(SD)</i>
1	I practice lecture-method, an oral demonstration of knowledge & ideas given by the instructor.	4.15(1.02)	3.91(3.91)
2	I practice demonstration-method, transferring of ideas through audio/video aid.	3.78(0.78)	3.67(3.67)
3	I practice problem-solving method, which helps students to learn through solving the problem.	3.65(0.9)	3.69(3.69)
4	I practice project-method, which offer real-life tasks imparted through school.	3.33(0.88)	3.67(3.67)
5	I practice laboratory-method, a fact-finding method that offers training in observation, prompts complete information and increases learners' interest.	2.6(1.6)	3.6(3.6)
6	I practice expository-method; a lecture presentation & tell-a-tale strategy.	2.7(1.09)	3.56(3.56)
	Overall	3.27(0.98)	3.65(3.65)

Data presented in Table 1 revealed that the Mean score of the four instructional methods was 3 to 4. The first selected instructional method was lecture method with Mean score 4.15, which is the highest of all other methods, secondly, demonstration method with Mean score 3.78, then problem solving method with Mean score 3.65 and finally, project method

with Mean score 3.33. However, Mean score for Expository and laboratory method was comparatively very low (e.g., Mean=2.70 & mean=2.60). Total Mean score (3.27) asserted that majority of teachers were agreed upon that selected teaching methods were occasionally used at universities. Similarly, overall SD value (0.98) also indicated according to study participants' teaching methods were used from time to time by most of the university teachers.

Similarly, the Mean score for the effectiveness of teaching methods also ranged between 3.5 and 4. The most effective teaching method was lecture-method with Mean score 3.91, demonstration method with Mean score 3.67, problem solving method with Mean score 3.69, project method with Mean score 3.67, laboratory method with Mean score 3.60, and Expository method with Mean score 2.50. Overall Mean score 3.65 clearly suggested that university teachers agreed upon the effectiveness of all the selected instructional methods. Among them Lecture method stood highest effective method. Equally, asserted by SD value (0.80) which indicated that most of the study participants believed that selected teaching methods were effective for teaching at universities.

Table 2

Use and Effectiveness of Instructional Strategies as Perceived by Participants

Sr.	Strategies for Teaching Statements	Usage <i>M(SD)</i>	Effectiveness <i>M(SD)</i>
1	I practice role-play strategy, help students to discover real-life situations & to shape their communicative skills.	2.73(1.21)	3.72(3.72)
2	I practice discussion-strategy, include variety of forum (open ended, question/answers) to reflect upon others' perspective.	3.96(0.92)	3.68(3.68)
3	I practice brainstorming-strategy, a group-based creativity platform for discussion, creativity of ideas and solving educational problems.	3.44(0.9)	3.91(3.91)
4	I conduct seminar for particular topic presentation, assessed and discussed through group discussion. This helps to develop reasoning skills, co-operation and emotional skills.	2.9(0.78)	3.69(3.69)

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Sr.	Strategies for Teaching Statements	Usage <i>M(SD)</i>	Effectiveness <i>M(SD)</i>
5	I practice conference-meeting, to discuss, develop, synthesize, evaluate and creative abilities of learner.	2.93(0.88)	3.73(3.73)
6	I practice symposium strategy for teaching, a series of speeches on a topic to help solve the problem or elaborate.	2.85(0.81)	3.54(3.54)
7	I practice simulation, a controlled illustration of facts and figures which encourages the students by keeping them continuously or actively involved in the educational activities.	2.89(0.82)	3.61(3.61)
8	I held debates, an order of seeing manifold vantage point and reaching on a conclusion which requires members to participate in research, improve their listening and rhetoric abilities and critical thinking skills.	2.97(0.72)	3.64(3.64)
	Overall	3.08(0.97)	3.69(3.69)

Table 2 unveiled that the Mean score for two of the teaching strategies, was between 3 to 4 which was slightly higher than the other strategies. Those teaching strategies were discussion strategy with Mean score 3.96 and brainstorming with Mean score 3.44. While, the Mean score of the other six other teaching strategies ranged 2 to 3 only. Those teaching strategies were role playing (Mean=2.72), conference (Mean=2.93), seminar (Mean=2.90), symposium (Mean=2.85), simulation (Mean=2.89), debate (Mean=2.92). Overall Mean score (3.08) showed that the university teachers were agreed upon that teaching strategies were sometimes being used by university teachers. The overall Standard Deviation value (0.97) also indicated that participants believed that teaching strategies were sometimes used at universities.

Table 2 data displayed that the Mean score for effectiveness of teaching strategies ranged between 3.5 to 4. Those teaching strategies involved discussion strategy with the Mean score 3.68, brainstorming with Mean score 3.91, role play with Mean score 3.72, Seminar with Mean score 3.69, conference with Mean 3.73, symposium with Mean score 3.54, simulation with Mean score 3.61, and debate with Mean score 3.64. The Mean score in total suggested that selected instructional strategies were effective for teaching at university. Similarly, overall SD value 0.80 indicated that majority of participants believed that instructional strategies were effective for teaching at university.

Table 3

Teachers' opinion regarding Use and Effectiveness of Non-Formal Activities

Sr.	Casual Activities Statements	Level of Use M(SD)	Efficiency M(SD)
1	I organize quiz-shows, one way of teaching a topic and testing the information to keep the learner engaged throughout.	3.91(0.91)	3.87(0.75)
2	I prepare field-trip, first-hand experience on the topic and deliver real-life conditions to the learners.	3(0.85)	3.52(0.72)
3	I establish exhibitions to make learning public and develop communication skills, public speaking, teamwork or research.	2.9(0.79)	3.71(0.82)
4	I prepare sports /games/shows to develop the physical and mental health of the students.	3(0.75)	3.59(0.75)
5	I conduct competitions/contests to inspire learners to work hard and to improve their confidence.	3.08(0.82)	3.81(0.69)
	Overall	3.18(0.9)	3.7(0.75)

The Mean score of four non-formal activities presented in Table 4, remained between 3 to 4. Quiz Mean score =3.91, contests Mean score=3.08, sports/games Mean score=3.00 and fieldtrip Mean score=3.00. However, the Mean score for only one of the non-formal activities, was between 2 to 3 (Exhibition Mean score=2.90). Total Mean score 3.18 of the activities showed that university teachers were agreed upon the fact that non-formal activities were occasionally used at universities. Similarly, total SD value (0.90) declared that mainstream of study participants believed that casual activities were sometimes practiced at universities.

However, the Mean score of effectiveness presented in table no 4 for teaching strategies, was also remained between 3.5 to 4. Also, the Mean score for quiz activity was 3.87, for contests 3.81, for sports/games 3.59, for fieldtrip 3.52, and for exhibition 3.75. The Mean values implied that nominated casual activities were effective for the instruction. The overall Mean score (3.70) displayed the university teachers' agreement over the effectiveness of selected non-formal activities. Similar was overall SD value

0.76 which further confirmed that study participants believed in the effectiveness of casual activities.

Table 4

Responses of the Male & Female Teachers toward the Effectiveness of Teaching Practices (Method/Strategies/Activities)

	Male (n=211)	Female (n=94)	Independent samples t-test	
	M	M	t-value	p-value
Teaching Methods	21.60	22.37	-1.803	.072
Teaching Strategies	29.26	30.15	-1.552	.122
Casual Activities	18.43	18.71	-.777	.438

The calculated results in table 5 precisely disclosed the attained value. The level of significance for teaching method was up to .072 whereas, for the application of teaching strategies, the level of significance was .122. Casual activities significance value was up to .438. This was larger than the pre-determined value. The determined value $p > 0.05$ indicated no significant difference of opinion was present statistically between male and female teachers regarding the effectiveness of teaching practices (i.e., methods, strategies and casual activities). This additionally conformed that both male and female teachers believed that particular teaching practices were commonly used for teaching at universities.

Table 5

University Teachers' viewpoint regarding the effectiveness of Teaching Method/Strategy

Order	Instructional methods and strategies	f	%
1	Discussion	58	19.03
2	Lecture method	50	16.39
3	Demonstration method	46	15.09
4	Problem solving	43	14.09
5	Cooperative learning	41	13.44
6	Conference	35	11.47
7	Seminar	32	10.49

Table 5 clearly highlights the participants' complete viewpoint regarding the effectiveness of instructional method or strategy. The rank-order presented

in the table claimed that 19.03% of the university teachers believed that the most effective strategy for instruction was discussion; secondly, lecture-method, then demonstration method, problem solving, cooperative and least effective strategies and methods were conference and seminar.

Respondents' viewpoint of commonly Used and Effective Instructional Method or Strategy: Analysis of an open-ended question

An open-ended question was asked from the participants regarding their viewpoint of the commonly used and effective instructional method and strategy. Various responses were recorded by the participants. To best interpret the response, thematic analysis was employed. Almost, five major themes were devised after analysis. Responses were ordered in the table in descending direction. According to the viewpoint of 45.63% study participants commonly used method of instruction at university level was lecture method, while 51.24% believed that discussion was the most effective strategy for instruction.

Major Findings

- Occasionally used Instructional strategies and methods include: lecture method, project-method, demonstration-method, problem-solving method, dialogue, brainstorming and quiz.
- Seldom used instructional practices at university were: team-teaching, inquiry-based learning, modular instruction, adaptive instruction, role-play, seminar, conference, simulation, symposium, programmed instruction, field trip, competitions and exhibition.
- The study outcomes exhibited that teaching practices were effective only, according to the observation of university teachers.
- Discussion was found among the most effective strategy.
- The study also exposed that commonly used instructional practice at university was 'Lecture-method'.

Discussion

The study outcomes elucidated that normally used instructional method was direct method e.g., lecture method. However, demonstration method, problem-solving and project-method were also considered occasionally used methods. Whereas, instructional strategies like discussion and brainstorming were occasionally used while other strategies e.g., seminar, role-play, conference, symposium, simulation and debate were seldom used by the teachers. Quiz was among the top non-formal activities very often used at university level. The ultimate and most surprising result of the study

revealed that whether it was a method or a strategy or a non-formal activity; the only criteria for effectiveness was closely linked with the presumed assumptions of the teachers. Earlier studies, according to Shinn (2019) suggested that commonly used teaching practices were demonstrations, discussion method, laboratory work, projects, competitions, simulations, problem-solving, lecturing, examinations and work assignments. Though additional researches proposed that teachers used few new methods for teaching such as audio/visual aids for teaching in the classrooms (Aslam, 2019). Additionally, the study ranked Lecture-method and Discussion as the most effective and commonly used instructional method and strategy.

Recommendations

1. Use of various techniques, methods and strategies for Instruction must be made a part and parcel of daily education at universities.
2. Transition of teaching practices from outdated to emerging trends of teaching using information technology or digital education.
3. There is a need to clearly redefine the roles and responsibilities of the teachers as a monitor, and facilitator for students.
4. It is strongly recommended that administrative authorities must organize professional development programs off and on to cater advance instructional strategies.

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