

Quality Teaching At Higher Education: Demands and Challenges

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Abstract

In my own words, the role of higher education has always been an important factor for the development of education and the economic system of any country. Key components that are considered as a key factor for the quality of higher education include quality of faculty, standards of curriculum, research environment, technological equipment, policies, and evaluation process of the education system. The present study was aimed to explore the perception of university teachers about their priorities regarding the measures of quality teaching at higher education. The key areas identified by OECD (2012) for quality teaching at higher education were followed by the present study. One hundred university teachers from public sector universities of Pakistan were selected as a sample of the study. A self-constructed questionnaire that was based on OECD's key areas was used as an instrument of the study. Collected data were analyzed by calculating mean scores, frequencies, and percentages for each statement. The major findings of the study showed that OECD's identified areas are not at the highest level of priority by public sector universities. It is recommended that universities may focus on the OECD's identified areas to achieve the goal of quality teaching at higher education in Pakistan.

Keywords: Quality teaching, university teachers, higher education.

Introduction

In my opinion, from many centuries, education has always been treated as an instrument of the change agent in any nation. Broadly higher education is known as one of the most important key drivers of growth, performance, and prosperity of any nation. The social role of higher education provides a significant link between the intellectual and educational roles of universities (Anderson, 2004; Barnett, 1994). Quality teaching is considered as a source for teaching methods to construct the learning outcomes for students. Many dimensions are involved in quality teaching, which includes the

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productive curriculum design and content, collaborative learning, experimentation, and guide for independent study. A variety of learning environments must be used for quality teaching. It has been observed by many of the researchers that promoting quality teaching is an effort at many levels and support for quality teaching is needed at three independent levels which are:

1. *Institutional level*: It includes policy design projects and support for the institution and internal quality assurance system,
2. *Program level*: Consist of activities to evaluate and encourage the design, content, and delivery of programs inside a department.
3. *Individual-level*: It includes initiatives to support the teachers to achieve their goals by encouraging them to bring innovations and supporting the student learning improvements by focusing on a student-centered teaching-learning approach (Cartwright, 2007).

These three levels are considered essential components for quality teaching and are inter-dependent on each other. But supporting the quality teaching at the program level is considered the key element to ensure the improvement in quality teaching. Many initiatives can be taken to encourage quality teaching at the institutional level:

1. Teaching-learning development center
2. Activities for professional development
3. Recognition awards for teaching excellence and activities
4. Practices for teaching innovations
5. Proper criteria for teachers' selection
6. Libraries and computing facilities for learning
7. Proper management for teaching-learning practices
8. Students' counseling, career advice, and mentoring services
9. Proper evaluation methods for the teaching-learning process (Telford & Masson, 2005).

There are many of the factors that bring quality teaching to the forefront. Every education system does experience the gradual development of students' enrollment nowadays. On the other side, higher education also suffers many of the problems related to the students, teachers for their performance towards quality teaching. The common reasons for which quality teaching is encouraged by the institutions include;

1. Meeting the increasing demand for meaningful and effective teaching. Because nowadays students also want to ensure that whether their education will get any employment and will equip them with the demanded skills or not?
2. To ensure that they are reliable providers of quality education.
3. To balance the teaching-learning performance with research performance
4. To compete effectively against the backdrop of tuition fees and students' mobility

5. Effectively increasing the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process against the funding constraints (Anderson, 2004).

There are also some of the factors which are influencing the quality teaching including:

1. Internationalization of higher education
2. The increasing scope of education and a variety of students' profile
3. Continuous technological changes that may cause for the outdated content and pedagogies.
4. Increasing demand for the graduates and higher education engagement
5. Increasing global competition and economic effectiveness
6. The demand of skilled workforce for the 21st-century challenges (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Characteristics of Quality Teaching

It is concluded from many of the discussions that many of the scholars are agreed on the opinion of the quality teaching components, and these components are the combination of good and successful teaching. Description of both components is below;

Good Teaching: It is considered that good teaching is a base for the expertise of any idea because good teaching is related to the effectiveness of the behavior. It is identified by the researchers that many characteristics can depict good teaching. These characteristics are merged into three main elements (Wechsler & Shields, 2008) including:

- First of all, good teaching depends on what teachers bring into the classroom, and these are called teachers characteristics. These characteristics include content pedagogy, content knowledge, experience, general intelligence, and verbal ability (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Berliner, 2004; Wechsler & Shields, 2008). It is expressed by Kennedy (2008) that teachers' characteristics are teachers' resources, and these personal resources include beliefs, attitudes, values, and personal traits.
- Second good teaching depends on what teachers do in the classroom, and it is called teaching practice. Good teaching always uses the rational and moral method, and these two methods are classified into three main elements of good teaching by Fenstermacher and Richardson (2000). These three elements include logical acts, psychological acts, and moral acts of teaching. Logical acts of teaching include defining, demonstrating, explaining, creating, correcting, and interpreting. Psychological acts emphasize motivating, encouraging, rewarding, punishing, planning, and evaluating (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Moral acts of teaching include moral traits, including honesty, courage, tolerance, compassion, trust, respect, and fairness.

- Third good teaching is known as what students learned from learning that are desired outcomes. Teaching practice that is associated with the students' learning outcomes and test scores is considered an effective indicator of good teaching (Haskins dan Loeb, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Kennedy, 2008).

Successful teaching: It has been suggested by Fenstermacher and Richardson (2000) that one of the important parts of quality teaching is students' response towards teaching. But to know that either student, learn the material or not is called successful teaching. Successful teaching majorly depends on the students. Main elements of the successful teaching comprised; students' urge to learn, support of social environment from family, society, culture, peers, and, most importantly, proper facilities, time, and resources (Loughran, 2010; Elmore, 2004). For successful teaching, every student must be skilled with the background knowledge, questioning techniques, adding new knowledge, and understanding the phenomena. In successful teaching, it is the responsibility of a teacher to create a learning environment that provides rich opportunities for learning to the students.

Dimensions of quality teaching: Quality teaching has always been considered one of the essential components of quality learning in higher education. Nowadays, graduates are going in the world of employment rapidly with risk and complexity demands. For these demands, university education has to play an important role in meeting the challenges of the employment market and training the students' skills, knowledge, values, and beliefs to survive in the world of employment. A good connection between the demands of the employment world and learning experiences can provide wonderful opportunities to the students to learn professional and common competencies. Certain areas have been identified by the OECD in 2012's report, which must be considered by the higher education institutions for quality teaching. Areas included are: (a) increasing awareness about the quality teaching (b), preparing excellent teachers, (c) engaging students, (d) developing an organization for change and teaching leadership, (e) supporting institutional policies to encourage quality teaching, (f) highlighting innovation as a core component for change and (g) evaluating the impact.

In the 21st century, higher education has more focused on the students' learning outcomes with student-centered learning, pedagogical competencies, activity-based learning, peer and group assessments, networking, collaborations with other disciplines, and international programs. Quality in higher education has always been considered a multidimensional concept, and this concept must be accepted with all its functions, activities, teaching, academic programs, research and scholarships, faculty, students, community services, and academic environment (UNESCO, 1998). It is a fact that the quality of education is directly related to the quality teaching and quality teachers. Teachers are known as the core component of any educational process, and it is

important for any educational system that teachers should be professionally competent and sincere towards the teaching profession. It is indicated by many discussions that a university teacher is not only a subject teacher, but he/she must be a strong source for understanding, strength, good conduct, and national unity (McCarty, 2003).

In higher education, university teachers always play an essential role in the understanding and improvement of the teaching-learning process (Zaman, 1998). In higher education, teaching is not only considered as delivering information, but it is a continuous process of communicating the information and guiding the students to gain instruction. Teaching is also known as the interaction between the teachers and students, preparation and lesson planning, selecting proper teaching aids, and evaluation of instruction and communication (Misra, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

In the era of continuous growth and development with the verification of higher education systems, society is considered one of the important factors to offer quality education programs for the students. Higher education institutions are getting more attention because of public assessments and international rankings. It is reviewed from the literature that good teachers always have empathy for the students. They are always experienced teachers and well organized and expressive. And in comparison, excellent teachers have a passion for learning, for teaching, and students' learning. This comparison has emphasized a research culture among the institutional environment. National policy by public authorities and quality assurance agencies can also help institutions to develop a quality culture, including the teaching-learning process. Keeping in view the previous literature and findings, the present study was aimed to explore the university teachers' perceptions about the priorities of their universities concerning measures taken for quality teaching.

Methodology

The main focus of the present study was to find out the perception of university teachers about the measures of quality teaching for higher education at their institutions. As the study was survey-based, so, the quantitative research design was used to collect the data. All teachers from public universities of Pakistan were treated as the population of the study, whereas 100 teachers from public universities of Pakistan were selected as the sample of the study through a simple random sampling technique. A self-made questionnaire by researcher comprised of seven key areas of quality teaching identified by OECD (2012), was used as an instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was comprised of 74 statements with the categorization of 7 clusters. Respondents were asked to rate the priority of their institutions on a four-point scale ranging from least to highest priority. Collected data were analyzed through frequency, percentage, and mean score for each statement and each cluster.

Data Analysis

Table 1

Percentage of teachers rating as highest priority and option wise

Sr. #	Statement	% of Teachers Rating as Highest Priority of Their Institutions	Option wise Rating of the Majority
1.	Quality teaching is considered as a deliberate objective of my institution.	26.5 %	option # 3 by 26.5%
2.	The developed framework for the institution reflects the mission, values, and context of the institution.	20.6 %	option # 4 by 38.2%
3.	Department/program level teaching and learning frameworks are in-line with the framework of the institution.	20.6 %	option # 4 by 29.4%
4.	Teaching and learning frameworks clearly define the students' learning outcomes.	20.6 %	option # 4 by 44.1%
5.	Consultation of all stakeholders, including students, is considered for the development of teaching and learning frameworks.	17.6%	option # 3 by 29.4%
6.	Aligning the teaching-learning process is the main purpose of teaching-learning frameworks.	17.6 %	option # 4 by 41.2%
7.	Quality teaching in my institution is emphasized by all contexts, avenues, and occasions.	11.8 %	option # 4 by 38.2%
8.	Quality teaching is promoted by my institution at the regional, national, and international levels.	5.9 %	option # 4 by 32.3%
9.	Quality teaching is celebrated and awarded by teaching awards in my institution.	5.9 %	option # 1 by 26.5%
10	The balance between research and teaching is developed through support for quality teaching.	8.8 %	option # 4 by 35.2%
11	A strong link between research and teaching is used to enhance the teaching-learning process.	20.6 %	option # 4 by 32.4%
12	My institution presents the teaching by quality culture and supporting the teaching-learning scholarships.	11.8 %	option # 4 by 44.1%
13	The teaching-learning framework is always supported by the teaching staff, heads, and team leaders.	5.9 %	option # 3 by 44.1%
14	Human resources, funding, and facilities to support quality teaching are always provided by my institution to meet the needs of teachers.	8.8 %	option # 4 by 50%
15	Quality teaching is monitored by a well-constructed tool, and useful, constructive, and timely feedback is provided to the teachers.	8.8 %	option # 4 by 38.2%
16	The pedagogical competencies that are related to my institution are expected from the teachers' and others' involvement.	8.8 %	option # 4 by 35.3%

17	Most of the time, pedagogical competencies are used as a source for professional development and improving the teaching-learning process.	11.8 %	option # 4 by 35.3%
18	A well-designed professional development with clear objectives associated with quality teaching is provided by my institution.	5.9 %	option # 4 by 38.2%
19	Resources and experts in professional development are always accessible in the right place at the right time.	2.9 %	option # 4 by 32.4%
20	Peer-learning, coaching, mentoring, and collaborative approach are all encouraged by my institution to improve the teaching-learning process.	2.9 %	option # 2 by 29.4%
21	A wide range of mechanisms is used for excellent teaching practices in my institution.	5.9 %	option # 4 by 35.3%
22	Teachers are identified for their excellency and accomplishments for an institution.	14.7 %	option # 2 by 32.4%
23	Students are trained to play an active and constructive role in the achievement of quality teaching.	23.5 %	option # 4 by 29.4%
24	A specific role by my institution is played to foster quality teaching across the institution.	14.7 %	option # 3 by 32.4%
25	Students are encouraged to provide useful and constructive feedback for the evaluation of quality teaching.	14.7 %	option # 4 by 47.1%
26	Students are appropriately awarded for playing an active role in fostering quality teaching.	5.9 %	option # 4 by 14.7%
27	Well-constructed instruments are used to collect students' feedback about the teaching-learning process.	14.7 %	option # 4 by 38.2%
28	Teachers in my institution are aware of how to use the students' feedback to improve their teaching-learning process.	11.8 %	option # 4 by 29.4%
29	Proper mechanisms are used to monitor and collect students' feedback.	8.8 %	option # 4 by 32.4%
30	Modern teaching methods are encouraged for students' active engagement in the teaching-learning process.	11.8 %	option # 4 by 29.4%
31	Staff and students are aware of the use of students' feedback and action results.	5.9 %	option # 3 by 32.4%
32	The culture of on-going communication between students and teachers is encouraged to promote quality teaching.	11.8 %	option # 2 by 29.4%
33	A clear leadership structure is followed by my institution, which highlights the responsibilities for fostering quality teaching.	5.9 %	option # 3 by 35.3%
34	Leadership responsibilities are about the resources and instruments that are needed to communicate	8.8 %	option # 4 by 35.3%

	the results.		
35	Leadership responsibilities are fostered and developed concerning pedagogical leadership.	8.8 %	option # 4 by 38.2%
36	Attractive career paths and possible compensation are offered by my institution for leadership responsibilities.	5.9 %	option # 4 by 32.4%
37	Every faculty member is welcome to adapt and implement the teaching-learning framework for maintaining consistency.	11.8 %	option # 2 by 35.3%
38	Regular monitoring is done across my institution for evaluating the progress of the teaching-learning framework.	8.8 %	option # 4 by 41.2%
39	A well-functioned and specific unit is dedicated to quality teaching with clear instructions, responsibilities, and resources.	2.9 %	option # 3 by 32.4%
40	Research is always promoted by the quality teaching unit; a proper work base is developed by providing pedagogical resources.	2.9 %	option # 3 by 29.4%
41	Effective practices are communicated by a quality teaching unit and provide professional development.	5.9 %	option # 2 by 32.4%
42	The quality teaching unit is full time connected with the departments and disciplines to promote the productivity of best practices.	5.9 %	option # 3 by 26.5%
43	The teaching-learning framework is always integrated with the support services.	11.8 %	option # 4 by 32.4%
44	Policies are regularly reviewed to identify the main factors that are hindering the consistency of quality teaching.	5.9 %	option # 2 by 26.5%
45	Departmental policies for quality teaching are related to the teaching and learning framework of the institution.	5.9 %	option # 3 by 38.2%
46	The objectives of quality teaching are always supported by human resources policies.	11.8 %	option # 2 by 29.4%
47	Performance and career progression policies are evaluated regarding the pedagogical competencies.	8.8 %	option # 4 by 32.3%
48	The full range of effective teaching and learning practices are reflected in the remuneration package.	17.6 %	option # 3 by 26.5%
49	Well-aligned technological policies are used for the more effective teaching-learning process.	11.8 %	option # 4 by 29.4%
50	The learning environment is adaptable for quality teaching with a variety of teaching approaches.	17.6 %	option # 3 by 35.3%
51	Student support policies are well-set with the teaching-learning framework by supporting effective learning.	11.8 %	option # 2 by 35.3%
52	Student support services, including induction, tutoring, and counseling, are always evaluated to assess the contribution to effective learning.	5.9 %	option # 2 by 29.4%

53	Students' and teachers' international policies are regularly used as an opportunity to enhance quality teaching.	8.8 %	option # 2 by 26.5%
54	In my institution, experimentation and innovation in teaching practices are always encouraged and awarded.	11.8 %	option # 4 by 35.3%
55	Students are properly involved in the design and evaluation of innovative teaching-learning experiments.	11.8 %	option # 2 by 29.4%
56	External stakeholders of the teaching-learning framework are properly involved in innovative teaching-learning practices.	0.00 %	option # 2 by 38.2%
57	Teaching practices' innovations are properly evaluated to find out the impact.	2.9 %	option # 2 by 38.2%
58	Multidisciplinary and team approaches are encouraged across my institution for collaborative innovation.	5.9 %	option # 2 by 44.1%
59	Research activities are encouraged by the students for learning and suggesting possible innovations in teaching practices.	8.8 %	option # 4 by 35.3%
60	Teaching practices are continuously evaluated through reflection for effective teaching practices.	5.9 %	option # 4 by 32.4%
61	Teaching-learning challenges are carefully diagnosed, and possible solutions are also suggested.	8.8 %	option # 4 by 29.4%
62	Teaching practices' innovations are carefully designed within the institutional guidelines by managing the risks.	5.9 %	option # 2 by 26.5%
63	Innovations in teaching are properly monitored to assess the consistency concerning institutional strategic development.	5.9 %	option # 2 by 32.4%
64	Knowledge-sharing platforms and sources are all the time accessible to support the enhancement of innovative practices.	2.9 %	option # 2 by 44.1%
65	The term quality teaching is merged with the quality assurance processes and assessment techniques of my institution.	8.8 %	option # 4 by 44.1%
66	The results of internal and external evaluations are considered as an important factor for quality teaching enhancement.	8.8 %	option # 3 by 32.4%
67	Evaluation of teaching performance and evaluation of instruments to support quality are treated separately.	17.6 %	option # 3 by 32.4%
68	Evaluation is designed as an initiative process for quality teaching.	5.9 %	option # 2 by 35.3%
69	Evaluation instruments are well-managed, understandable, and technically supported.	5.9 %	option # 3 by 35.3%
70	The results of the evaluation are analyzed carefully and used carefully to improve the quality teaching-	5.9 %	option # 3 by

	learning process.		32.4%
71	Teachers are professionally trained to interpret and use the results of the evaluation.	8.8 %	option # 3 by 41.2%
72	Reflection to improve the quality teaching is done by using the internal evaluations.	8.8 %	option # 4 by 38.2%
73	A check and balance are maintained to assess the implementations of results and recommendations.	11.8 %	option # 4 by 38.2%
74	Results of evaluations are communicated across the institution for the implementation of results.	8.8 %	option # 3 by 35.3%

Cluster wise mean scores were calculated and interpreted as following:

Table 2
Interpretation of Mean Values

Mean value	Interpretation
between 1 – 1.99	least priority
between 2 – 2.99	less priority
between 3 – 3.99	priority at a moderate level
between 4 – 5	highest priority

Table 3
Cluster wise means

No.	Cluster	Mean	Interpretation
1	Raising awareness of quality teaching	3.29	Priority at a moderate level
2	Developing excellent teachers	3.17	Priority at a moderate level
3	Engaging students	3.08	Priority at a moderate level
4	Building an organization for change and teaching leadership	3.00	Priority at a moderate level
5	Aligning institutional policies to foster quality teaching	3.27	Priority at a moderate level
6	Highlighting innovation as a driver for change	2.83	Priority at a moderate level
7	Assessing the impact	3.12	Priority at a moderate level

There is not even a single cluster given the highest priority

Respondents were asked to rate the priority of their institutes on different options, where 1 indicates the least priority of their institution 2 as less, 3 as moderate, and 4 as the highest priority. The above table gives us a detailed picture of the options # selected by the highest number of respondents for each statement /measure for quality. Results indicate that options # 4 has been selected for a very limited number of statements; hence highest priority is not being given to the measures of quality.

Discussion

The phrase quality teaching is discussed differently by policymakers, researchers, and practitioners. Some of them claimed that quality teaching is directly linked with successful teaching, whereas some of them indicated that quality teaching is student-centered teaching. And also, some of the countries didn't provide a clear definition of quality teaching.

It is found from the data that the evaluation of teaching performance is done for the improvement of teachers in the teaching-learning process, and these evaluation measures are conducted carefully. Results are being informed to the teachers for improvement. These findings are in-line with the findings of many studies as it is stated by Darling-Hammond (2010) that the major aim of evaluating teachers' effectiveness must be for the improvement of teachers' capacities and providing them opportunities to enhance the teaching effectiveness and their institution. It is important to evaluate the quality teaching to find out the need for teachers' recruitment, strengths and weaknesses of teachers, ensuring the professional development of the teachers, identifying mentors, coaches and leaders and allotment of quality teachers to every school (Haskins & Loeb, 2007; Kennedy, 2008; Darling- Hammond, 2010).

Every discussion about quality teaching starts with teachers. It ends with quality teachers, and education is considered the necessary element in the teaching-learning process, and this process becomes more effective with the collaboration of teachers and students. The common conclusion inferred from many of the studies highlights that quality teaching requires quality teachers, and to produce quality teachers, it is important to facilitate teachers to utilize a variety of teaching methods and techniques to refresh their knowledge.

Every education system needs to develop a high standard of quality teaching, which will help to attract, prepare, support, and develop the quality teachers who will be able to teach in a challenging environment. Initiatives from institutions must be taken to prepare the skilled teachers who can teach content with the practice and experiences. More importantly, the policies that develop the teaching context must be related to the quality and role of the individual teacher in the contribution of quality teaching culture (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Conclusion

Based on literature and findings, it is concluded that higher education has always been an important key factor for quality teaching in any institution. The importance of quality teaching cannot be ignored in any century, and it has become a key factor in the sustainable development of any nation, both economically and socially. It has been concluded from the findings that a very low percentage of the teachers thought that the measures which can help to meet the challenges in all the areas of concern are given the highest priority by their universities. It is also inferred from the

findings that raising awareness of quality teaching, developing excellent teachers, Engaging Building organization for change and teaching leadership, Aligning institutional policies to foster quality teaching and Assessing impact being prioritized at a moderate level by Pakistani universities while universities are giving less priority to highlighting innovation as a driver for change. Finally, it is concluded that the majority of the teachers believed that the measures which can help to meet the challenges in all the areas of concern are given moderate or less priority by their universities.

Recommendations

The focus of quality teaching may be on competencies, and teacher role can be transferred from transferring knowledge to knowledge creation. Quality teaching can be a form of "deep learning." Proper channel for quality teaching may be created for quality outcomes and students' learning. Teachers' evaluation reports might be shared with teachers through proper channel for professional growth and development. Active learning and problem-solving may be focused on quality teaching. A learner-centered teaching-learning process might be followed for quality education. Teaching must be made "learning – centered" where the focus is on learning and real needs of the students that are derived from the market and citizenship requirements. Based on the findings of the study, a further comparative study can be conducted to measure the quality teaching among male and female university teachers.

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