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From Instructional Effectiveness to Quality Education: An Exploration into The Impact at University Level

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ABSTRACT

This study has been conducted to explore the impact of Instructional Effectiveness on Quality Education at university level. This qualitative study has been conducted with the help of phenomenology. There were 12 MPhil Education students selected purposively as the sample for the study. They have been sampled from the two public and private universities based in Lahore. The data have been collected with the help of a self-developed Semi-Structured interview protocol. This interview protocol has been validated through the experts' opinion. The results of this study have led to the following conclusions: Instructional effectiveness has a significant impact on the quality of education in the university level. The key factors that determine quality university education were identified as: instructional clarity, teacher–student interaction, diversity of teaching methods, and assessment practices that are aligned. All the participants agreed that student-centered, interactive and methodologically varied teaching improves the academic engagement, understanding and learning results from the University level. On the basis of the results, it has been recommended that university staff need to be provided continued professional development in teaching skills, instructional variation and formative assessment design to ensure that their pedagogical practices are aligned with the academic needs of university students.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the foundation and very core of human development, social change and national progress. With the knowledge-driven nature of today's societies growing, the need for quality education has been on the rise in all levels of the educational system. This is well captured in the Sustainable Development



Goal 4 (SDG 4) of the United Nations which calls for the provision of inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2023). However, access to education has improved greatly globally, but there is significant variation in the quality of learning that takes place in these schools. An estimated 300 million students globally are still unable to read or write basic words and numbers, a gap that will hinder their ability to realize their potential as individuals and as workers and citizens, as highlighted by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2023), and which demands systematic investigation of the determinants of education quality.

The principle of instructional effectiveness, or how well intentional instructional practices, pedagogical strategies and decisions lead to meaningful and measurable gains in student learning outcomes, is central to the discourse on quality education (Engida et al., 2024). It is widely accepted that the most immediate and closest to the student factor of student achievement is the quality of the classroom instruction. As pointed out by Barber and Mourshed (2003/2004) “the quality of an education system is no greater than its teachers.” (p. 2) This recognition has led to an increasing number of studies examining how instructional quality and practices translate into improvements in learning, academic achievement, and increased educational equity.

The delivery of instruction has consistently been shown to be positively and significantly related to student achievement in a variety of subject areas and educational levels in empirical investigations. In the study by Engida et al. (2024), the researchers used the Framework for Teaching (FfT) to analyze the dimensions of how teachers deliver their instructional activities in primary schools in Ethiopia, and the results showed that teacher's delivery of instruction (communication with students, questioning and discussion techniques, and responsiveness) showed a statistically significant positive relationship with English language achievement. The results are consistent with the international evidence base which indicates that the structural and interactive aspects of classroom teaching are among the most significant factors linked to learning outcome (Petalcorin & Tan, 2026; Zhang & Kuang, 2023).

In addition to specific instructional behaviors, increasing research has examined teacher-level attributes that underlie effective instruction. In an empirical analysis of 161 in-service teachers in secondary schools in Estonia, Leijen et al. (2024) revealed three different profiles of teachers: the “competent” profile (high GPK and high SE), “over-confident” profile (average GPK and very low SE), and “insecure” profile (low GPK and average SE). They found that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are more important than GPK alone in the short-term but that GPK is an important factor in teachers' professional persistence in the long-term and their commitment to the profession. The fine line between knowledge, confidence and instructional behavior has important implications for teacher preparation and professional development policy.

Teacher professional development (TPD) has become a catalyst of learning to improve teaching and learning more systematically. Based on a review of 125 studies, Ventista and Brown (2023) concluded that professional learning programs that included continuous coaching, collaborative continuous professional development (CPD) and that lasted over extended periods of time were best able to enhance student skills and student learning. Their analysis also showed that there was a critical gap in the evidence base, with only 11 of 125 studies using experimental or quasi-experimental designs giving rise to the need to have more rigorous causal research in this area. In the same way, Sancar et al. (2021) put forward a new theoretical approach to teacher development, stressing that any learning that is to benefit the instruction should be of both content and pedagogical dimensions, learning should be integrated and that it should be contextually sensitive.

Learning environment and broader systemic factors mediate between the relationship of instructional effectiveness and quality education. Paloş and Vîrgă (2023) found that personal and social resources (such as teacher support, peer collaboration, and classroom climate) had a significant influence in the mediation of the relationship between instructional efforts and student academic and emotional well-being. Instead, their study, published in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology*, found that in classrooms that had greater peer support, students were more likely to gain adaptive coping skills and achieve better academic

performance, which highlights the influence of instruction in the context of the classroom ecology. This ecological approach is in line with the study conducted by Petalcorin and Tan (2026) which used structural equation modeling (SEM) that showed that instructional quality, in addition to school governance and stakeholder participation, has a significant effect on the effectiveness of the school.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought and highlighted the critical need to understand instructional effectiveness as a question in education systems worldwide, especially during times of pandemic. In low- and middle-income countries, the World Bank (2022) estimated that learning poverty reached 57% in 2019, and stayed this level or increased to between 68% and 71% during the pandemic, representing the loss by students of the equivalent of a whole year of learning on average (Schady et al., 2023). This unparalleled learning loss has brought policy focus back to non-negotiables of educational recovery and resilience such as evidence-based instructional practices, pedagogical innovation and effective teaching. The digital aspect of teaching has also been highlighted: A systematic review found in *Frontiers in Education* (2025) showed that adequate professional development programs in digital instructional integration, especially those that focus on collaborative learning format, mentoring and blended teaching methods, have a positive impact on teacher innovation and pedagogical improvements, resulting in more student-centred instructional methods that stimulate engagement, critical thinking and knowledge application.

Although there have been a considerable number of publications on how to make teaching more effective and how to achieve a good education, there are still many research gaps. Although there is a considerable amount of research on the subject, the existing literature is geographically limited, having a majority of its empirical support primarily from the Global North (Ventista & Brown, 2023). Additionally, self-reported teacher perceptions, or classroom observation tools that may not be consistent across different cultural and institutional contexts, are used to measure instructional quality in studies (Hill et al., 2024). Moreover, there has been a lack of link between the macro-level policy talk in schools and the micro-level classroom experience, and less focus on the role that structural factors, such as the workload, school resources, and institutional leadership play between the classroom and the school policy.

METHODOLOGY

This study has been conducted to explore the impact of Instructional Effectiveness on Quality Education at university level. This qualitative study has been conducted with the help of phenomenology. There were 12 MPhil Education students selected purposively as the sample for the study. They have been sampled from the two public and private universities based in Lahore. The data have been collected with the help of a self-developed Semi-Structured interview protocol. This interview protocol has been validated through the experts' opinion.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The data have been analyzed with the help of Thematic analysis after the collection. The detail is as under:

Role of Instructional Clarity in Promoting Quality Education

The participants were generally agreed that clarity of instruction is an essential aspect of quality education in the university. They stressed that if the teachers set the learning goals clearly, explain the concepts systematically, and communicate in a language that is easy to understand, students will have a deeper understanding and will participate more. Most participants indicated that their academic performance improved when their teachers were clear at every stage of the teaching process.

One of the participant stated that:

My learning experience was greatly enriched by the clarity of instruction. If my professor was able to express the concept clearly and state learning objectives at the beginning, I was able to follow each lesson along without any confusion and I was able to truly understand the subject matter without any nice awkward frustrations.

Another participants shared that:

Good teaching is the backbone of good university teaching. Logically structured content and the presentation of ideas in a coherent sequence, provided by professors, foster a systematic building of knowledge, leading to a better academic performance and deepening of students' interest in the course material.

Another participant has a similar position that:

I felt the learning goals were explicitly communicated by my teacher before I started a lesson and I was very motivated in learning and actively participating. That clarity took away the cloudiness, provided direction to my efforts and made my involvement with academia much more fulfilling.

Another participants shared similarly that:

Academic teachers that communicate clearly and explicitly create much greater learning outcomes for their students, in my academic experience. I was able to learn more efficiently, complex educational theories, when they were presented with proper logical structure, organised sequencing and clear expression.

One of the participant stated that:

I will not speak of my overall experience in the University without giving credit to the clarity of instruction. After learning exactly what to expect in each session, I was able to be more confident, more interactive, and more successful with my academic evaluations all year long.

Another participants shared that:

Precise and deliberate articulation of content is a core requirement of quality education, at all times and in all contexts. Students' learning improved significantly when professors avoided unnecessary jargon, gave well structured step by step explanations, regularly asked students to check their understanding throughout the lesson and ensured comprehension by the end of the lesson.

Another player agrees that:

I was able to make some sense out of the new knowledge in relation to what I already knew because of the clarity of instruction. It would have been intimidating and hard to follow and comprehend at a university level, with no relevance to anything I would have been able to relate to or understand while I was there to be able to use.

Another participants shared that:

I noticed that student engagement was consistently higher in courses with more effective teaching and that student engagement was linked to the instructional clarity of the course. With well-structured and clear expectations for students to play an active role in discussions and ask more thoughtful questions, they were able to learn more and better during formal assessments.

Another participants shared similarly that:

The clear and deliberate teaching gave me clear guidance in the academic field and greatly alleviated my former anxiety. Having a clear idea of the focus of each lesson enabled me to be more effective in my preparation and assured interaction during each lesson of the course.

Another participants shared that:

Professors who repeatedly voiced ideas clearly and repeated the conceptual elements regularly were able to help me through the most difficult concepts. For me, the idea of being clear in instruction is completely divorced from truly quality education in the university system in any field.

Another participant puts forward the following opinion:

I often found myself wanting to learn more about what I was supposed to learn but the information and directions were unclear in some semesters. But when teachers were conscious, about being clear in their presentation, I quickly got back into academic confidence, understood the contents of the course, and my academic performance was an obvious improvement, across all of my assessments, in a noticeable and steady manner.

One of the participant stated that:

The overall quality of my learning experiences at university were directly and powerfully influenced by the clarity of the instruction. Students with clearly framed objectives in their well structured lectures would provide me with a strategic direction and purpose to my independent study, and I would be able to do much better than I was doing.

Teacher–Student Interaction as a Determinant of Educational Quality

The participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of quality teacher-student relationships for achieving good quality at the university. They stated that a communicative classroom atmosphere, in which the teacher encourages questions, gives prompt feedback and is genuinely interested in the achievements of the students, has a positive impact on their learning. The participants were generally satisfied with the positive interaction as it was motivating and enriching to them academically.

One of the participant stated that:

It is when my professors weren't being judgmental or condescending, they were open to having me ask questions as an academic learner that I felt valued. The sense of belonging to the intellectual community drove me to delve deeper into the course material and directly affected my overall academic performance and confidence.

Another participants shared that:

Interactive teaching brought about personal relevance and meaningfulness in education. The teachers who listened and responded positively to students during each session of the programme really contributed to improving the level of learning that I experienced during the programme and each session was really worthwhile and stimulating.

Another participant says that:

Healthy and consistent teacher–student interaction created a psychologically safe space that encouraged intellectual exploration and academic risk-taking. When I knew I was going to be the language of my professor's mind, I was far more confident in articulating my thoughts and challenging ideas with confidence.

Another participants shared similarly that:

Real quality education blossoms and grows in a place where teachers interact with students in a real sense and meaningful way. Purposeful and thoughtful academic conversation always enriched my learning and understanding, throughout every subject, whereas the one-directional lecturing greatly restricted my learning potential.

One of the participant stated that:

It was evident that our intellectual needs were being honored by the professors who actively encouraged discussion and who thoughtfully responded to student concerns. This ongoing and authentic communication raised the level of the entire classroom and was invaluable to our learning around complex academic content we will be using in the course.

Another participants shared that:

My instructor's two-way feedback was a real strength in the programme, boosting my confidence as a student and my understanding of the topic. Above all else, in my university years, the one most critical factor to a successful education was interaction between the teacher and the student.

Another participant says that:

Instructors who thoughtfully asked questions and allowed students to question the commonly held beliefs were truly engaged in the learning process and intellectually stimulating. That highly interactive environment definitely differentiated good quality education from simply passing on or passively receiving content at university level.

One of the other participants commented that:

Feedback from my professor in the classroom during interactions was always helpful for me to rapidly and efficiently correct my misconceptions. The timely responses and targeted were able to keep me productive and on track, and gave me the direction I needed throughout the course.

Another participants shared similarly that:

I always learned more and did better in courses where professors were still available to talk to students and were still around. Throughout the semester, their willingness to discuss, clarify and thoughtfully respond to student ideas made for highly memorable and meaningful learning experiences that were quite different from typical lectures.

Another participant shared that he was going to be a part of the group:

The education process went much more human and personally meaningful to me having regular contact with my teachers. I felt a better connection to very complex material when my teacher was able to relate to me as an individual academic learner rather than the whole class.

Another player says that:

The quality of university education is much different from mechanical instruction, and is distinguished by active engagement between teacher and student. Active engagement between teacher and student is basic to good university teaching, as opposed to mechanical instruction. If my professors took time to interact with me—when it mattered the most, then I became more critical, more intellectually curious, and actually more interested in the subject I was studying.

One of the participant stated that:

If it was not for the regular and significant encounters I had with others, my college days would have been just as flat and boring. Through the school year, teachers who actively and fully connected with students made the school unique from a learning point of view, and much more meaningful and personally meaningful on an intellectual level.

Use of Instructional Strategies and Teaching Methods

The participants noted that the diversity and suitability of teaching methods have a great impact on the quality of education in universities. They found that the instructors who are using different learning strategies like collaborative learning, case studies, problem-based learning and using multimedia are more effective in meeting the needs of different learning styles. Too much emphasis on the lecture-only approach was widely disapproved of for its restriction on deep learning and student participation.

One of the participant stated that:

Even the trickiest of ideas were made accessible and engaging by professors who intentionally employed diverse and suitable pedagogy. The case studies and planned group discussions enabled me to learn abstract educational concepts in a memorable, meaningful and real-life way that I could relate to and learn from personally and apply to my own, practical, and meaningful classroom.

Another participants shared that:

When the teachers went beyond the traditional teaching style and used more active learning techniques, I felt intellectually challenged much more than before and was much better equipped for the larger issue that I would face in my future work life, as well as in formal exams.

Another participant says that:

I was constantly stimulated and engaged with the knowledge gained in the semester through intentional use of a variety of teaching techniques. However, Problem Based Learning (PBL) was particularly successful in helping me to develop my critical, analytical and evaluative thinking skills, which traditional lectures did not seem to be able to do.

Another participants shared similarly that:

A good teacher who is really good must be quite flexible in his pedagogy and be ready to adapt his teaching methods to suit the needs and requirements of his students. The professors who had reflected and adapted their pedagogical approach to the content and individual learner learning needs were able to achieve significantly better and sustainable learning outcomes consistently.

One of the participant stated that:

My interpersonal academic skills and my greater understanding of the subject matter were greatly improved by the collaborative learning activities I undertook and the ones my professors organised and

facilitated me to do during the course. Better learning outcomes were obtained when facilitating collaboration with peers with competent guidance than when children worked individually.

Another participants shared that:

I was always amazed at the teachers who used just lecturing throughout the semester and not able to capture any interest from their students. However, when multimedia tools, live demonstrations, and truly participatory learning were well integrated into lessons, the impact on students' learning, memory, and effectiveness were greatly heightened.

Another participant would say that:

“Multiple and varied teaching strategies taught me the content, and how to learn it effectively and adaptively as well. These unique pedagogical approaches provided different and valuable entry points to the learning of difficult and abstract academic content.”

Another participants shared that:

The professors who regularly used an inquiry based and reflective approach to teaching encouraged me to think outside of the box, beyond the textbook. That was an intellectually intense way of taking in information, and it changed the way I receive information from being passively received to formally engaged, intellectual consumption of information, which I find to be very central to quality higher education.

Another participants shared similarly that:

“When my teacher skilfully used his storytelling, real-life examples and contextual scenarios in lessons, even the most abstract academic theories were grasped, remembered and applied in meaningful ways in a variety of practical situations that arose much beyond the classroom.”

Another participants shared that:

There was effective implementation of a range of teaching and learning strategies to meet the needs of the range of learners in the classroom. Teachers who truly understood this learning diversity showed good instructional practice and genuine concern for effective education when they adapted their teaching methods to account for it.

Another participant says that:

I found in my experience, that the teaching method used by the teacher was more important than the content itself. The way that a professor taught was the level to which I really learned and retained complex academic material over the course of time.

One of the participant stated that:

The truly enriching moments in my own learning were when teachers were able to integrate effective teaching with student-centred teaching. As a result, this thoughtfully designed integration always resulted in a challenging, yet nurturing learning classroom that fostered authentic understanding, and that resulted in long-term academic retention of complex concepts.

Assessment Practices and Their Impact on Learning Quality

Participants discussed the impact that the assessment practices they had in their own classes had on their educational experience. They believe that they improve learning outcomes and have a positive impact on academic development when they are connected to learning goals and provide timely, constructive feedback. On the other hand, tests that were thought of as mechanical or irrelevant to the learning objective were cited as detrimental to real learning. In specific, formative assessment received a lot of positive feedback with regards to enabling continuous and ongoing development.

One of the participant stated that:

Assessments that were clearly oriented towards what had been taught got me to actively access the material, instead of just memorizing it. Evaluation, a process designed with fairness and transparency, is an integral part of educational quality at the university level in all disciplines.

Another participants shared that:

“The specific and constructive feedback I received on academic work on a regular basis enabled me to identify and take note of my weak points clearly and to improve my academic performance in the semester and beyond.”

Another participant says that:

I could keep track of my own learning process all year long when the regular and well-designed formative assessments were used by teachers. The continuous and regular testing made sure that I stayed in the game, fixed up my concepts of the material as early as possible, and strengthened my understanding of the material over time.

Another participants shared similarly that:

A one-sided approach to assessment through summative assessments only, simply didn't reflect a comprehensive understanding of what I had truly learned. The diversity, holistic and well-designed assessment practices were extremely helpful in enhancing the overall quality of the education and better reflected my learning throughout the course.

One of the participant stated that:

It is a belief that I hold strongly that the quality of assessment design is integral to the quality of education offered in a university. When my professors developed assessments that truly engaged critical thinking, analysis, and real world application, I learned a lot more than I learned based on superficial understanding of the content.

Another participants shared that:

“Specific and timely feedback, and feedback that is truly detailed and specific, on all my academic work was always one of the most valuable and most impactful aspects of my entire university educational experience and on-going professional development.”

Another participant says that:

I was very grateful for teachers who used assessment as a tool to enhance learning, instead of just as a grading system. They provided careful and considered reflective feedback that always helped to stimulate real self improvement and assisted me to develop my analytical and critical/evaluative skills, which are the most crucial skills needed for sustained higher academic performance.

Another participants shared that:

Less than ideal task design and misconceived evaluation systems were a major part of the reason that I didn't attend university as much as I would have liked, and that I struggled with the learning content in certain courses during my university career.

Another participants shared similarly that:

Those professors who were able to articulate with precision and clarity from the beginning what they were assessing and how I could get ready for that assessment consistently helped me work much closer to my own true academic potential. The provision of transparent and fair assessment is a key and non-negotiable aspect of the effectiveness and quality of teaching and learning in universities.

Another participants shared that:

“Reliable, regular monitoring throughout the semester kept me continually accountable, intellectually stimulated and engaged with the content of the course in a way that could not be so well achieved or replaced by periodic high stakes testing.”

Another participant says that:

When assessments were purposefully intended to test true concept learning, rather than rote memorization, I definitely put much more meat on the bones of learning. Steer clear of the term "academically qualified" when referring to the graduates of instructors who designed holistic and authentic evaluations and simply say that they were truly and broadly educated.

One of the participant stated that:

The assessment systems and learning in the university are deeply connected and each without the other would have no meaning. Throughout, I was consistently challenged to think deeply, to reflect, and to be critical, all in the context of honest and purposeful work and fair assessment.

CONCLUSION

This study has been conducted to explore the impact of Instructional Effectiveness on Quality Education at university level. This qualitative study has been conducted with the help of phenomenology. There were 12 MPhil Education students selected purposively as the sample for the study. They have been sampled from the two public and private universities based in Lahore. The data have been collected with the help of a self-developed Semi-Structured interview protocol. This interview protocol has been validated through the experts' opinion. The results of this study indicate that the effectiveness of teaching and learning is a significant aspect that affects the quality of university education. The four key factors of instructional clarity, meaningful teacher–student interaction, diversity of teaching strategies, and well-aligned assessment practices were found to be the most important factors in quality university education. Clear learning goals, positive interactions in the classroom, a range of teaching strategies, and positive feedback processes were regularly identified as having a significant positive impact on academic involvement, understanding, and achievement of participants. On the other hand, deep and meaningful learning was seen as hindered by rigid pedagogy, based on lecture and mechanically created forms of assessment. Together these results suggest that student-centered, intentional, and integrated instruction is essential to the creation of quality university education, where each of the four dimensions identified is a necessary component of enriching and transformative university education.

Recommendations

The recommendations are as under:

- University staff need to be provided continued professional development in teaching skills, instructional variation and formative assessment design to ensure that their pedagogical practices are aligned with the academic needs of university students.
- Existing and new mechanisms of meaningful teacher-student interaction should be established and institutionalized in university affairs (feedback system, interactive classes etc.) so as to create communicating and learning-enhancing classrooms in all departments.

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