

Exploring the Prevalence and Implementation of Teaching Pedagogies Among University Educators: A Qualitative Inquiry

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the prevalence and implementation of pedagogical approaches among university educators in Karachi, Pakistan. Using semi-structured interviews with 12 educators from both public and private universities, the study investigates commonly employed teaching methods and the strategies used to implement them effectively. Thematic analysis revealed that while traditional lecturing remains prevalent (mentioned by 83% of participants), educators increasingly integrate collaborative learning, inquiry-based methods, and reflective practices into their teaching. Creative strategies such as project-based learning, the use of smartphones and internet-based tools, quick quizzes, and humor were also highlighted as tools for fostering student engagement. Despite varying familiarity with theoretical pedagogical terms, most educators intuitively apply principles from constructivist and student-centered models. The findings offer insight into the diverse, evolving practices shaping higher education classrooms in Pakistan and provide direction for teacher training, curriculum development, and educational policy.

Keywords: Pedagogy, Higher Education, University Teachers, Qualitative Research, Teaching Strategies

Introduction

The quality of teaching in higher education plays a pivotal role in shaping students' intellectual development, critical thinking, and career readiness. Globally, there has been a significant shift from teacher-centered approaches such as rote memorization and lecturing toward more learner-centered pedagogies that promote engagement, collaboration, and independent inquiry (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Pedagogical approaches like constructivism (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978), collaborative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2009), reflective teaching (Schön, 1983), and inquiry-based instruction (Dewey, 1938) have received growing attention for their potential to enhance learning outcomes.

In the context of Pakistan, however, university teaching often remains entrenched in traditional models, with limited institutional emphasis on pedagogical training (Rehman et al., 2015). While curriculum reforms and policy shifts—such as those introduced by the Higher Education Commission (HEC)—have encouraged modern teaching strategies, the implementation of these reforms remains uneven and under-documented. Teachers often lack formal education in pedagogy

and rely heavily on personal teaching experiences, informal peer influence, or trial-and-error methods (Qureshi et al., 2020). In this environment, understanding what pedagogies are actually being used, and how, becomes crucial.

Despite numerous theoretical discussions about effective pedagogical practices, there is a dearth of empirical, qualitative research that explores how university educators in Pakistan conceptualize and implement these methods in their classrooms. Most existing studies in the region are quantitative, limiting the depth of understanding regarding teacher beliefs, reasoning, and lived experiences. Furthermore, there is insufficient literature that captures how educators reconcile local classroom realities—such as overcrowding, diverse student abilities, lack of technological infrastructure, and limited institutional support—with pedagogical ideals.

This study addresses this gap by exploring two key questions:

1. What pedagogical approaches are most commonly employed by university educators in Karachi?
2. What strategies and techniques are used to implement these pedagogies in classroom settings?

The study is grounded in a qualitative approach to capture the complexity of teacher experiences and pedagogical reasoning. By focusing on educators in both public and private institutions, the research also offers comparative insights into the variability of pedagogical practices across institutional types.

Theoretically, the study is informed by multiple learning frameworks. Constructivist learning theory (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978) positions learners as active agents who build knowledge through experience and reflection. Collaborative learning theories emphasize the social nature of learning, where peer interactions enhance understanding (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Reflective pedagogy (Schön, 1983) encourages teachers and students to evaluate their own learning processes. Inquiry-based models promote student curiosity and self-directed exploration (Dewey, 1938). These frameworks serve as a lens through which participants' teaching strategies are understood and interpreted.

The current study, therefore, offers timely insights into how theory translates into practice in the unique cultural and institutional context of Pakistani higher education. By elevating teachers' voices and showcasing their pedagogical ingenuity, the research contributes to the broader discourse on improving teaching quality in developing countries.

Methodology

Research Design This study employed a qualitative research design, utilizing semi-structured, in-depth interviews to explore university teachers' use and understanding of pedagogical practices. A constructivist epistemology underpinned the research, allowing for an interpretive, meaning-making approach that emphasizes participant perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to analyze and categorize data into meaningful themes.

Participants A total of 12 educators from HEC-recognized universities in Karachi participated in the study, with equal representation from public ($n = 6$) and private ($n = 6$) sectors. Participants were purposively sampled to ensure diversity in teaching experience and institutional context. Six educators had 1–5 years of experience, and six had more than 6 years.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria Participants were included if they:

- Were actively teaching at the time of the interview
- Had not taken a professional break exceeding one year
- Taught in-person classes
- Were affiliated with an HEC-accredited university

Educators who taught exclusively online or were on academic leave were excluded.

Data Collection Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, conducted either face-to-face or via phone. Each session lasted approximately 45 minutes and was audio-recorded with participant consent. The interview guide included open-ended questions related to teaching styles, pedagogical awareness, strategy selection, and implementation challenges.

Data Analysis All interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase method. Coding was conducted manually and reviewed in two rounds with the assistance of PhD scholars. Quasi-quantification was used to indicate how many participants mentioned a specific theme or strategy (e.g., "8 out of 12 teachers").

Ethical Considerations Ethical approval was obtained from the researcher's institution. Informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity were ensured.

Findings

Prevalence of Pedagogies Among Educators Educators reported using a range of pedagogical approaches. While many did not reference formal theory, their practices reflected principles of constructivism, collaboration, inquiry, and reflection.

Table 1 Pedagogical Approaches Used by University Educators (N = 12)

Pedagogical Approach	No. of Educators	% of Sample
Traditional Lecturing	10	83%
Collaborative Learning	8	67%
Constructivism	7	58%
Reflective Practice	5	42%
Inquiry-Based Learning	4	33%
Integrative Approach	2	17%
Student-Centered Learning	3	25%
Socratic Method	2	17%
Flipped Classroom	1	8%
Differentiated Instruction	1	8%
Use of Technology (e.g., Kahoot)	5	42%

Implementation Strategies and Techniques Teachers applied a range of strategies such as quick questioning, use of technology, project-based learning, and participation-based approaches.

Table 2 Teaching Strategies Used by Educators (N = 12)

Strategy	No. of Educators	% of Sample
Questioning / Quick Quizzes	11	92%
Group or Individual Projects	4	33%
Use of Smartphones / Internet	4 (phones), 3 (internet)	33% / 25%
Humor	1	8%
Active Participation	6	50%
Topic Connection & Repetition	1	8%

Discussion

The findings of this study offer valuable insight into the lived pedagogical practices of university educators in Karachi, revealing a nuanced blend of traditional and modern teaching approaches. The continued dominance of **traditional lecturing**, mentioned by over 80% of participants, reflects deeply embedded cultural and structural norms in Pakistan's higher education system. This is consistent with Hoodbhoy (2009), who argued that the legacy of colonial educational structures

has led to an overreliance on content delivery and memorization, with limited emphasis on independent thinking. Similarly, Qureshi et al. (2020) reported that large class sizes, rigid syllabi, and limited professional development opportunities have entrenched the lecture method as the “default” strategy.

Yet, alongside this traditionalism, there is clear evidence of **pedagogical evolution**. A notable trend toward **constructivist** and **collaborative learning** approaches was observed, particularly among younger and more adaptive faculty. These educators described their use of group work, student-led discussions, debates, and inquiry-based tasks — aligning with learner-centered paradigms that emphasize active participation and knowledge co-construction (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1970). This mirrors the work of Gul and Rehman (2017), who highlighted that in South Asian contexts, many teachers implement progressive pedagogical strategies intuitively, guided more by classroom needs than by formal pedagogical theory.

One striking pattern in this study was the implementation of **reflective and inquiry-based strategies** by nearly half of the educators. Practices such as “before-and-after” writing tasks and scenario-based questioning illustrate an appreciation for **metacognitive development**, even if these were not explicitly framed as such by the participants. These findings resonate with Dewey’s (1938) model of experiential learning, where education is conceived as a process of continuous reflection and interaction with real-world experiences.

Moreover, the application of **blended teaching strategies**, such as the use of Kahoot, WhatsApp, or YouTube videos, demonstrates an organic adaptation of **technology-enhanced pedagogy** — a necessary shift in the post-COVID educational climate (Khan et al., 2021). These implementations suggest that teachers are not only responding to student engagement needs but are also beginning to **bridge the digital divide**, albeit informally. In contexts where formal e-learning infrastructure is lacking, such improvisation is commendable and worthy of institutional support.

It is particularly important to note that while only a minority of participants used formal educational terminology (e.g., “flipped classroom,” “differentiated instruction”), their teaching actions reflected the **essence** of these concepts. This underscores a critical insight: many educators practice modern pedagogy without necessarily naming it. This discrepancy highlights the need for **pedagogical literacy** — not only to improve instructional design but also to enable educators to articulate and reflect on their practice using shared academic language.

The discussion also surfaces the **unevenness** of pedagogical implementation between public and private institutions. Educators in private universities were more likely to describe the use of student-centered and inquiry-based methods. This may be attributed to differences in class size, institutional flexibility, student expectations, or even generational shifts in teaching staff. As Rehman et al. (2015) suggest, institutional culture plays a critical role in shaping pedagogical freedom and risk-taking.

These findings collectively point to an urgent need for **context-sensitive faculty development programs**. Traditional workshops and lectures on pedagogy are unlikely to resonate with educators who are already innovating within real-world constraints. Instead, faculty development must be **practice-based, collaborative, and reflective**, providing opportunities for educators to explore pedagogy through dialogue, peer observation, and guided experimentation (Qadir & Hussain, 2022). Such programs must validate the lived expertise of teachers while introducing them to relevant theoretical frameworks that deepen their practice.

Finally, this study adds to a growing body of evidence advocating for **bottom-up pedagogical reform** in higher education. Rather than relying solely on top-down policy mandates, institutions must actively listen to the voices of their teaching staff — understanding how pedagogy is shaped by intuition, trial-and-error, student feedback, and contextual limitations. The role of the university should not be to impose pedagogy, but to cultivate it.

Conclusion and Implications

This study explored the prevalence and implementation of pedagogical practices among university educators in Karachi through a qualitative, experience-driven lens. Findings revealed a reliance on traditional lecturing alongside emerging use of collaborative, reflective, and inquiry-based methods. Educators employed diverse implementation strategies including project-based learning, questioning, participation, and digital tools — often without formal pedagogical terminology but with clear pedagogical intent.

The implications of these findings are multifold:

- **Policy and curriculum designers** must recognize the practical constraints faced by educators and support more flexible, grounded training programs.
- **Faculty development initiatives** should move beyond theoretical workshops to include practice-sharing, peer mentoring, and classroom-based reflective learning.
- **Educational researchers** should further explore how pedagogical knowledge is formed in low-resource, high-enrollment contexts — and how to support it more effectively.

Finally, this study contributes to a limited but growing body of qualitative literature documenting the pedagogical realities of higher education in Pakistan. Future studies could compare experiences across disciplines or focus on student perspectives to deepen understanding of pedagogical impact.

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