

Role of University Department Heads in Providing Feedback to the Teachers

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Abstract

This study highlights the critical role of leadership in delivering feedback to educators concerning their instructional practices, professional growth, and the research environment. Qualitative research with a phenomenological research design was used to investigate the findings. Utilizing a convenient sampling method, interviews were conducted with three department heads and eleven teachers from the University of the Punjab, Lahore. Separate semi-structured interview protocols were created for both heads and teachers. Thematic analysis was applied to derive the findings. The results indicated that feedback from department heads enhances teachers' instructional capabilities, thereby contributing to quality education. Feedback is provided during staff meetings, and individual discussions are held to address specific concerns. Additionally, department heads foster a research-oriented culture among teachers by facilitating participation in seminars, conferences, and international trips. Teachers reported that while feedback on professional development is offered, there are limited resources and avenues for their professional advancement. Some educators noted that their heads create opportunities for networking through seminars, workshops, and conferences. Furthermore, university faculty face constraints in accessing resources necessary for professional excellence. In situations where resources are scarce, it is imperative for heads to ensure equitable access for all teachers and to allocate resources to affiliated instructors in a fair manner.

Keywords: Feedback, future goal, professional development, quality teaching, research culture

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Introduction

Supervision encompasses a range of duties and obligations related to technical, professional, and interpersonal elements. It also involves implementing tactics and initiatives to enhance the environment for teaching and learning (Amelia et al., 2021; Latifi et al., 2021). At the part of university heads, their role is more sensitive as it is linked with higher level educational activities. For learning process to be effective, they need to look for such practices which are useful for the betterment in managing the teaching and learning process (Arong & Ogbadu, 2010). The role of the Head of Departments in Universities is crucial in providing effective feedback to promote and enhance the professional growth and learning of teachers. They serve as a significant source of encouragement and support for teachers, especially when addressing issues and challenges related to instructional development and the teaching and learning process.

21st century is the era of science and technology, where higher level educational environment has become complex and diverse day by day. High learning standards are set at university level for all involved personnel to achieve educational success. This in turn has placed high demand on the role of universities' heads. Feedback is seen as a key element in quality teaching as well as in students learning in a more effective way when they are aware of what they have to teach/learn to do to improve their teaching/learning (Amelia et al., 2021). If feedback is to be effective it must be timely, appropriate and proper to the context (Ramsden, 2003). When natural consequences are insufficient, feedback is one kind of consequence that can keep behavior in check. Feedback should be crucial for daily activities performed in the workplace (Johnson & Akpapuna, 2018).

Heads of academic departments in universities are vital to the effectiveness of teaching learning process when they provide effective feedback to the teachers in creating sustainable environment. Based on their academic background, standing, and disciplinary expertise, they can influence the well-being of faculty members, the educational experience of students, and the overall sustainability of the institution by reflecting and on that basis by providing feedback timely and relevantly. Heads of the departments are highly efficient in offering academic guidance when it comes to delivering professional growth opportunities (Akuegwu & Nwi-ue, 2017). When feedback is provided by the departmental heads at university level to the teachers, they improve their learning and when provided by the peers to teachers they improve their teaching and when provided by the parents to teachers they improve and so on. There are

many studies in this regard for the improvement of teaching learning process from several ways, but less research is reported about providing feedback to the teachers by their departmental heads at university level. The case is same in Pakistani scenario that less research was found in this area. There is need to see the effect of feedback practices for teachers when it is provided by the university heads of different department in Education. The purpose of this study is to understand the feedback practices provided to the teachers by their departmental heads at university level.

The present study will be significant in higher education as it has direct relevance to teaching learning process. The results will provide information about the effective role of departmental heads of university in providing feedback to their teachers in improving their quality teaching. The current study will add up to the existing body of literature.

Related Research

Attaining the highest standard of education across all levels is a common objective pursued by nations worldwide. The realization of this goal hinges on various factors, with a significant emphasis on the diverse personnel within each educational framework. Notably, heads in educational institutions play a crucial part in reaching the desired level of excellence. Research focusing on proficient and successful educational institutions have underscored the pivotal role played by these roles of heads (Salfi, 2011).

Universities serve as hubs for higher education, and by preparing their students to be global citizens in the outside business world, teachers help them to ensure that students receive an excellent education. It is only feasible, though, if university teachers possess the will to successfully complete their tasks. Teachers are the building blocks of universities, without a question, educators in any nation are the developers of a positive and progressive society (Rasheed et al., 2010). Leaders are heads and primary decision-makers, especially when it comes to processes within their respective departments. It is anticipated that leaders will oversee and supervise all aspects of the daily operations of the faculty and staff comprising the department (Kruse et al., 2020). The performance of faculty in higher education is influenced by various factors, with a particular emphasis on the leadership style of department heads (Jamali et al., 2021).

Departmental heads perform many roles. One of the most important role is to plan strategies and activities to improve the quality of education at higher level and then reflect on those plans to make improvement.

Feedback is an important part of any reflection. Here the role of head is very critical in providing feedback to their associate teachers to improve the whole process of learning and teaching. The 360-degree performance appraisal system places a strong emphasis on delivering feedback to employees. By using 360-degree performance appraisal system strengths and weaknesses can be identified through departmental heads to improve the institution (Görün et al., 2018). Effective supervision of instructional and professional development is a reliable indicator of the success of accreditation programs and licensure examinations in higher education institutions (Salendab & Dapitan, 2021).

Feedback provided by the departmental head to university teachers is one of the aspects which encourage in developing high performance work systems among teachers. It is important for the head to provide due feedback and appropriate resources for the teacher to utilize (Hunsaker & Hunsanker, 2009). The study by Ahea et al. (2016) highlights the transformative impact of enhancing feedback practices in higher education. Engaging in reflective practice is crucial for feedback to be effective and easily accessible resources for writing (Yang 2023).

Feedback is present in both our personal and professional lives, providing insights into what was successful and what was not. In a professional environment, it is crucial to comprehend the mechanics of feedback to thoughtfully construct performance evaluations that lead to positive organizational results (Görün et al., 2018). Feedback is the result of our performance and serves to inform us about our progress towards a specific goal. Its purpose is to provide guidance on a task or learning process, with the aim of enhancing performance and understanding. Feedback also aims to minimize the gap between current performance and the desired learning outcome. (Ghavifekr & Ibrahim, 2014; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Wiggins, 2012).

Feedback plays a crucial role in enhancing learning outcomes and academic performance (Latifi et al., 2021). The quality and timeliness of feedback can determine whether its impact is positive or negative (Carless & Boud, 2018; Kerman et al., 2024). It is viewed as a process through which individuals interpret received feedback to enhance their learning and bridge the gap between their current performance level and the desired level (Boud & Dawson, 2021; Carless & Boud, 2018).

Various researchers have characterized feedback as having cognitive, motivational, and affective dimensions. Effective feedback, as described by Brookhart (2008), encompasses both cognitive and motivational aspects. Hattie and Timperley (2007) concluded, through a meta-analysis, that feedback strategies yield significantly higher effects compared to

most typical educational interventions. These findings have led on the importance of feedback that emphasizes assessment for learning, rather than assessment of learning or assessment as learning (Wiggins, 2012).

Feedback is present in both our personal and professional spheres, providing insights into successful and unsuccessful endeavors. In a professional environment, it is crucial to comprehend the mechanics of feedback to thoughtfully construct performance evaluations that lead to positive organizational results (Johnson et al., 2023). Organizations are progressively substituting performance ratings with systems that emphasize continuous feedback. Qualitative feedback proves to be more effective, fostering greater motivation and engagement among employees (Giamos et al., 2023).

Research Objectives

The current study was based on the following objectives:

1. To explore teachers' opinions about the effectiveness of feedback in terms of their quality teaching given by their department heads.
2. To explore teachers' viewpoint about the quality of feedback in terms of their professional development given to them by their department heads at university level.
3. To find out teachers' views about the role of heads' feedback in the development of their future goals.
4. To collect responses from university departmental heads about providing feedback in terms of effectiveness of quality teaching, professional growth and development of research culture to their associate teachers

Research Questions

Three research questions were attempted to achieve the above objectives:

1. What are teachers' opinions about the effectiveness of feedback in terms of their quality teaching given by their departmental heads?
2. What is teachers' viewpoint about the quality of feedback in terms of their professional growth given to them by their departmental heads at university level?
3. What are teachers' views about the role of heads' feedback in the development of their future goals?
4. What are the departmental heads' opinions about providing feedback in terms of effectiveness of quality teaching, professional growth and development of research culture to their associate teachers?

Method and Procedure

Population and Sampling

Population was heads and teachers at the universities in Lahore. Convenient sampling technique was used to take the sample of population. Three heads of departments and 11 teachers of same departments were taken as a sample conveniently. Gender wise three male heads, six female teachers and five male teachers were in sample

Research Design

This study was qualitative in nature. Phenomenological research design was selected to explore the role of university department heads in providing feedback to the teachers from heads and teachers.

Research Instrument

Two interview protocols were developed to keep in view the past literature regarding the feedback, research culture in universities and professional development of teachers. One was developed for heads and other for their teachers. Both interview protocols were validated from three experts and finalized after some minor changes in open ended questions.

Procedure

Formal authorization was obtained from the heads and teachers prior to the commencement of the interviews. The purpose of the interviews was explained to them, and suitable times for the interviews were requested. The interviews were recorded in audio format. A copy of the interview protocol was provided to the participants before the interviews began. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes. The researcher expressed gratitude to the participants upon the conclusion of the interviews.

Data Collection

Data was collected within three weeks with the help of interview protocol in the form of audio recording. Afterward the recorded data was transcribed into text then code of themes were applied for analysis.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was done to reach the results. The main focus was on feedback practices of heads to their teachers, effectiveness of provided feedback in quality teaching, opportunities of professional growth and development and promoting research culture among teachers. All interviews were recorded and transcribed in text form to find the common themes. First initial themes were analyzed then final themes emerged to explore the results from data.

1. Departmental Heads Feedback Interview Protocol

First Interview Protocol was used to collect thoughtful responses from university departmental heads about providing feedback in terms of effectiveness of quality teaching, professional growth and development of research culture to their associate teachers. Table 1 displays 9 superordinate and 24 subordinate categories emerging from 11 semi structured questions. All participants were assigned a number to identify the participant in the transcribed data e.g., H1 indicates participant no 1 as head participant.

In theme one all heads agreed that the feedback was provided by them generally in regular staff meetings where general issues were discussed and in individual meeting for specific issues and they were available at all hours to guide associate teachers. In theme two all three head participants admitted that they provided feedback to their teachers to improve their instructions as teamwork and in a cooperative environment. In theme three H1 responded, "Teaching is the second choice for most teachers and if you have entered teaching profession then no one can stop you from working hard." H2 said, "Yes, of course." H3 responded, "I believe on quality work and expect highly of my staff in this regard."

Table 1

Head participants' perspectives on providing feedback to the teachers

Sr.#	Major Categories	Associated Concepts	Respondents
1.	Feedback provided about issues	Staff Meeting	H1, H2, H3
		Individual Discussion	H1, H2, H3
		Any time	H1, H2, H3
2.	Instructional Feedback	Content	H1, H2, H3
		Methodology	H1, H2, H3
		Performance	H1, H2, H3
3.	High Expectations from Teachers	Head has	H1, H2, H3
		Head does not	
4.	Professional Feedback	Conferences, Workshops, Seminars, Professional Courses, National and Foreign Visits	H1, H2, H3 H1, H2, H3 H1, H2
		Yes	H1, H2, H3
		Performance	H1, H2
5.	Feedback influenced Students	Personal Development	H1, H2
		Mutual Group Discussion	H1, H2, H3
		Jointly Research Studies	H2, H3
6.	Works collaboratively with staff and students	Field Trips	H2
		Yes	H1, H2, H3
		Mentioned as above in theme 5	H1, H2, H3
7.	Supports opportunities to visit & interact with others and new practices		
8.	Allocates and directs resources to support	Limited/Centralized	H1, H3
		Equally Shared	H1, H2
9.	Promotes the research culture	Takes Initiative/Encourage	H1, H2, H3
		Any time	H1, H2
		Unbiased Suggestions	H1, H2, H3
		Through New ideas, Research Reports, Articles, Students' Work	H1, H2, H3

Note. N=3. Total participants

In theme four all three heads answered that they support their teachers by facilitating them through conferences, workshops, seminars, professional courses, national and foreign visits, they advise them to participate in all these events which were conducted time to time. H1 further added that he/she informed their teachers directly, by sending print

material or by e-mail and provide them all necessary information. H2 added that the feedback by him/her was not only for their professional development but also for their personal development.

In theme five was they all agreed that students' performance helped them to reflect upon the process of teaching which provide basis of feedback for the teachers. H1 and H2 used this feedback for improvement of performance. H2 said that these students' feedback helped him to guide his/her staff in improvement of instruction, research, supervision, interpersonal relationships, character building, in sum overall professional and personal development. In theme six it was found that H2 and H3 conducted jointly research studies.

Theme seven describes that all three heads support all kind of activities. In theme eight all heads provide all opportunities to their staff. H1 and H3 said that in resources all matters were decided and implemented at central level but they facilitated their teachers with all resources available at hand. H1 and H2 responded that whatever the opportunities for new practices and resources they had they equally share among them. In theme nine all head participants admitted that they are responsible to promote a culture of research for future progress. They all took initiative and facilitate their teachers in their research activities.

2. Teachers Feedback Interview Protocol

The Second Interview Protocol was used to gather insightful responses from university teachers regarding their pursuit of feedback from departmental heads concerning the effectiveness of quality teaching, as well as their professional growth and the advancement of research culture. Table 2 displays 10 superordinate and 32 subordinate categories emerging from 12 semi structured questions and shows the responses of teachers. All participants were assigned a number to identify the participant in the transcribed data e.g. T1 indicates participant no 1 as teacher participant.

Table 2

Teacher participants' perspectives on receiving feedback from their departmental heads

Sr.#	Major Categories	Associated Concepts	Responses
1.	Feedback provided about issues	Staff Meeting	T1,T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8,T9
		Individual Discussion	T1,T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8,T9
2.	Ways of getting feedback to improve instructions	Appreciation	T3
		Encourage	T3, T5, T6, T7, T8
		Self-Initiation	T2, T8, T9
		No Feedback	T1, T2, T4, T10, T11
3.	Heads' Feedback helps in achieving objectives	Helps	T2, T3, T4, T6, T7, T8
		To some extant/ rare	T5, T9
		No Feedback	T1, T10, T11
4.	Heads' provide Feedback on Professional Development	Provided	T2,T3,T4,T5,T6,T7,T8,T9
		On Performance	T2,T3,T4,T5,T6,T7
		On Teaching Through Students' Feedback	T2,T3,T6 T3,T5,T6,T7
		No Feedback	T1,T9,T10
5.	Students' performance effects heads' decision	Effects	T2, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8
		No Effects	T1,T3,T9,T10,T11
6.	Head works collaboratively with staff and students	Works Collaboratively	T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8,T9,T11
		To some extant/ Only with Staff	T1,T10
7.	Head supports opportunities to visit and interact with others	Facilitate	T2,T3,T6,T7,T8
		Through Seminars, workshop, conferences	T2,T3,T8
		Rare	T1,T5,T7
		No support	T4,T9,T10,T11
8.	Head supports new practices	Supports new practices	T3, T5, T6, T8,T11
		Limited Sources	T2, T7
		No Support	T1,T4,T9,T10
9.	Head allocates and directs resources to support	Allocates resources	T5,T6,T7
		Limited allocation	T2,T3,T8
		No allocation	T1,T4,T7,T9,T10,T11
10.	Head promotes the research culture	Takes initiative/ encourage	T3,T4,T5,T6
		Self-Initiation	T2,T7,T8,T9,T10,T11
		Only Lip Service	T1,T9,T11
		Only for students' research	T1,T7,T8,T9,T10,T11

Note. N=11. Total participants

In theme one, mostly participants T1 to T9 accepted that feedback was provided generally in regular staff meetings where each issue was discussed and solutions were suggested, sometime feedback was provided in individual meeting and specific issues were discussed and resolved. In theme two, two ways were explored by the participants' responses i.e., encouragement and appreciation. One which got feedback and the other, which did not. Majority accepted that they got feedback in the form of encouragement i.e., T3, T5, T6, T7 and T8 just one participant T3 responded that feedback was also in the form of appreciation. T2, T8 and T9 responded that in case if their head did not provide any feedback, then they improved themselves by intrinsic motivation which included the habit of reading about new research in education, awareness of employing new methods of instruction used in other universities at international level, searched and read books for advancement in knowledge in their respective field. Participants T1, T2, T4, T10, and T11 disagreed that there was no feedback at all.

In theme three mostly participants i.e., T2, T3, T4, T6, T7 and T8 agreed that their heads' feedback helped in achieving objectives, participants T5 and T9 agreed that to some extent feedback was helpful and T1, T10 and T11 said as there was no feedback from the head then there was no question regarding about its effectiveness. Theme four showed that heads provided feedback to teachers for quality teaching based on students' feedback formally collected at the end of every semester. Majority of the participants i.e., T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8 and T9 agreed that feedback by the heads helped them in improving their teaching methodology and performance which led to their professional development. In theme five majority participants i.e., T1, T3, T9, T10, and T11 refused that students' performance effects heads' decision whereas, the other participants i.e., T2, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8 believed that students' performance definitely had effect on their head's decision. In theme six all the participants accepted that their heads worked collaboratively. In themes six, seven and eight, half of the participants were in the favor that opportunities were provided whenever the head was assisted by the department to hold conferences, workshops, seminars (in and outside the university). T2 and T7 responded that due to limited sources sometimes their head did not find it possible to support or provide any opportunity

whereas T1, T4, T9 and T10 refused that head supports opportunities to visit and interact with others.

In theme ten four types of responses were noted. T3, T4, T5 and T6 participants acknowledged that their head took initiative and helped them in promoting research culture in the department and as well as by creating healthy and positive environment through encouragement and by supporting all physical and expressive ways. Two participants T4 and T6 admired their head that he was very concerned in promoting research culture, he not only looked after all department's students research work but also go through their research activities time to time, making suggestions, recommendations for improvement and encouragement. T2, T7, T8, T9, T10 and T11 answered that their head did not play any positive part in developing research culture, they had their own motivation and self-initiation towards the research work. Two participants T4 and T11 disclosed that their head took initiative and discussed for research activities with other but not with them as it might be due to, they were senior and had same qualification and work experience as head. T1, T9 and T11 discussed that their head favored and talked about research activities and disused to promote it but it was only a lip service to such activities otherwise practically they did not take initiative in any kind of research activity. Many participants i.e., T1, T7, T8, T9, T10 and T11 refused that their head encouraged or offered support in promoting research culture. They said that their heads were just interested about students' research work which should be completed on time.

Results and Discussions

Teachers' opinions about the effectiveness of feedback in terms of their quality teaching

Teachers are self-initiated towards improving their skills and abilities if their head is aloof. They are intrinsically motivated rather than extrinsically motivated. Teachers accepted that role of head is vital for successful teaching learning process. Head's feedback always keeps them on the right track in achieving their objectives, improving their performance and for their research work. Teachers are responsible for effective learning of their students so they should initiate just that throughout the whole educational process and in order to improve

academic performance and learning outcomes, feedback is essential. (Latifi et al., 2021).

Teachers' viewpoint about the quality of feedback in terms of their professional growth

Heads are responsible for providing collaborative environment to achieve their program objectives completely. They always try to work with the staff and students in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Head creates the cooperative atmosphere through group work, staff meetings, jointly conducting studies and arranging field trips with their staff members and students. Heads take care of the right of their students, promote them the sense of responsibility, interpersonal relationships, overall character building through their teachers by providing effective scheme of studies, revising the courses, recommending them latest books and research done and careful inspection of their educational activities. Heads support and facilitate their teachers in providing every kind of opportunity for successful learning whether these are limited (Akuegwu & Nwi-ue, 2017). Majority of the teachers use feedback provided by their heads in the positive way and it is useful to improve their instructions, methodology, class management, professional development and in conducting research. For positive organizational results, feedback plays a crucial role (Görün et al., 2018).

Teachers' views about the role of heads' feedback in the development of their future goals

Healthy, encouraging and supportive environment help their associate teachers to progress the research culture in the department. They take initiative as researchers and take care of all kinds of research events by supervising students' research work and writing or presenting papers. Teachers are supervised, encouraged and facilitated with all the resources at hand. Heads are not authoritative and they like to work in a team, they discuss, reflect and then make decisions democratically about any educational issue.

Departmental heads' opinions about providing feedback in terms of effectiveness of quality teaching, professional growth and development of research culture to their associate teachers

Heads are very much committed towards their work. They are vigilant about providing resources and assisting the activities to their associate teachers. They conducted meetings regularly. Heads assist their teachers in achieving their objectives, in their professional development and promoting research culture and they provide positive feedback to their associate teachers about their work in an encouraging way. The findings support the study by Arong and Ogbadu (2010) that learning process to be successful, it is important to seek out effective practices that contribute to the improvement of managing the teaching and learning process. It is expected that leaders (heads) will be responsible for overseeing and supervising all facets of the department's daily operations involving faculty and staff (Kruse et al., 2020). They all believe and provide healthy criticism about issues and give them chance to make independent decisions. Consequently, heads have high expectations from their associate teachers to work with their maximum potential.

Conclusion

Based on above analysis and findings, it can be concluded that role of head no doubt has its own place; teachers at university level should also be energetic and asked for suggestions or reflection for their own performance and research and investigative work. It can be concluded that there is a positive association between the role and responsibilities of department heads in providing proper feedback to their associated teachers to improve their performance by reflecting on their instructional strategies, by providing them professional development and by promoting research culture for successful learning. It was established that heads tried to facilitate their associated teachers whatever limited resources they have. It is noted that teachers accept the heads' feedback positively whenever feedback is provided by them. Through conferences, seminars, workshops, field trips, visit to other universities, and joint study work, teachers are facilitated to expand their knowledge, skills and abilities to achieve the program objectives. In short, this study revealed that it is important for the department heads to play the role of the instructional leader as it possesses good characteristics in enhancing better teaching and learning for both leaders and the subordinates. Good leaders influence their subordinates not

only encouraging but also facilitating them with all resources towards future progress.

Recommendations

The study puts forward following suggestions:

- It is essential to establish democratic methods for the allocation of resources to guarantee fair distribution among all educators.
- Furthermore, it is crucial for heads to proactively pursue supplementary resources from appropriate authorities to enhance teachers' professional growth and elevate overall educational results.
- Ongoing and transparent communication between educators and heads to address concerns, seek advice, and work together on educational projects is essential for supportive learning environment.
- Efficient avenues for teachers to express their concerns and recommendations related to resources, facilities, and instructional methods are crucial for improving the overall quality of education.
- Educators may embrace feedback with receptiveness when provided by the heads.

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Citation of this Article: Naseem, A. (2024). Role of university department heads in providing feedback to the teachers. *Journal of Contemporary Teacher Education*, 8, 1-18.