

Sighted Students' Perceptions about the Effectiveness of University Teachers with Visual Impairment: A Case Study

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Abstract

The major premise of this research is to have an awareness of the perceptions of sighted students about the effectiveness of a teacher with visual impairment in one of the public universities of Lahore. Focusing on the actual pedagogical practices of a teacher with visual impairment in his/her teaching profession. The main objective of this research was to find out the perceptions about the competence and scope of becoming an effective educational leader for the visually impaired university teachers. This paper attempts to get the opinion of sighted students regarding their visually impaired teachers. This research is an exploratory case study in its nature in which mix method approach has been adopted. For the qualitative method, both in-depth interviews of five students and one focus group of 3 students were conducted. For the quantitative method, a survey questionnaire was used and data was collected from 49 (47 females and 2 males) sighted students. Quantitative data was analyzed on Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 21 to get percentage and frequency while qualitative data were transcribed and predetermined themes were checked. Results were drawn from the interpretation of both qualitative and quantitative data. The major finding of this research is that sighted students had all the praises for their visually-impaired teacher. Results indicated that sighted students had a positive response towards their teacher with visual impairment and visual impairment of any person is not a hurdle in making him/her an ideal teacher.

Keywords: perception, sighted students, visual impairment, pedagogical practices

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Introduction

"A Teacher is a Teacher" regardless of whether his sight is impaired, his gait is uneven, or his back is more arched than normal (Karadağ & Belenkuyu, 2018; Gallagher & William, 1969). It is the mind of the teacher that teaches, and it is the mind of the student that assimilates the concepts being taught (Kinchin, 2021; Battersby, 2017). If physical impairment such as visual impairment does not hamper a student to get an education or higher education, it is equally possible for a visually impaired teacher to aspire to become an excellent teacher. Every educator, blind or sighted, has a unique way of demonstrating his or her talents and capabilities (Odame et al, 2021; Storer & Branham, 2019). When recruiting blind teachers, the emphasis should be on how he or she utilizes these abilities and opportunities. You don't know what a person is capable of until he's been put to the test via exposure and experience. Blind instructors' potential and ability must be measured against their academic and teaching experience, not their level of vision or lack thereof. Gallagher & William (1969) emphasized that it is supportive to retain this phrase in observance that: "Blindness is neither a qualification nor a disqualification". This implies that blindness does not automatically predispose a person to special teaching traits, abilities, or skills, nor does it qualify him for a job just because we may feel sympathy or worry. A teacher's blindness does not inherently qualify them to instruct blind students. This study contains testimony for the presently employed blind teachers as for how effectively they teach. It has been demonstrated across the globe that a blind educator can help pupils improve their academic knowledge as well as their comprehension and awareness of the disparities in intellectual and spiritual values (Yang & Gao, 2020).

Literature Review

Inclusive education is the most dominant and rapidly spreading education system which most of the universities all over the world have started practicing. This system of inclusive education has opened a new vista of educational development and learning specifically for persons with disabilities (Ramirez, Byrkjeflot &

Pinheiro, 2016). Now persons with disabilities are no more of a burden on their families and societies, and education has equipped them to improve their earning and lifestyle (Pandey & Mishra, 2016). There is a concern as to whether a teacher genuinely wants to help a pupil learn and grow into a competent adult. This question signifies that we are searching for individuals who wish to work in a vocation that encourages pupils to acquire and absorb knowledge without becoming sentimental (Entwistle, & Ramsden, 2015).

Effective teachers fervently love their profession (Stronge et al., 2004). They clearly understand that curriculum, behaviors of students and the needs of society are not constant, that is why to get the better understanding of these, it is the duty of teachers to keep them in the constant learning phase. Stronge et al (2004) states that an efficient educator has a lion's share in the academic success of his/her students because they understand their psyche and affects them accordingly. Gibbs (2002) describes an effective teacher in a way that he is supportive and flexible towards his students and creative and consistent towards learning. A good teacher has clear goals and objectives and student's achievement is the main target of him (Ayua, 2017; Rafiq & Qaisar, 2021).

Alton-Lee (2003) and Gurney (2007) consider teacher responsible for learning of students, because a teacher creates such an environment which engages them to learn and encourage them to show them their best potential. Positive and open interaction with students, kind behavior, positive and timely feedback and respect are some of the dominant characteristics of effective teachers (Gurney, 2007). Borich (2016) describes the characteristics of an effective teacher in a way that he has variety in his instructions, clarity in his lesson and orientation of tasks, moreover, he/she engages students in the learning process. It is the quality of a good teacher that he does not teach to demonstrate his knowledge or skill rather he has passion towards students' learning and extensive and deep understanding of content (Borich, 2016). Besides all the other qualities, effective teachers also manage and understand how to maintain discipline in class, their relation with the students, teaching methodology, and assessment procedure (Emmer et al., 1980, 2003).

Wickham (2003) emphasized that competent educators are more able to customize their pupils' learning. They are fully aware that pupils are diverse individuals with a wide range of talents and aptitudes in every classroom. No matter what the subject is, the teacher must sense the pulse of the classroom and alter teaching approaches to maintain a high level of interest. They also apply their expertise and judgment to assess which strategy will be the most beneficial in assisting pupils in their class learning. Effective teachers strike a connection with their pupils and have a sixth instinct for individuals who require further assistance. To be able to help pupils, it is critical to understand their requirements, learning methodologies and styles, personality, motivation, attitude, talents, and even their background.

Prozesky, 2000 argues that effective communication is the basic ingredient of an effective teacher. They communicate in such a clear manner that students do not have any ambiguity regarding objectives, testing, and content of the course taught. Rubio, 2006 emphasized that an effective teacher has a better understanding of the tactics which work best for students' needs. Students define effectiveness when they get love, respect, sense of affiliation and encouragement from teachers (Stronge et al., 2004). A good teacher shows genuine interest and concern to solve students' problems and issues. Stronge et al. (2004) described the qualities of an effective teacher in this way that he/she is a good listener and a great supporter of students' personal matters and problems. Students show love and respect for the teachers who assure them of a feeling of equal partnership of their achievement.

Teachers' training, knowledge of content, and skills of teaching methodology are some basic tools to become a good teacher. They facilitate their students in every possible way to develop mastery and skill in them which must be there for a person to be a lifelong learner and a good and civilized human being. They express their feelings and expectations for students and provide them every possible chance and support to be a better learner. Continuous and timely feedback, reflection on their work and collaboration are also the vital part of an effective teacher's routine. Is it essential to grant blind educators special rights that other instructors may not have? The response is that a blind instructor should not anticipate or demand special treatment from his or her administrators. Like

his sighted colleagues, a blind instructor is expected to participate, create, and compete (Nieto, 2015). He/she is also conscious that he/she will not be able to achieve in this field unless he/she comes into it adequately prepared and driven. Blind instructors may be found in all classes, from primary to secondary. Administrators, curriculum coordinators, and counselors are all on staff. Math, music, language, business, social studies, social science, and remedial reading teachers are also available (Nieto, 2015).

A blinded individual can simply utilize audio-visual technology to improve the effectiveness of his or her instruction (Ghinea, Klecun, Perry & Taylor, 2012). In reality, audio equipment is widely employed in today's educational approaches, making it a crucial teaching tool. A tape recorder is an invaluable tool for a blind person, and blind college students use them frequently (Bauman & Donskis, 2013). If you know how to run a tape recorder, learning to run a movie projector is simple. During their careers as instructors, some teachers lose their vision (Nieto, 2015).

Retraining these instructors has been frowned upon by school authorities in the past. Authorities seem to be more willing to welcome these educators' return after rehab since they know they are completely versed about their topics and have previously performed satisfactorily (Nieto, 2015). Blind instructors have been trailblazers in allowing other blind people to exhibit their talents in the classroom, and the teaching profession may be proud of them (Nieto, 2015). There is a need for skilled instructors and skilled, professionally educated blind people may absolutely contribute to meeting that need (Skovholt & Trotter, 2014). If they possessed the academic qualifications, as well as the desire and ability to teach, totally blind people could satisfy all of the employment criteria of the teaching profession (Nieto, 2015). Blind people who are qualified have demonstrated their ability to teach in public schools at both the elementary and secondary levels. Who decides whether these blind people are eligible can be a complicated and emotionally charged issue (Nieto, 2015)? Prospective blind instructors, in my opinion, must be intelligent, resourceful, emotionally secure, mobile, and, most importantly, very driven. This person's counseling and guidance should begin in his or her

junior year of high school and continue on a regular basis throughout his or her college career.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this research was to find out the perceptions about the competence and scope of becoming an effective educational leader for the visually impaired university teachers. The study was aim to find out the visually impaired teachers' competency in:

1. Structuring and presentation of lessons.
2. Quality of evaluation and feedback.
3. Overcoming communication barrier.
4. Classroom management
5. Developing long-lasting relationships.

Basic Assumptions

1. Visually impaired teachers have lesser scope of becoming an effective educational leader at higher educational level.
2. It is assumed that there is a great variety and diversity in perceptions of visually sound students about visually impaired university teachers.
3. Many sighted students develop specific feelings of respect and inspiration for their visually impaired teachers and these feelings help in boosting their interest in education and learning
4. Some sighted students have to face many problems during communication with their visually impaired university teachers.
5. These barriers and hurdles in communication between sighted students and visually impaired university teachers affect the learning and interest of sighted students and result in students' disappointment and decreased interest in academic behaviors.

Methodology

For this study, one case of teacher with visual impairment was taken from a public university of Lahore. According to Denscombe

(2013) case studies are more likely "holistic" than separate components. Evers and Wu (2006) have remarked that "a single case study is, roughly speaking, an inquiry concerning a particular event, process, object, phenomenon or state of affairs." Case studies also tend to emphasize the detailed working of relationships and social processes at a particular place. As the researcher wants to get the in-depth students' perceptions about the effectiveness of visually-impaired university teachers, a case study appears to be the most suitable choice.

Perception is a fuzzy and ethereal term; hence a flexible research design and technique were required to thoroughly investigate the issue. When it comes to perception, especially in higher education, which is a complex and intricate system with a plethora of variables interacting to create perception, more careful and detailed investigation was required. Keeping in mind the subtle complexity of this concept, Creswell proposed the most common and well-known approach to mixing methods, i.e. "triangulation design" (2007). As per Morse (1991) To better comprehend the research difficulties, the design is effective in getting "diverse but complementary data on the same issue"

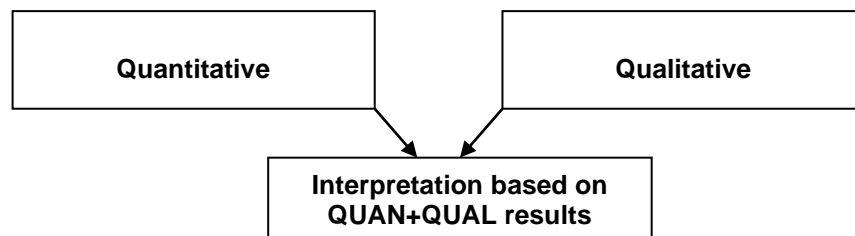


Figure 1. Triangulation Design
(Source: Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), p. 63)

The conventional convergence model was chosen as the best fit for this investigation out of four mixed-methods triangulation designs (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007).

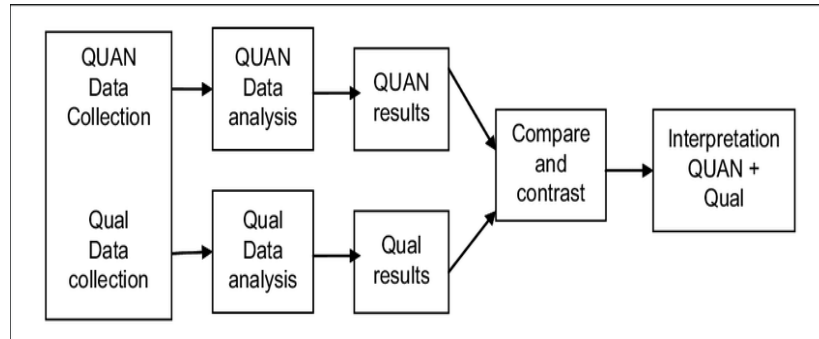


Figure 2. Convergence model of triangulation design
 (Source: Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), p. 63)

Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered in order to achieve a fair judgment. In-depth interviews and focus groups were used to acquire qualitative data, while a survey questionnaire was used to obtain quantitative data. The following three strategies were utilized to acquire data for this study:

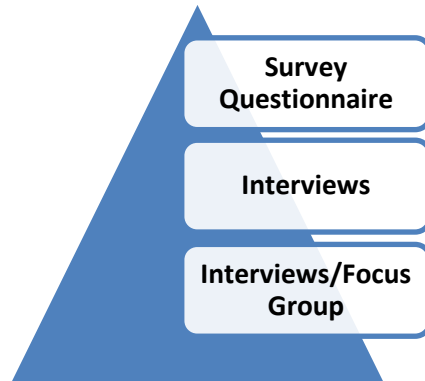


Figure 3. Sampling

Population/Sample

This research is a case study in its design as it is related to the perceptions about the effectiveness of visually impaired university teachers. This specific variable of teacher with visual impairment left little room for selection and choice for the researcher. The researcher had to approach teacher with visual impairment teaching in the public university of Lahore, and data was collected from her students. The sampling procedure for a case study is

purposive, where every case is dealt individually, because the population for the study was small and uniform in its characteristics. Therefore, with this sample size, there was a little chance of missing the variability in expression. So, a public university having visually impaired faculty was approached for this purpose. The students and this teacher with visual impairment were approached for data collection purposes.

For the qualitative method, both in-depth interviews of five students and one focus group of 3 students were conducted. For the quantitative method, a survey questionnaire was used and data was collected from 49 (47 females and 2 males) sighted students.

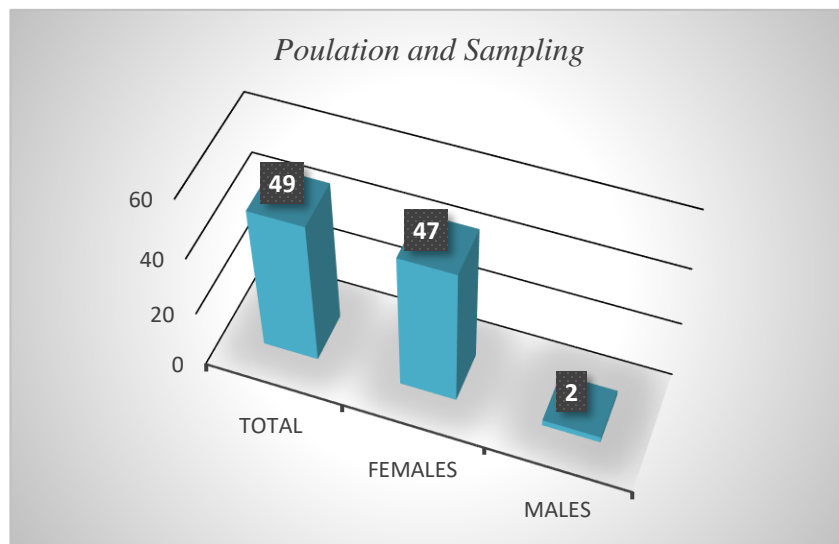


Figure 4. Showing Total population and sampling

Interpretation of Data

The quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package (SPSS) to drive the result of students' perception about visually impaired teachers. The percentile technique was used for the assessment of the respondents. The statistical calculations described the performance of visually-impaired university teachers and students' perception regarding it.

Findings of Quantitative Data

Sighted students showed very positive responses for most of the attitudes and practices of this visually-impaired teacher. Almost all the students encircled strongly agree and agree with all the statements of the questionnaire specifically for the following statements sighted students only encircled strongly agree and agree and did not encircled any other option;

1. Teacher has full command on the subject
2. Teacher sets appropriate tasks according to the students’ grade level
3. Lesson are well planned by the teacher
4. Lessons are conducted according to time table
5. Pace of work is in line with time frame
6. Examinations are arranged according to schedule

Then for the following statements few sighted students encircled undecided alone with many strongly agree and agree:

1. Mutual co-operation and understanding between teacher and students are ensured by the teacher
2. Teacher is precise and clear in his/her subject matters
3. Student’s questions are positively responded by the teacher
4. Teacher properly communicates his/her lesson
5. Student- teacher interaction helps in creating a good learning environment

Table 1

Visually impaired teachers’ behavior effecting sighted students’ perception

Statements	Strongly Agree Frequency (Percentage)	Agree Frequency (Percentage)	Undecided Frequency (Percentage)	Disagree Frequency (Percentage)	Strongly Disagree Frequency (Percentage)
Teacher has full command on the subject.	39(79.6%)	10(20.4%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Teacher sets appropriate tasks according to the students’ grade level.	24(49.0%)	25(51.0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
The students are treated in friendly manner.	39(79.6%)	9(18.4%)	0(0%)	1(2.0%)	0(0%)
The mutual co-operation and understanding between teacher and students are ensured by the teacher.	+	11(22.4%)	1(2.0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

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Teacher prepares his/her lessons adequately before delivering the lecture.	38(77.6%)	10(20.4%)	0(0%)	1(2.0%)	0(0%)
Teacher manages discipline affectively in the classroom.	22(44.9%)	26(53.1%)	0(0%)	1(2.0%)	0(0%)
Decisions are made according to the needs of the students in the classroom.	31(63.3%)	16(32.7%)	0(0%)	2(4.1%)	0(0%)
Teacher is precise and clear in his/her subject matters.	35(71.4%)	13(26.5%)	1(2.0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
All students are treated equally by teacher.	21(42.9%)	17(34.7%)	3(6.1%)	5(10.2%)	3(6.1%)
Student's questions are positively responded by the teacher.	28(57.1%)	20(40.8%)	1(2.0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Lessons are well planned by the teacher.	37(75.5%)	12(24.5%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Teacher properly communicates his/her lectures.	33(67.3%)	15(30.6%)	1(2.0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Teacher use audio-visual aids during lectures.	16(32.7%)	21(42.9%)	2(4.1%)	9(18.4%)	1(2.0%)
Teacher presents his/her lessons in a meaningful manner.	31(63.3%)	15(30.6%)	1(2.0%)	2(4.1%)	0(0%)
Student teacher interaction helps in creating a good learning environment.	33(67.3%)	15(30.6%)	1(2.0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Teacher completes his/her classes well in time.	37(75.5%)	11(22.4%)	0(0%)	1(2.0%)	0(0%)
Teacher produces work of exceptionally high quality.	19(38.8%)	28(57.1%)	1(2.0%)	1(2.0%)	0(0%)
Teaches manages his/her work according to the syllabus.	30(61.2%)	18(36.7%)	0(0%)	1(2.0%)	0(0%)
Lessons are conducted according to time table.	33(67.3%)	16(32.7%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Teacher maintains good relations with students.	30(61.2%)	15(30.6%)	2(4.1%)	2(4.1%)	0(0%)
Teacher contributes positively in student academic development.	31(63.3%)	16(32.7%)	0(0%)	2(4.1%)	0(0%)
Teacher comes to university regularly and on time.	36(73.5%)	11(22.4%)	0(0%)	1(2.0%)	1(2.0%)
Pace of work is in line with time frame.	26(53.1%)	23(46.9%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Examinations are arranged according to schedule.	40(81.6%)	9(18.4%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

Sighted For the following statements few sighted students encircled disagree and undecided alone with many strongly agree and agree;

1. The students are treated in a friendly manner
2. Teacher prepares his/her lessons adequately before delivering the lecture
3. Teacher produces work of exceptionally good quality
4. Teacher manages discipline effectively in the classroom
5. Decisions are made according to the needs of the students in the classroom

Lastly for the following statements few sighted students encircled strongly disagree, disagree and undecided along with many strongly agree and agree:

1. All students are treated equally by teacher
2. Teacher uses audio–visual aids during lectures

Interpretation of Qualitative Data

The qualitative data was transcribed and the following are some of the points shared by all the interviewees that visually impaired teacher:

1. Has full command on subject and prepares lessons adequately
2. Is friendly, co-operative and maintains good relations with students
3. Presents lessons in a meaningful way
4. Produces work of exceptionally high quality
5. Contributes positively to students' academic development
6. Is regular and punctual and the pace of work is in line with the time frames
7. Manages discipline in class
8. Does not use audio visual aids
9. Is biased in his/her behavior
10. Does not treat every student equally

Findings of the Qualitative Data

Findings of the qualitative data fully supported the findings of the quantitative data. Sighted students had all the praises for their visually-impaired teacher, as the following responses are evident of that except a few negative responses from two to three interviewees:

Two of the students shared that in the beginning of the classes, they even could not judge that “*the teacher was visually-impaired*”

“She is friendly and supportive and use [sic] practical examples during her lessons which really help students to understand the lesson very well”

“The teacher usually listens to the students who help her going in the classroom, as for the distant classrooms

teacher was unable to reach in the class by herself and she was helped by one student for going in the class". This student also commented "Obviously these two or three girls were dear to the teacher because of that help and for those matter in which teacher herself was unable to judge because of her disability, she relies on the opinions of her helpers". This is not verbatim within inverted commas

Conclusion

Both quantitative and qualitative results show that the teacher with visual impairment is liked by every student. They showed great interest in developing a long-lasting relationship with the teacher. Students also expressed satisfaction for the quality of evaluation and feedback provided by the teacher even when they all were aware of the fact that their written work was not checked by the teacher. Students seem to be very much satisfied with the teaching methodology, orientation of presentation, structuring of lesson, and classroom management by the visually impaired teacher. Only a few students expressed a little reservation that the blind teacher is biased in her behavior as she gives more importance to those students who help her in different tasks which she herself cannot do. Many sighted students have specific feelings of respect and inspiration for their visually-impaired teacher and these feelings help in boosting their interest in education and learning. There is no communication barrier between sighted students and visually- impaired teacher. It is concluded that visual impairment of any person is not a hurdle for choosing teaching as their career and to become an effective educational leader. Visually- impaired teachers have the full scope of becoming an effective educational leader at higher educational level. When one performs his/her duty sincerely, he/she must get respect and acknowledgment for it education.

Recommendations

This study was limited to the public and private universities of Punjab only. A similar study could be conducted in universities of any other province of Pakistan. This research was a case study, the similar study could be conducted by using other different methods of research.

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Citation of the Article:

Afzal A., & Rafiq, S. (2021). Sighted students' perceptions about the effectiveness of university teachers with visual impairment: A Case Study. *Journal of Inclusive Education*, 5(1), 131-148

Received on: 10th June 2021

Revised on: 12th December 2021

Accepted on: 12th December 2021