



Perceptions and Practices of University Teachers towards Questioning: From Teachers and Students Prospective

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Abstract- This study investigated the perceptions and practices of university teachers towards questioning. The study used quantitative approach to seek the answers of the questions (a) whether teachers and students have same attitude towards questioning during teaching-learning process? (b) whether differences exist between teachers' attitudes and practices towards questioning during teaching-learning process? The data were collected from 100 teachers and 1200 bachelor level students through self-constructed questionnaire from University of Malakand. First, the researchers collected the data through questionnaire from teachers and students and then they observed the 40 teachers in the classrooms while they were teaching in on the same points mentioned in the questionnaire. The collected data were tabulated, analysed and interpreted. The mean, standard deviation, independent-sample and paired-sample t-test were used to analyse the data. Significant differences were found between teachers and students' attitudes towards questioning and in between teachers' attitudes and practices towards questioning at university level. It was recommended that teachers must recognize the importance of questioning in teaching learning process, provide congenial environment for supporting questions, appreciate questioning in classroom, use a variety of questions to develop different skills of students, give proper time to answer questions and use reinforcement techniques during teaching-learning process.

Keywords: Questioning, Perceptions, Practices, Teaching-Learning Process

I. INTRODUCTION

"All our knowledge results from questions, which is another way of saying that questioning is our most important intellectual tool" (Neil Postman)

Questioning is the strongest tool used by many teachers to stimulate the thinking ability of the students during teaching-learning process. Suitable and appropriate questions not only help to learn but also inculcate the art of responding to someone. Research findings proved that questioning is an effective tool and skill of learning, interacting and provoking students' thrust for thinking (Arsalan, 2006; Harrop & Swinson, 2003; MacNaughton & Williams, 2004). It is two way process and two parties are involved in this process. Sometimes teacher pose the questions and students respond while in some situations students pose questions and teachers respond. Azerefegen (2008) stated question serve as a cues or stimuli for students' learning. Arsalan (2006) mentioned some of the effective ways of questioning including structuring pitching, putting forward ideas clearly and concisely, directing and distributing, posing and pacing, prompting and proving, listening to replies and responding, and sequencing.

Different sorts of questions have been asked by the teachers in the classroom to increase the students understanding and achievement in the classroom which include an equilibrium between convergent and divergent type questions, probing questions, remain silent for few seconds while student responding, redirecting students' responses, giving respectful feedback and giving some time to students to think and organize their answers (Critelli & Tritapoe, 2010). A combination of convergent and divergent questions ensures the low level cognitive information and open and deep discussion from students in the classroom (Arsalan, 2006). Wragg and Brown (2001) highlighted the advantages of questioning as it develops and arouse the students' interest and curiosity in learning, focusing attention on topic, developing an active approach to learning, stimulating students to ask questions, diagnosing difficulties in learning, communicating the message that active involvement leads to maximum learning, providing an opportunity to the students to organize and present the material, developing students' thinking skills, develop reflective thinking of the students, and involving students in vicarious discussion during teaching-learning process. Yang, Luo, Vadillo, Yu, and Shanks (2021) believed that using testing (quizzing) as an intervention is an effective tool to enhance the students' retention power for a long period of time. Brown and Pyle (2021)

recommended that self-questioning technique is a vital strategy to enhance the reading comprehension of the students. Mahmud, Sulaiman, Ayub, Suraya and Yunus (2021) concluded that oral questioning has broad role in teaching-learning process. It helps in collecting data about students' learning, teachers' teaching and about the students' mastery of the content and can be used effectively to assess students' performance during formative assessment.

Kerry (2002) argued that questions play a vital role in teaching-learning process as students' academic achievement and their engagement level largely depends upon the types of questions asked by the teachers and how they use it in classroom. The modern approaches of teaching and learning view learning as a social activity as it involves two parties i.e. teacher and student, in which students construct their knowledge on the basis of their interaction with class teacher and students. Thus, it can be said that learning is a situated activity (Lave & Kvale, 1995). This view of teachers and children acknowledge questions as a core function for both learning and teaching. As Wiggins and Mctighe, (2001:4) noted, "we are shifting from viewing questions as devices by which one evaluates specifics of learning to conceptualizing questions as a means of actively processing, thinking about, and using information productively".

In teaching-learning process teachers ask questions during teaching. Usually in the classroom teachers ask questions and one or more students respond to these questions and teachers evaluate the response (Richards & Raymonds, 2000). Ellis (2008) mentioned two reasons of asking questions by teachers in the classroom. First, questions require responses and therefore, it serve as a basis of obliging students' participation during instruction. Secondly, it serves as a tool for controlling the progress of interaction through which a lesson is enacted. Richards and Lockhart (1996) and Young (1992) argued that questions can also be used by teachers in the classroom to motivate students' towards learning, to encourage students to take active participation, to explain the concepts, to control students' behaviour, to test students' knowledge and understanding, to assess students' learning, to focus on particular topic and to elicit information required regarding a topic. Edwards and Bowman (1996) believed that the significance of using questioning as an instructional strategy used by teachers in the classroom has been largely acknowledged in the literature. Moyer and Milewicz (2002) considered questioning as an important instructional tool and strategy used by teachers frequently during instruction. Teachers' questioning during instruction provide basis for obtaining students' attention, exercising disciplinary control, motivating and encouraging students' participation and for smooth running of classroom instruction (David, 2007; Shomoossi, 2004). Similarly, Setiawati (2012) mentioned that teachers' questioning serve many effective functions in the classroom. Questioning provide a base for interactive learning in the classroom which ensures students' learning and participation in classroom activities (Ma, 2008). Questioning create excitement among the students in the classroom which helps in retention of material in learning process. Using questioning effectively can serve as an effective assessment tool which helps the teacher to know about students' level of learning and understanding of lessons. Azerefegn (2008) mentioned that as there are various ways of asking questions, similarly, there are various purposes served questioning. Edmonson, Tatman and Slate (2009) mentioned different purposes of questioning including arousing curiosity and interest of students in lesson, focusing attention of students on a topic, developing active and interactive approach of instruction, encouraging students to ask questions, diagnosis of difficulties in students' learning, and providing an opportunity to students to express their views about a concept.

There are different types of questions which serve different purposes. These different types of questions provide basis for creating and sharing knowledge and ideas during instruction in the classroom. Closed-ended questions are asked for the purposes to analyze what students about know about some specific facts or information (Bay & Hartman, 2015). Open-ended questions provide an opportunity to students to express their views, feelings, establish relations and more elicit information about a topic, concept or idea in more detail form (MacNoughton & Williams, 2004; Wood & Anderson, 2001). Procedural questions are designed to facilitate learning and interaction during instruction in the classroom to establish rules, routines, procedures and discipline (Richard & Locharts, 1994). Factual questions are related with some specific information required related with an incident, personnel, or history. Conceptual questions are asked to test the low level cognitive and deep understanding of the students to express in their own words. Provocative questions serve the purpose to motivate and frame the content by the students themselves. Similarly, Hunkins and Hammill (1994) and Hyman and Wright (1979) proposed four techniques of questioning. These include redirecting questions, wait time to respond, listening carefully and attentively and provide reinforcement.

In spite of the large amount of literature available on the importance and vital role of questions during instruction, empirical research evidences were found scarce in the local setting. Therefore, to fill this gap the present study was designed to seek the answers of the following questions.

- (a) Whether teachers and students have same attitude towards questioning during teaching-learning process?
- (b) Whether differences exist between teachers' attitudes and practices towards questioning during teaching-learning process?

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research design approach was used to collect and analyze the data. This was a descriptive cum observational type of research designed to obtain relevant and precise information concerning the current status of the phenomenon. The focus of the study was to find out the perceptions of University teachers and students about the attitudes of teachers and students towards questioning in the classroom at the university level. The population of the study consisted of all teachers and students at different departments of the University of Malakand. The researchers distributed questionnaires among 1200 students and 100 faculty members of five faculties. The researchers obtained 800 filled questionnaires from the students and 80 filled useable questionnaires from the teachers. The perceptions of teachers towards questioning were cross-verified by their students regarding questioning. In the same way, the researchers cross-verified the perceptions of teachers towards questioning through observing forty teachers in the classroom related to the same points asked in the questionnaire.

The researchers developed a questionnaire on the basis of reviewing literature related to questioning. Different aspects related to types of questions, importance of questions, purposes of questions and techniques of questions. A pool of 60 items was developed. The researchers validated the questionnaire and observational sheet through a panel of experts. These experts have enriched experience in teaching and research. After their valuable suggestions, the final questionnaire consisted of 50 items. The questionnaire was constructed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Similarly, the observational sheet used was focusing on the same points mentioned in the questionnaire. Before executing the questionnaire, it was piloted over 60 students and 10 teachers who were not included in the sample of the study. The reliability of the questionnaire was found .78, which was found more than the standard value for reliability. The researchers collected data personally through frequent visits to the students and teachers and requested them to fill the questionnaires. Similarly, the researchers obtained prior permission from the teachers to observe in the classroom related to questioning. Proper protocols were followed to observe the teachers during teaching in the classroom. After collection of data, it was fed into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0. Data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviations while inferential statistics such as independent and paired samples t-tests.

III. RESULTS

Among the respondents of the study, there were 250 female and 550 male students. Similarly, among the 80 respondents, there were 15 female and 65 male teachers. Among the 40 observed teachers, five were female and 35 were male teachers. The average age of the students was found 20.4 years. The respondents were taken from different semesters. From the second semester, 30 percent of students participated in the study. From semester four, 20 percent of students participated. 24 percent of students of semester six were participated in the study. From semester eight, 26 percent of students were participated in the study.

Table 01: Comparison between the perceptions of university teachers and students regarding questioning

Respondents	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	p
Teachers	80	3.89	0.504	.168	1.99	.034
Students	800	3.58	0.283	.094		

To know the differences between the opinion of teachers and students regarding questioning, independent samples t-test was used to analyze the data. The value of t-statistics was found significant at the standard level of significance at .05. As the value of $p > .05$, therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the perceptions of teachers and students. Teachers thought that they take care of all the points mentioned in the questionnaire related to questioning, while students think differently.

Table 02: Comparison between the perceptions and practices of university teachers regarding questioning

Respondents	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	p
Teachers	44	3.86	0.693	.104	2.097	.042
Students	44	3.75	0.597	.090		

To know the differences between the perceptions and practices of university teachers towards questioning paired samples t-test was performed. The value of t-statistics was found significant at the standard level of significant at .05. As the value of $p > .05$, therefore, it can be concluded that there is significant difference between the perceptions and practices of university teachers towards questioning in classroom. Teachers perceived that they take care of all the points mentioned in the questionnaire related to questioning while when they were observed they practice differently during instruction. There is significant difference between their perceptions and practice regarding questioning.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of study findings, following conclusions were drawn.

It was concluded that both teachers and students think that questioning is an important tool used by teachers to analyze the knowledge, skills and understanding of the students. Teachers perceived that they used different sorts of questions to investigate the learning level of the students during instruction. They thought that they used questions to obtain students' attention, exercise disciplinary control, motivate and encourage students' participation and for smooth running of classroom instruction. However, students thought differently from their teachers regarding questioning. They thought that teachers do not practice these techniques of questions during teaching-learning process. Similarly, significant differences were found between the perceptions and practices of teachers regarding questioning. Teachers perceived that they practice questions to assess the learning of the students and to provoke the interest of the students in the learning. But when they were observed they do not use question as a tool for ensuring the learning and assessing the learning of the students.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

For improving the perceptions and practices of university teachers and students toward questioning techniques, a number of recommendations are offered to teachers, students, policy makers and researchers.

1. Teachers may ask questions in such a way that they may float the questions over the heads of all the students and give equal opportunities to all students to give answers of the questions. Teachers must prepare questions in advance before taking class. They should ask simple, clear and relevant questions during teaching-learning process as formative assessment.
2. Teachers should not ask such questions which are only focusing on the knowledge level but it also focuses to check the comprehension and application level of the students. Constructivist approach and inquiry may be the best approaches to create a congenial environment for asking questions.
3. Teachers must ask such kind of questions which must be related to objectives of the lesson and also to the interest of the students. Such kind of questions should be asked which ensure student participation, motivate students or maintain students' interest and manage or control the classroom.
4. It is recommended that students must carefully listen the questions first and then give proper and relevant answer. They should take keen interest in asking questions from the teachers. They should take active participation in teaching learning process rather than passive participant. Training in asking questions may be a worthwhile strategy for university teachers. The curriculum developers may develop such kind of activities which may be based on a series of questions to check the knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, and synthesis and evaluation level of students.

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