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## **A comparative study between focused and non-focused groups of students to enhance their examination's performance**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of the study to discover the factors which develop the interest of students in academic performance and enhance examination learning. The main method of data collection was a semi-structured questionnaire administered to 50 students and assessment and evaluation of the students after specific duration. The specific objectives of the study were to determine if factors such as teaching methodology and students' participation in class affected academic success. The data were analyzed quantitatively and the results showed that factors such as teaching methodology and students' participation in class affected students' academic scores. The use of past year examination papers as a learning method improved students' academic scores compared to other methods.

**Keywords:** Examination's performance, academic success, teaching methodology

### **Introduction**

Learning is an instinct of living creatures. In human beings, the process of learning starts with their birth. Students' learning achievement has always been an issue of great concern for teachers, parents, school administrative bodies, educational policy makers, and students themselves. More importantly, parents concern about their children's outcomes, which is common throughout the world. "Many studies showed that achievement is dependent and affected by a number of other independent, moderate, and intervening variables, whereas, many other direct and indirect factors are also involved". In student achievement, a teacher's role has been very pivotal. Ferguson (1991) [32] identified that "The examination score of the students are greatly influenced by the good teacher" (p. 465). Ediger and Rao (2005) [26] noticed that "As teachers always monitor and assess the students, teacher observation proved to be a good tool for assessing student achievement" (p. 12). According to teaching is a respectable profession and effective teaching is always being important for producing the desired outcomes. Good teaching is important and helpful in multiple ways as students differ from one another and make betterment in learning opportunities for these differences (Ediger & Rao, 2005) [26].

Students usually do not concentrate on gaining the knowledge or developing the concepts. They don't make efforts in acquiring the in-depth knowledge of the subject and focus on exam related preparation. In Asia, in specially south Asia, good academic results has great importance in getting admissions in professional institution particularly for the students of grade XI and XII (Intermediate classes). There is strong need of achieving good academic results along with good subject knowledge. This study will help in synchronization of these two aspects of education. It will help in devising new methodologies and techniques which will not only useful in developing the interest of students towards academic growth but very helpful for the achievement of good grades.

Studies on teaching methods are not something new in educational research. A large number of studies have been done on this area. Have written a compendium of research studies conducted in this area over the past three decades. Even before that, Feldman and Newcomb (1973) [30] mentioned decades of similar research studies in the area of teaching methods. These show both increased interest and knowledge in the area of teaching strategies and learning theories. Suggests that these studies on teaching methods conducted in the past decades are so overwhelming that it would be impossible to go over them all in detail.

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For many decades, the search for better teaching methods to provide the best learning has been the goal of education. However, teaching method is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. Flexibility is crucial in adapting teaching methods in the class. Since all teachers are different, the strategies they use, and the way they use them will depend on the context and situation of their class, as well as their own personality and biases.

The main question that still lingers, even after the large number of studies that have been done is, What are the most suitable teaching methods, and how do they impact students' learning in today's setting, especially in large classes? Can cooperative learning provide better results than just lecture in this situation? Do students' attitudes toward the class have any relationship with teaching and learning?

The effect of teaching methods on students' learning should be the interest of every teacher and student. In the field of business teaching, there have been various studies done in an attempt to measure teaching methods. Conducted a case study on several teaching methods in business studies to explore the reasons for their use, and perceptions of effectiveness. The result of their study suggested that various methods do influence teaching effectiveness. Another study by McAlister-Kizzier and the Delta Pi Epsilon Society (1999) suggested that case studies were an effective teaching method for business instruction. This led to further studies on teaching methods in the area of business. Recently, more research in business studies has suggested that teaching methods that involve small group learning have a positive

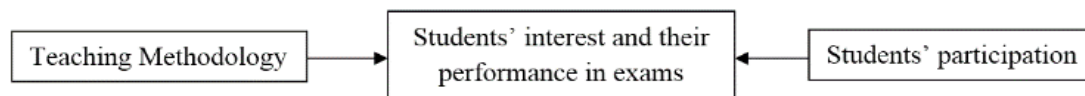
effect on student learning. For example, a study conducted by Bell, Quazi, and Jasper (2004) suggested that students prefer student group study for better learning in the class. Xu and Yang (2010) acknowledged the positive impact of social interaction in groups. Hosal-Akman and Simga-Mugan (2010)<sup>[37]</sup> stated that cooperative learning had better potential compared to other teaching methods. This is not surprising since research has shown that cooperative learning has good potential for increasing learning (Ahles & Contento, 2006; Bennett, Hogarth, Lubben, Campbell, & Robinson, 2010; McLeish, 2009)<sup>[2, 7]</sup>.

With this general background, this study sought to further develop a better understanding of the role of cooperative learning teaching methods in education and students' attitude on students' academic performance. The focus was on discovering related variables in actual class settings that may help us understand teaching and learning better. In developing countries where class sizes are usually large and teacher-directed class are considered the norm, it is important to see how cooperative learning method can play a role in students' academic performance.

### Statement of the Problem

Students do not take interest in acquiring knowledge and improvement of the conceptual studies. Why they just focus on passing the exam with good marks rather than good academic excellence.

### Theoretical Frame work



### Variables to Be Discussed

#### 1. Dependent Variables

- a) Interest of the students towards their studies.
- b) Good performance of the students in examinations

#### 2. Independent Variables

- a) Teaching methodologies
- b) Students' active participation class room's proceedings.

### Research Objectives

1. To find out the relationship between teaching methodology and interest of the students towards their studies.
2. To find out the relationship between students' participation in class and good performance of the students in examinations

### Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between teaching methodology and interest of the students towards their studies?
2. What is the relationship between students' participation in class and good performance of the students in examinations?

### Hypothesis

1. Students' interest towards their studies and their good performances in examinations are positively related with suitable teaching methodologies.
2. Students' interest towards their studies and their good performances in examinations are positively related with their maximum attendance in the class.

### Literature Review

Many studies conducted in the area of student achievement suggested that a number of factors (previous schooling, parents' educational background, family income, students' self-motivation, students' age, learning preferences, and entry qualification of students) affect student performance at school, college, and even university level. (Ali, Haider, Munir, Khan, & Ahmed, 2013)<sup>[5]</sup>

Salfi and Saeed (2007) found that "A large number of factors affect the achievement or success interaction of students" (p. 607). A teacher's academic and professional qualification, experience, age, assessment interval, training, and many other factors all affect students' learning discourse and all should function properly for the quality of education. In many research studies, the effect of teachers' qualifications on students' learning achievement has been estimated and several efforts were made to know whether teachers' qualifications putting under the category of independent variables might have any direct or indirect effect on student achievement.

Warwick and Riemers (1992) found that teachers' qualifications and content knowledge showed a positive relationship with student achievement. Many studies noticed that teachers' academic and professional qualifications had a significant effect on student achievement (Khan & Shah, 2002; Habib, Shah, & Khawaja, 2004)<sup>[38]</sup>. Anyone's explanation of supporting this idea of school level effects of teachers' qualifications is that teachers continuously learned from one another, so any negative effect associated with low-quality teachers might be minimized if other fellows are

cooperative having valuable knowledge and expertise. According to Ballou and Spark (1997) <sup>[11]</sup>, a great number of researchers showed that without proper and continuous learning of teachers, instructors, and school employees, no one can attain high level of achievement. Duncombe and Armour (2004) <sup>[25]</sup> stated that in teaching profession, providing high-quality teachers with higher qualification is more important than anything else and it can only be possible by providing them professional preparation and working condition.

A teacher's qualification showed the educational attainments of the teacher. Many studies have examined which qualification of teachers positively related to student achievement. Teachers having a higher qualification or have an advanced degree in their teaching subject has a positive effect on student achievement (Rice, 2003). Ingersoll (1999) <sup>[39]</sup> described that the good source to improve student achievement is the provision of highly qualified teachers and the major reason of students' low-quality achievement is that a large number of school teachers are not well qualified. Suggested that in student achievement, well qualified teachers always develop significant difference and their students were impartial, tolerant, adoptable, and challenging. Among the teacher-related factors affecting student achievement, teachers' qualifications are not only the single factor, many other factors also played an important role in student achievement. Many researchers proved that there is a positive relationship between student achievement and teachers' qualifications, but the teaching force quality is not only governed by the qualification, many other factors, like teaching skills, pedagogical knowledge, experience, training, assessment interval, dedication, and commitment to the profession also have a great influence on the performance of students.

Many researches showed that a large number of teaching standards supporters claimed that professional qualification and academic specialization were positively associated with increased gain in student achievement while the opponents declared that the available researches did not support this assertion. Many recent work stated that professional qualification of teachers do not have any effect on student achievement, but do raise hurdles, preventing qualified candidates from entering into this profession (Ballou & Podgursky, 2000) <sup>[10]</sup>. The same finding was found in the study of Rowan, in which a small scale research was conducted on the impact of teachers' professional qualification on the achievement of elementary school students and results revealed no discernable effect. Among the teacher-related factors, teachers' academic and professional qualification affects student achievement; teachers' professional development or in-service training also significantly contributes, because the trained ones can instruct skillfully and better known the art of effective teaching as compared to the untrained. identified that teachers' in-service training mainly related to the opportunities provided to practicing teachers to enhance their skills, knowledge, and innovative approaches to improve their instructional effectiveness in the classroom situation. Viewed that complex challenges involved in education process, such as diversity of student population, innovation in technologies, and rigorous academic standards in the teaching-learning process, arise the need of continuous in-service training. pointed out the need of teacher training in a teacher's career that the success of any school directly relate

to the availability of qualified and trained teachers, so teachers should make responsible for professional development.

More teaching experience thought to be more effective for student achievement. Also supported this concept that "Students taught by experienced teachers perform better than students of inexperienced teachers" (p. 24). Darling-Hammond (2000) <sup>[23]</sup> found the relationship between teaching experience and student achievement that there was no significant difference between the performance of students taught by teachers who had less than five years and more than five years of experience. Pedagogical knowledge or knowledge about the different teaching methods equips teachers with numerous techniques associated with efficient teaching focusing on students' learning outcome. Denton and Lacina (1984) <sup>[24]</sup> also in favors of that the positive relationship was found between teachers' knowledge of teaching strategies and student performance in examinations. Many educational experts believed that 5-8 years are required to acquire the knowledge of teaching methodology to reach the expert stage. Deep knowledge of teaching strategies has always been associated with better lesson planning and implementation in the classroom (Berliner, 1988; Shearer, 2001) <sup>[12]</sup>.

The review of related literature expressed divisive results emerged with regards to the relationship between different teacher-related factors and student achievement. The absence of any detailed study on the secondary level in Pakistan motivates the researchers to examine the relationship between different teacher factors and student achievement.

Cooperative learning has been found to be a popular choice of teaching methods in recent years. Cooperative learning allows students to work well together for specific tasks The core point of cooperative learning is the positive interdependence-learning atmosphere created as the students work in a group (Kagan, 1990) <sup>[41]</sup>. Numerous studies indicate that cooperative learning is a favorable teaching approach for academic and social gain when used responsibly (see for example Ediger, 2011 <sup>[29]</sup>). urged that class should go beyond lecture and include active learning where collaboration is encouraged. Cooperative learning is also considered to help students develop the requisite skill of knowing how to work together in today's pluralistic society. It is also seen as an integrative and holistic approach to learning, with a focus on social implications.

For use with large classes, which are particularly common in the developing world, cooperative learning is also seen as a favorable approach, but far fewer studies have been done on its direct effect on students' academic performance. A study by Coskun (2011) <sup>[15]</sup> supports this idea that student grouping in the class does have some positive on unique and original ideas of the student.

Studied thirteen teaching methods. These were suggested by empirical studies on teaching methods and students' perception for best learning. The result suggested that cooperative learning and small group activities are closely correlated with students' learning.

The traditional teaching method, lecture, also has strong literature support. Various research studies have concluded that lecture is still the most widely used teaching method today (Berrett, 2012) <sup>[8]</sup>. A recent study by Covill (2011) <sup>[16]</sup> on college students' perceptions of the traditional lecture method suggests that lecture is of great value and receives positive responses from students. Covil further suggests that

the lecture method may carry learning characteristics such as problem solving, critical thinking, etc., usually found only in active learning.

Lecture is seen as the most convenient teaching method even though it may not have the greatest impact on student's learning (Jones, 2007) <sup>[40]</sup>, because it seems to be the easiest to prepare compared to other methods. Nevertheless, the impact of lecture should not be underestimated. Argue that the effect will be even greater when lecture is revised and combined with other teaching methods or used with educational technology. This sort of enhanced lecture does contribute to student learning (Berry, 2008; Burke, James) <sup>[9]</sup> Literature supporting small group learning and lecture as a teaching method is vast. There have been many studies conducted to support each method. But few studies have discussed the comparative effect on students' academic performance of these two teaching methods. One study that comes very close to this found that the mean scores of the cooperative learning group were slightly higher than the lecture group (Hosal-Akman & Simga-Mugan, 2010) <sup>[37]</sup>. Another study showed that teaching methods did have a significant effect on students' scores on achievement test. Several studies showed that students' attitude have a relationship with teaching method and academic performance. Litke's (1995) <sup>[43]</sup> study showed that students have various attitudes that are closely related to teaching methods. Study also found that the method used seemed to affect students' attitude toward the class, and this may be the factor that most influences learning. A study by Akkuzu and Akcay (2011) <sup>[3]</sup> showed a relationship between students' attitude and their academic performance. They suggested that students' positive attraction toward certain kinds of teaching may help increase their academic performance. Eastman, Iyer, and Eastman (2011) <sup>[28]</sup> suggest that when students have a positive attitude toward something, they will do the task well.

### Methodology

This research is based on comparative study of two groups each of twenty five students of same grades, same age group and having same intellect level. Same syllabus is designed for both groups compatible to their age group. Same teacher is assigned to teach both groups for three months. The groups are classified into formal group and experimental group. The conventional way of teaching is used to teach the students of formal group. Teacher used lecture method to deliver information and knowledge to the students. Class was purely teacher-centered class in which students just listen the lecture. They are allowed rather encouraged to ask question and participate in the class room activities but students do not take interest in active participation. The class usually remained passive. Most of the students remained silent during the lecture or kept busy in copying the lecture. The concentration of the students was not focused on teacher during the lecture. Students usually wait for the time when the class would be over. Sample examination papers were discussed at the end of the duration of study by the teacher. The experimental group of students was taught with different strategies. They were given sample examination papers and ask them to prepare their assignments. The prepared assignments then discussed in the class and checked by the teacher. The whole syllabus was distributed in five examination papers with difficulty level increased from 1 to 5. Students were asked to prepare the notes of these papers on

their own and share it with the class in the presence of teacher. The class became interactive and students became very participative. They started taking interest in studies and their involvement in the class activities enhances their learning and understanding abilities.

### Data Analysis

At the end of the duration of three months, student of both groups were assessed by the same set of papers. It was observed that students of experimental group did very well in the examination and got good grades. The teaching strategies used in the experimental group not only improved the performance of students in the exams but also enhanced the understanding abilities of students and developed their interest in studies.

### Results and Discussions

If the class room teaching is modified to make it synchronized with the examination pattern, it will develop the interest of students towards studies, improves their concepts and enhances their cognitive skills. It also increases the performance of students in exams. Students can get more marks in exams with better understanding of the subjects and concepts. It will also be very helpful in the preparation of different entrance tests.

### Implications and Future Recommendations

This study was conducted in limited schools of Karachi. sample size was hundred. Results are positive. But more researches should be conducted to cover more target populations. There are other more factors on which students' achievements depend such as excess co-curricular activities, students attendance, parental involvement, medium of instructions, selection of discipline according to student's own will etc. These areas also needed to be discussed in future researches. Future researches should cover more target population so that more reliable results should come. The results of the survey show that teachers must adopt the methodology according to the student's needs and active participation of students also important throughout the class duration.

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