

Perspectives of Students and Teachers on Quality Teaching in Higher Education: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract: This research paper investigates the perceptions of quality teaching in higher education from the perspectives of both students and teachers. The researchers explored various aspects of quality teaching, including definitions, teaching methods, roles and responsibilities, institutional factors, and characteristics of effective university teachers. The results indicate both commonalities and distinctions in the ways students and educators perceive quality teaching. Key emerging themes include the importance of meaningful learning, engaging pedagogies, effective communication, and supportive learning environments. The significant findings emerging from the paper highlighted that, teachers working in Higher Education perceived their role as multifaceted, encompassing teaching, research, and what they termed "extension"

services—involvement in broader educational activities beyond their institution. Teachers' definitions of quality teaching centred around content richness and engaging pedagogy. The perspectives of both students and teachers highlighted the value of group work and collaborative learning activities. Both students and teachers recognise that quality teaching is a shared responsibility. Students acknowledged their role in actively participating in class and taking ownership of their learning. This research paper contributes to the ongoing dialogue on enhancing teaching quality in higher education and offers insights for educators and institutions to improve their practices. Investigators highlighted the need for institutional policies valuing and rewarding teaching excellence. Institutions must have clear policies that recognise and reward innovative teaching practices.

Introduction

In higher education, quality teaching has recently become a subject of increasing focus and debate (Henard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008). As the perspective of higher education evolves, with changing student demographics, technological advancements, and shifting societal expectations, the need to apprehend and build up the quality of teaching

becomes paramount. This research aims to contribute to this ongoing dialogue by exploring the conception of quality teaching from the perspectives of both students and teachers in a higher education setting.

Higher education plays an extremely important role in promoting human as well as societal wellbeing and in developing India as envisioned in its Constitution - a democratic, just, socially conscious, cultured, and humane nation upholding liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice for all. Higher education significantly contributes towards sustainable livelihoods and economic development of the nation. As India moves towards becoming a knowledge economy and society, more and more young Indians are likely to aspire for higher education (NE,2020, pp.33)

Quality teaching in higher education aims to cultivate well-rounded, creative individuals capable of critical thinking and ethical engagement. This involves deep specialization in various fields—ranging from sciences to humanities—while also nurturing character, social responsibility, and 21st-century skills. Effective education should foster personal growth, prepare students for meaningful careers, and enhance societal contributions. emphasizes quality teaching as a cornerstone for enhancing higher education in India. It advocates for a holistic approach to education that integrates a rigorous, research-oriented curriculum with innovative pedagogical practices. Essential to this vision is the focus on continuous formative assessment and comprehensive student support systems, which are designed to ensure that learning experiences are engaging and inclusive. This vision aspires to transform higher education into a robust system that supports innovation, social engagement, and economic

development, ultimately contributing to a knowledgeable and skilled nation. Overall, the NEP 2020 sets a transformative agenda that seeks to align Indian higher education with global standards of quality and accessibility.

The conceptualisation of quality education is multifaceted and often contested. As Pfeffer and Coote (1991) note, it can be a "slippery concept" with various connotations. In higher education, quality teaching is not merely about transmitting knowledge but encompasses a range of factors that contribute to effective learning outcomes (Alemu, 2018). These may include the teacher's expertise, pedagogical approaches, learning environment, student engagement, and institutional support.

In India, where this study is situated, the focus on quality in higher education has gained significant traction. The establishment of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in 1994 underscores the national commitment to enhancing the quality of higher education institutions (NAAC, n.d.). However, despite these efforts, challenges persist. Recent reports indicate the prevalence of fake educational institutions, highlighting the urgent need for robust quality assurance mechanisms (Livemint, 2023).

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of quality teaching by examining the perspectives of two key stakeholders: students and teachers. By comparing their views, we aim to identify areas of convergence and divergence, thereby offering insights that can inform teaching practices and institutional policies.

Conceptualising Quality Teaching in Higher

Education

The concept of quality teaching in higher education has been the subject of extensive research and debate. The investigators underwent a significant literature review, which gave them insight to explore the gaps in the previous and present work. The review of literature was categorised under different themes, which helped the investigators explore the characteristics of different dimensions of quality teaching in higher education. Henard and Leprince-Ringuet (2008) comprehensively review the literature on quality teaching, highlighting its multidimensional nature. They argue that quality teaching is not just about the teacher's actions in the classroom but encompasses a range of factors, including institutional policies, curriculum design, and student engagement.

Alemu (2018) emphasises that quality teaching is characterised by well-prepared and organised instruction, fairness in evaluation, and genuine care for students' success. This aligns with earlier research by Barnes and Lock (2010) and Oredbeyen (2010), who identified clarity of instruction and teacher preparedness as critical indicators of quality teaching. Biggs and Tang (2011) introduce the concept of "constructive alignment" as a fundamental principle of quality teaching in higher education. This approach emphasises the alignment between intended learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessment strategies. They argue that students are more likely to engage in deep learning and achieve desired outcomes when these elements are coherently aligned.

Furthermore, Ramsden (2003) emphasises the importance of understanding students' perspectives

and prior knowledge in facilitating effective learning. He argues that quality teaching involves creating learning environments that encourage students to engage with the subject matter and develop their understanding critically.

Several studies have explored student perceptions of quality teaching in higher education. Pavlina et al. (2011) surveyed the University of Zagreb, finding that students emphasised teachers' content clarity and self-explanatory techniques. Interestingly, they found that students perceived modern technology as less important than the teacher's role in forming the quality of teaching.

Charles (2011) conducted in-depth interviews with students in the UK, revealing that quality teaching means different things to individual students. This highlights the subjective nature of quality perceptions and the need for a nuanced understanding of student expectations.

A study by Hill et al. (2003) identified several factors that students associate with quality teaching, including the teacher's knowledge and enthusiasm, clarity of goals and standards, appropriate workload, and quality of assessment and feedback. These findings suggest that students have a holistic view of quality teaching beyond classroom interactions.

Chickering and Gamson's (1987) influential work on good practice in undergraduate education identified seven principles that students consistently associate with high-quality learning experiences. These include encouraging the dialogue between student and teacher, developing collaboration and cooperation among students, and respecting the diverse talents and

individual pace/ways of learning.

While much research has focused on student perceptions, fewer studies have explored teachers' views on quality teaching in higher education. Kember et al. (2000) found that teachers' use of student feedback largely depends on their perception of its reliability and validity. This suggests that teachers' conceptions of quality teaching play a crucial role in their pedagogical practices.

Prosser and Trigwell (1999) explored university teachers' approaches to teaching and found that teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning significantly influence their teaching practices. They identified a range of approaches, from teacher-centred/content-orientated to student-centred/learning-orientated, with the latter being associated with higher-quality learning outcomes.

A study by Skelton (2004) explored the concept of "teaching excellence" from the perspective of award-winning university teachers. The findings revealed that these teachers emphasised the importance of passion for the subject, the ability to inspire students, and a commitment to ongoing professional development as critical elements of quality teaching.

Institutional Role in Quality Teaching

The role of institutions in promoting quality teaching has been recognised as crucial. The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) emphasises the importance of institutional policies and practices in maintaining and improving the quality of higher education (INQAAHE, n.d.). In the Indian context, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)

plays a significant role in assessing and accrediting higher education institutions, thereby promoting quality standards (NAAC, n.d.).

Gibbs and Coffey (2004) studied the impact of university teachers' training on their teaching skills and students' learning. They found that training programs can significantly improve teachers' and students' approaches to learning, highlighting the importance of institutional support for professional development.

Knight and Trowler (2000) argue that efforts to enhance teaching quality must be sensitive to disciplinary and departmental cultures. They suggest that institutions should foster "communities of practice" that support ongoing dialogue and reflection on teaching practices.

Factors Affecting Quality Teaching

Various factors have been identified as influencing the quality of teaching in higher education. These include teacher competency, curriculum design, student intake standards, funding for support services, and infrastructure (UK Essays, 2018). Additionally, the student-to-staff ratio has been highlighted as a critical factor affecting the quality of student-teacher interactions and feedback (Nasr et al., 1996).

Biggs (2001) introduces the "3P model" of teaching and learning, which emphasises the interaction between presage (student factors and teaching context), process (learning-focused activities), and product (learning outcomes). This model highlights the complex interplay of factors contributing to quality teaching and learning experiences.

Technological advancements have also been recognised as a significant factor influencing teaching

quality in higher education. A Kirkwood and Price (2014) study explored the impact of technology-enhanced learning on teaching practices and student outcomes. They found that while technology can enhance learning experiences, its effectiveness depends on how it is integrated into pedagogical approaches and aligned with learning objectives.

Characteristics of Effective University Teachers

Research on the characteristics of effective university teachers has identified several key traits. These include subject knowledge, teaching skills, friendliness, approachability, and making complex subjects easy to learn (Alemu, 2018). The American Economics Association (AEA) found that improving teaching quality positively impacts students' future outcomes, including college attendance and career prospects (AEA, 2014).

Hativa et al. (2001) conducted a study on exemplary university teachers and identified four dimensions of effective teaching: organisation of the course and subject matter, clarity of instruction, stimulating students' interest and engagement, and creating a positive classroom environment. These findings suggest that effective teaching involves cognitive, affective, and managerial skills.

Kreber (2002) focusses on "scholarship of teaching" in higher education, suggesting that effective university teachers engage in ongoing inquiry into their teaching practices, critically reflect on their experiences, and share their insights with colleagues. This emphasises the role of teachers as active researchers and contributors to the field of teaching

and learning processes in higher education.

This literature review provides a foundation for understanding the multifaceted nature of quality teaching in higher education. However, it also reveals gaps in our understanding, particularly in comparing student and teacher perspectives within the same institutional context. This study addresses these gaps by providing a comparative analysis of student and teacher perceptions of quality teaching in a higher education setting in India.

Research Question:

In this research paper, the investigators tried to seek the answers of the following questions:

1. How do students and teachers in higher education define quality teaching?
2. What teaching methods and techniques are perceived as effective in promoting quality learning?
3. How do students and teachers view their roles and responsibilities in teaching-learning?
4. What institutional factors are seen as crucial in supporting quality teaching?
5. What characteristics are associated with effective university teachers?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on quality teaching in higher education and provide practical insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers.

Method

A descriptive research method has been used to conduct this research work. The research design focused on capturing rich, descriptive data that could provide insights into students' and teachers' nuanced

understandings of quality teaching.

Sampling Strategy

The study used a combination of purposive criterion sampling and non-random convenience sampling to select participants. The sample consisted of 11 postgraduate students and three university teachers from the University of Delhi. The rationales for focussing on or selecting postgraduate students were based on one of the assumptions that they have sufficient experience in higher education to reflect critically on their learning experiences and preferences.

For student participants, the selection criteria included:

- Current enrolment in a postgraduate program
- Diversity in previous educational backgrounds (school boards, medium of instruction)

- Exclusion of undergraduate and PhD students

For teacher participants, the selection criteria included:

- Current teaching position at the university level
- Diversity in subject specialisation (psychology, sociology, and ICT)
- Minimum of 5 years teaching experience

The teacher sample consisted of 2 male and one female participant, all with PhD qualifications and approximately five years of teaching experience.

While the sample size is relatively small, it is consistent with qualitative research practices prioritising depth of understanding over generalisability (Patton, 2015). The varied backgrounds of the participants facilitated the capture of multiple perspectives, thereby enriching the data collected.

Tools of data Collection

For data, semi structured interview schedules were used to collect the data from the respondents.

The interview schedule was designed to address the research questions while allowing for emergent themes and follow-up questions.

Data Analysis

The data analysis used the thematic approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which includes a systematic framework like transcription of interviews, creating initial codes, grouping codes for exploring a few themes, then verifying and labelling themes, and then creating reports, i.e., connecting the analysis to the literature and research questions.

To ensure reliability and validity, member checking was employed, where participants were allowed to review their interview transcripts and provide feedback or clarifications. This process enhances the credibility of the findings by ensuring that the researcher's interpretations accurately reflect the participants' intended meanings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Additionally, peer debriefing was used, where the researcher discussed the emerging themes and interpretations with colleagues not directly involved in the study. This process helps to challenge assumptions and explore alternative interpretations of the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Delhi's Ethics Committee. Participants provided informed consent and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. They were informed of their right to withdraw without penalty. Data was stored securely and will be destroyed post study. For online

interviews, participants were advised to use private spaces, and all identifying information was removed from transcripts and the final report.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of the interview data revealed several key themes related to perceptions of quality teaching in higher education. This section presents these findings, which are organised around the main research questions, and discusses them considering existing literature.

A. Perspectives of Respondents on “Defining Quality Teaching” along with Discussions on Findings

Students' Perspectives

- Most of the students generally defined quality teaching in terms of its outcomes and impact on their learning.
- A recurring theme emphasised meaningful and deep understanding instead of mere repetition of facts.
- As one student expressed, "Quality teaching is not about memorising data; it is about developing a deep understanding of the subject that we can apply in real-life situations." This finding aligns with Barrie et al. (2005), who found that students perceiving high-quality teaching tend to adopt a "deep" learning approach, characterised by a coherent and integrated understanding of course material.
- Students also highlighted the importance of skill acquisition and practical application. One participant stated: "A teacher who helps us acquire necessary skills for our daily lives and future careers is providing quality teaching." This perspective resonates with the broader goals of higher education in preparing students for professional life. It aligns with the findings of Alemu

(2018), who identified the ability to make learning relevant to real-world applications as a critical characteristic of quality teaching.

Teachers' Perspectives

- Teachers' definitions of quality teaching centred around content richness and engaging pedagogy. One teacher described it as teaching that is full of rich, updated content delivered through engaging pedagogy where the learner is not only enjoying but also actively participating in the development of content." This definition emphasises the dual importance of content knowledge and effective delivery, aligning with teacher effectiveness literature (Shulman, 1986).
- The emphasis on student engagement and participation also reflects a shift towards more student-centred approaches in higher education (Weimer, 2002).
- Both students and teachers agreed that quality teaching should foster an environment where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and engaging in discussions. This shared perspective highlights the importance of creating a positive classroom climate, which has been identified as a crucial factor in effective teaching (Hattie, 2009).

B. Perspectives of Respondents on Teaching Methods and Techniques

Students' Preferences

- Most of the students preferred diverse teaching methods, with a particular emphasis on discussion-based learning and practical applications. Many students valued interactive methods that allowed for the exploration of different perspectives. As one student noted: "In philosophy classes, I prefer discussions where we can view a problem from

different angles. It helps us develop critical thinking skills." This perspective aligns with social constructivist learning theories, emphasising the importance of active engagement, collaboration, critical thinking, and meaning-making in learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Lea et al., 2003).

- Students also appreciated using examples from real-life experiences and case studies to understand theoretical comprehensions. One participant commented: "When teachers use real-life examples to explain concepts, it makes the learning more relatable and memorable." This finding supports the literature on the effectiveness of contextualised learning in higher education (Brown et al., 1989). It also aligns with authentic learning principles, connecting academic content to real-world contexts (Herrington & Oliver, 2000).

Teachers' Approaches

- Most of the university teachers emphasised adapting their methods to the content and learning objectives. They reported using a mix of lectures, discussions, and practical activities. One teacher explained: "My choice of method depends on the content and the learning outcomes I want to achieve. Sometimes a lecture is most appropriate; other times a student-led discussion works better." This flexibility in approach aligns with research on adaptive teaching, which suggests that effective teachers adjust their methods based on student needs and learning contexts (Corno, 2008). It also reflects the "pedagogical content knowledge" concept introduced by Shulman (1986), which emphasises the importance of choosing appropriate teaching methods for specific content areas.

- Both students and teachers highlighted the value of group work and collaborative learning activities. This shared perspective aligns with the increasing recognition of peer interaction's importance in higher education (Johnson et al., 2014). Research has shown that collaborative learning enhances critical thinking, improves information retention, and promotes social skill development (Gokhale, 1995).

C. Perspectives of Respondents on Role and Responsibilities in the Teaching-Learning Process

Students View on Teacher Roles

- Students emphasised the facilitative role of teachers in higher education. They expected teachers to guide discussions, provide constructive feedback, and create a supportive learning environment. One student commented, "A good university teacher does not just lecture but facilitates our learning by encouraging us to think critically and express our ideas." This view supports the shift from "sage on the stage" to "guide on the side" (King, 1993) in higher education, emphasising student-centred pedagogies. It aligns with Kember and Kwan's (2000) findings of a teaching approach continuum, where student-centred methods correlate with higher-quality learning outcomes.

- Students also highlighted the importance of teachers being approachable and responsive to their needs. As one participant put it: "Teachers should be sensitive to each student's reactions and be willing to clarify things we do not understand." This emphasis on teacher approachability and responsiveness has been identified as a critical factor in student satisfaction and engagement in higher education (Komarraju et al., 2010). It also aligns with the concept of "pedagogical

carings" proposed by Noddings (1992), emphasising the importance of empathy and responsiveness in teaching.

Teachers' Perspectives on Their Roles

- Teachers viewed their role as multifaceted, encompassing teaching, research, and what they termed "extension" services—involvement in broader educational activities beyond their institution. One teacher explained: "Our role is threefold: teaching, research, and extension services. We should not limit ourselves to classroom teaching but contribute to the wider educational community." This perspective aligns with the traditional tripartite mission of universities: teaching, research, and service (Boyer, 1990). However, the emphasis on "extension services" suggests a broader interpretation of the service role, potentially reflecting the changing expectations of academics in contemporary higher education. This aligns with the "engaged scholar" concept proposed by Boyer (1996), which emphasises connecting academic work to broader societal needs.

- Teachers also emphasised their responsibility in creating an inclusive and engaging learning environment. One participant stated: "It is our job to create an atmosphere where every student feels comfortable sharing their views and participating in discussions." This focus on creating a positive classroom climate aligns with research on the importance of psychological safety in promoting student engagement and learning (Edmondson, 1999). It also reflects the principles of inclusive pedagogy, which aims to create learning environments that support the participation and achievement of all students (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Shared Responsibilities

• Both students and teachers recognise that quality teaching is a shared responsibility. Students acknowledged their role in actively participating in class and taking ownership of their learning. As one student put it: “In higher education, we are responsible for our learning. We need to engage in discussions and do independent research.” This perspective aligns with the concept of self-regulated learning, which emphasises the importance of students taking an active role in managing their learning processes (Zimmerman, 2002). It also reflects a growing recognition of the importance of student agency in higher education (Klemenčič, 2017). Teachers echoed this sentiment, emphasising the partnership between students and teachers in learning. One teacher remarked: "While I am responsible for planning and facilitating learning activities, students are partners in this process. Their engagement and contributions are crucial for effective learning." This shared perspective aligns with the concept of "students as partners" in higher education, emphasising students' active role in shaping their learning experiences (Healey et al., 2014). It also reflects a shift towards more collaborative and participatory approaches to teaching and learning in higher education (Cook-Sather et al., 2014).

D. Perspectives of Respondents on Institutional Factors Supporting Quality Teaching

Both students and teachers identified several institutional factors as crucial for supporting quality teaching. These included:

1. **Professional Development Opportunities:** Teachers emphasised the importance of ongoing

training and workshops to enhance their pedagogical skills. One teacher stated: "Regular faculty development programs help us stay updated with new teaching methods and technologies." This aligns with research highlighting the positive impact of professional development on teaching quality (Gibbs & Coffey, 2004).

2. Adequate Resources and Infrastructure: Students and teachers stressed the need for well-equipped classrooms, libraries, and laboratories. A student commented: "Having access to good resources, like a well-stocked library and modern labs, enhances our learning experience." This finding supports the literature on the importance of physical learning environments in higher education (Temple, 2008).

3. Supportive Policies: Teachers highlighted the need for institutional policies valuing and rewarding teaching excellence. One teacher remarked: "Institutions should have clear policies that recognise and reward innovative teaching practices." This perspective aligns with research on the importance of institutional culture in promoting teaching quality (Knight & Trowler, 2000).

4. Student Feedback Mechanisms: Both groups emphasised the importance of effective systems for gathering and acting on student feedback. A teacher noted: "Regular student feedback helps us understand what is working and what needs improvement in our teaching." This supports the literature on the role of student feedback in enhancing teaching quality (Richardson, 2005).

5. Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Several participants highlighted the value of cross-disciplinary

interactions. A student commented, "I enjoy courses that bring together perspectives from different disciplines. It broadens our understanding." This aligns with growing recognition of the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in higher education (Klein, 2010)

D. Perspectives of Respondents on Characteristics of Effective University Teachers

The study revealed several key characteristics that both students and teachers associated with effective university teaching:

Subject Expertise: Both groups emphasised the importance of deep subject knowledge. A student commented:

"A good teacher should have in-depth knowledge of their subject and be able to answer complex questions." This aligns with Shulman's (1986) emphasis on the importance of content knowledge in teaching.

Communication Skills: The ability to explain complex concepts was highly valued.

A teacher noted, " Breaking down difficult concepts and explaining them in simple terms is crucial for effective teaching." This supports research on the importance of clear communication in effective teaching (Hativa et al., 2001).

Enthusiasm and Passion: Both students and teachers highlighted the motivational impact of passionate teaching.

A student commented: "When a teacher is truly passionate about their subject, it is infectious. It makes us want to learn more." This aligns with research on the positive impact of teacher enthusiasm on student engagement and learning outcomes (Keller et al.,

2016).

Approachability and Empathy: The ability to connect with students personally was seen as crucial. A teacher stated: "Being approachable and understanding students' challenges is key to creating a supportive learning environment." This supports the literature on the importance of teacher-student relationships in higher education (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014).

Adaptability and Openness to Feedback: Both groups valued teachers willing to adapt their methods based on student needs and feedback.

A student noted: "The best teachers are open to our feedback and willing to try new teaching approaches." This aligns with research on the importance of adaptive teaching in higher education (Corno, 2008).

Use of Innovative Teaching Methods: The ability to incorporate diverse and engaging teaching methods was highly valued.

A teacher commented: "We need to keep up with new pedagogical approaches and technologies to make our teaching more effective and engaging."

This supports the literature on the positive impact of innovative teaching methods on student engagement and learning outcomes (Hénard & Roseveare, 2012).

Conclusion and Implications

This study provides valuable insights into the perceptions of quality teaching in higher education from both student and teacher perspectives. The findings reveal a complex and multifaceted understanding of quality teaching that goes beyond mere content delivery to encompass aspects such as meaningful learning, engaging pedagogies, effective

communication, and supportive learning environments. Several critical implications emerge from this research:

1. **Need for Alignment:** The study highlights the importance of aligning student and teacher expectations regarding quality teaching. Institutions should facilitate ongoing dialogue between students and teachers to foster a shared understanding of effective teaching practices.
2. **Professional Development:** The findings underscore the need for continuous professional development opportunities for university teachers. These should focus on subject expertise, pedagogical skills, communication techniques, and innovative teaching methods.
3. **Institutional Support:** Higher education institutions are crucial in fostering quality teaching. This includes providing adequate resources, implementing supportive policies, and creating mechanisms for recognising and rewarding teaching excellence.
4. **Student Engagement:** The study reinforces the importance of active student engagement in the learning process. Institutions and teachers should create opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning and contribute to the teaching-learning process.
5. **Interdisciplinary Approaches:** The value placed on interdisciplinary learning suggests that institutions should encourage cross-disciplinary collaborations and integrate diverse perspectives into curriculum design.
6. **Adaptive Teaching:** The findings highlight the need for teachers to be flexible and adaptive in their teaching approaches, responding to diverse student needs and learning contexts.
7. **Emphasis on Soft Skills:** Beyond subject

expertise, the study underscores the importance of teachers developing soft skills such as effective communication, empathy, and the ability to create supportive learning environments.

Future research could expand on this study by including a larger sample size, diverse institutional contexts, and different disciplinary areas.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the ongoing dialogue on enhancing teaching quality in higher education. Providing a nuanced understanding of student and teacher perspectives offers valuable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers striving to improve the quality of teaching and learning in higher education institutions.

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