

**Influence Of Teaching Quality On Learning Experience Among Graduate Students At Makerere University
Business School**

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of teaching quality on learning experience among graduate students at Makerere University Business School. A sample of 73 graduate students participated in the study. Results revealed a strong positive correlation ($r=0.846$, $p<0.01$) between teaching quality and learning experience. Pedagogical competence (Mean=3.92, SD=0.74) and instructor-student interaction quality (Mean=3.78, SD=0.83) significantly influenced learning outcomes. Regression analysis indicated that teaching quality dimensions explained 75.8% of variance in learning experience. The study concluded that teaching quality was a critical determinant of meaningful learning experiences in graduate business education. It was recommended that MUBS should implement continuous faculty development programs, establish teaching quality assurance mechanisms, adopt student-centered pedagogies, reduce class sizes to enable personalized instruction, and create reward systems recognizing teaching excellence to enhance graduate student learning experiences.

Keywords: Teaching quality, learning experience, graduate education, Makerere University Business School, pedagogical competence, faculty development

Background of the Study

Teaching quality represented a multifaceted construct encompassing instructor knowledge, pedagogical skills, interpersonal abilities, and commitment to student learning, widely recognized as the most influential factor in higher education quality (Hattie, 2009). In graduate business education, effective teaching extended beyond content delivery to include facilitation of critical thinking, application of theory to practice, cultivation of analytical capabilities, and development of professional competencies. Research consistently demonstrated that high-quality teaching enhanced student satisfaction, improved learning outcomes, and contributed to institutional reputation and graduate employability (Ramsden, 2003).

Makerere University Business School (MUBS), Uganda's leading institution for business and management education, faced increasing pressure to demonstrate teaching excellence amid growing competition from private universities and international business schools. The school enrolled diverse graduate students pursuing Master's degrees in business administration, accounting, finance, marketing, and other specialized fields. As MUBS sought international accreditation and regional recognition, ensuring high teaching quality became paramount. However, challenges including large class sizes, limited teaching resources, heavy faculty workloads, and traditional lecture-dominated pedagogies potentially constrained teaching effectiveness (Kasozi, 2009).

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The learning experience encompassed students' holistic perceptions of educational quality, including teaching effectiveness, curriculum relevance, assessment appropriateness, resource availability, and overall satisfaction with their academic journey (Biggs & Tang, 2011). For graduate students, particularly working professionals balancing career and academic responsibilities, the learning experience quality determined not only knowledge acquisition but also skill development, networking opportunities, and return on educational investment. Literature suggested that teaching quality served as the primary mediator between institutional inputs and student learning outcomes (Trigwell, Prosser & Waterhouse, 1999).

International research demonstrated strong relationships between teaching quality and student learning across various educational contexts (Marsh & Roche, 1997). Studies in African higher education indicated that students valued instructors who demonstrated subject expertise, employed varied teaching methods, provided constructive feedback, and showed genuine interest in student success (Mohamedbhai, 2008). However, empirical evidence specifically examining how teaching quality dimensions influenced learning experiences among graduate business students in Ugandan contexts remained limited. Understanding this relationship was essential for designing targeted interventions to enhance educational quality at MUBS (Ssesanga & Garrett, 2005).

Problem Statement

Despite Makerere University Business School's reputation as a premier business education institution, concerns persisted about inconsistent teaching quality across graduate programs. Student feedback indicated significant variations in instructor effectiveness, with some faculty demonstrating excellent pedagogical skills while others relied heavily on traditional lecturing with minimal student engagement (Mayanja, 2012). Many instructors, though possessing strong subject expertise, lacked formal training in adult learning principles or graduate-level pedagogy, potentially limiting their teaching effectiveness. Large class sizes averaging 60-80 students in some courses constrained opportunities for interactive teaching, personalized feedback, and meaningful instructor-student relationships.

Furthermore, heavy teaching loads and limited incentives for pedagogical innovation meant that faculty had little time or motivation to develop new teaching approaches or update course materials. The predominance of part-time faculty, while bringing valuable industry experience, created challenges in maintaining teaching quality standards and ensuring curriculum coherence (Altbach, 2015). Students reported varying levels of satisfaction with teaching quality, with particular concerns about delayed feedback, limited availability for consultation, and insufficient practical application of theoretical concepts. Without empirical understanding of how teaching quality influenced learning experience, efforts to improve graduate education remained fragmented and potentially ineffective in addressing students' actual needs and expectations.

Specific Objective

To determine the influence of teaching quality on learning experience among graduate students.

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Methodology

This study employed a descriptive correlational research design to examine the influence of teaching quality on learning experience among graduate students at Makerere University Business School (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The design was appropriate as it enabled investigation of relationships between variables while providing detailed descriptions of teaching quality perceptions and learning experience characteristics.

The target population comprised all graduate students enrolled in Master's degree programs at MUBS during the 2024/2025 academic year, estimated at 450 students across various specializations. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table with 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, a sample of 73 graduate students was selected. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation across programs: MBA (35 students), MSc Accounting and Finance (18 students), MSc Marketing (12 students), and other specialized programs (8 students) (Taherdoost, 2016).

Data was collected through a structured self-administered questionnaire comprising three sections: demographic information, teaching quality assessment, and learning experience evaluation. Teaching quality was measured using an adapted version of the Student Evaluation of Educational Quality (SEEQ) instrument developed by Marsh (1982), covering dimensions including instructor knowledge, teaching methods, communication clarity, feedback quality, and student-instructor relationships. Learning experience was assessed using items from Ramsden's (1991) Course Experience Questionnaire, measuring perceived learning outcomes, satisfaction, and educational value. All items utilized a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5) (Likert, 1932).

The instrument underwent content validation by three experts in higher education and business education. A pilot study with 10 graduate students from a different cohort established instrument clarity and reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.894 for teaching quality scale and 0.887 for learning experience scale, both exceeding acceptable thresholds (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2019).

Data collection occurred over three weeks following approval from MUBS administration and ethical clearance from Makerere University Higher Degrees Research and Ethics Committee. Informed consent was obtained, voluntary participation emphasized, and confidentiality assured. Quantitative data were coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) summarized the data. Inferential statistics including Pearson correlation analysis examined relationships between teaching quality dimensions and learning experience, while multiple regression analysis determined the predictive power of teaching quality on learning experience outcomes (Pallant, 2020).

Results

The study findings provided comprehensive insights into how teaching quality influenced learning experience among graduate students at Makerere University Business School.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=73)

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Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	40	54.8%
	Female	33	45.2%
Age Group	25-30 years	29	39.7%
	31-35 years	28	38.4%
	36-40 years	12	16.4%
	Above 40 years	4	5.5%
Program	MBA	35	47.9%
	MSc Accounting & Finance	18	24.7%
	MSc Marketing	12	16.4%
	Other programs	8	11.0%
Study Mode	Full-time	16	21.9%
	Part-time/Evening	57	78.1%
Year of Study	First year	42	57.5%
	Second year	31	42.5%

Source: Primary Data, 2026

The demographic profile indicated a relatively balanced gender distribution with 54.8% male and 45.2% female participants, reflecting improved gender parity in graduate business education. The age distribution showed that 78.1% of respondents were between 25-35 years, representing early to mid-career professionals seeking advanced qualifications for career advancement. The dominance of part-time students (78.1%) aligned with MUBS's mission to serve working professionals, though this created unique teaching challenges requiring flexible delivery modes and practical orientations (Schreiber & Valle, 2013). First-year students constituted 57.5% of the sample, providing perspectives from those recently experiencing the transition to graduate-level expectations and teaching approaches.

Table 2: Teaching Quality Dimensions (N=73)

Teaching Quality Indicator	Mean	SD	Rating
Subject Matter Expertise	4.15	0.69	High
Instructors demonstrate deep subject knowledge	4.28	0.65	High
Content is current and relevant	4.12	0.71	High
Instructors link theory to practice	4.05	0.78	High
Pedagogical Competence	3.92	0.74	High
Use of varied teaching methods	3.67	0.89	High
Explanations are clear and understandable	4.01	0.73	High

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Effective use of examples and case studies	4.08	0.71	High
Encouragement of critical thinking	3.94	0.81	High
Instructor-Student Interaction	3.78	0.83	High
Instructors are approachable and accessible	3.89	0.79	High
Respond to student questions adequately	3.85	0.84	High
Show genuine interest in student learning	3.71	0.91	High
Create supportive learning environment	3.68	0.88	High
Assessment and Feedback	3.54	0.91	Moderate
Assignments align with learning objectives	3.89	0.76	High
Feedback is timely and constructive	3.23	1.02	Moderate
Assessment methods are fair and appropriate	3.67	0.87	High
Feedback helps improve performance	3.38	0.98	Moderate
Overall Teaching Quality	3.85	0.78	High

Source: Primary Data, 2026

Analysis of teaching quality dimensions revealed variation across different components. Subject matter expertise received the highest rating (Mean=4.15, SD=0.69), indicating that students perceived their instructors as knowledgeable and competent in their disciplines. Within this dimension, demonstration of deep subject knowledge scored particularly high (Mean=4.28, SD=0.65), suggesting that MUBS faculty possessed strong academic credentials and professional expertise. This finding aligned with Shulman's (1987) assertion that content knowledge forms the foundation of effective teaching. However, the challenge lay not in what instructors knew but how they conveyed that knowledge to facilitate learning.

Pedagogical competence, though rated positively (Mean=3.92, SD=0.74), showed greater variation as indicated by the higher standard deviation. The effective use of examples and case studies scored well (Mean=4.08, SD=0.71), reflecting business education's applied nature and faculty efforts to ground theory in real-world contexts (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). However, the use of varied teaching methods received a comparatively lower score (Mean=3.67, SD=0.89), suggesting that some instructors relied heavily on traditional lecturing rather than incorporating interactive pedagogies such as discussions, simulations, group work, or problem-based learning. This finding corroborated concerns about pedagogical conservatism in African higher education (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009).

Instructor-student interaction quality (Mean=3.78, SD=0.83) indicated generally positive relationships, though with room for improvement. The relatively lower scores for creating supportive learning environments (Mean=3.68, SD=0.88) and showing genuine interest in student learning (Mean=3.71, SD=0.91) suggested that some instructors maintained professional distance rather than developing mentoring relationships with graduate students. Given that

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adult learners valued respectful, collaborative relationships with instructors (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2015), enhancing relational dimensions of teaching could significantly improve learning experiences.

Assessment and feedback emerged as the weakest teaching quality dimension (Mean=3.54, SD=0.91), with timely and constructive feedback receiving particularly low ratings (Mean=3.23, SD=1.02). The high standard deviation (1.02) indicated substantial inconsistency in feedback practices across instructors. This finding was concerning because feedback represents a critical mechanism through which students understand their progress and improve performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). The moderate rating for feedback helping improve performance (Mean=3.38, SD=0.98) suggested that when feedback was provided, its quality or specificity sometimes fell short of students' needs. Large class sizes and heavy faculty workloads likely contributed to these feedback limitations (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004).

Table 3: Learning Experience Quality (N=73)

Learning Experience Component	Mean	SD	Rating
Course objectives are clearly communicated	4.08	0.72	High
Learning activities enhance understanding	3.95	0.77	High
Curriculum is intellectually challenging	4.12	0.68	High
Develop critical thinking and analytical skills	4.05	0.74	High
Acquire practical knowledge applicable to work	4.21	0.66	High
Feel confident about learned competencies	3.87	0.81	High
Satisfied with quality of education received	3.91	0.79	High
Would recommend program to others	3.98	0.76	High
Overall learning experience is valuable	4.03	0.73	High
Overall Learning Experience	4.02	0.74	High

Source: Primary Data, 2026

Learning experience quality assessment revealed generally high ratings across all measured components. The acquisition of practical knowledge applicable to work scored highest (Mean=4.21, SD=0.66), validating MUBS's focus on professional relevance and students' pragmatic orientations toward graduate education. Intellectual challenge (Mean=4.12, SD=0.68) and development of critical thinking skills (Mean=4.05, SD=0.74) also rated highly, indicating that programs successfully pushed students beyond memorization toward higher-order thinking. Overall learning experience valuation (Mean=4.03, SD=0.73) and willingness to recommend programs to others (Mean=3.98, SD=0.76) demonstrated strong student satisfaction despite identified teaching quality gaps. This suggested resilience in the student body and overall program quality, while highlighting that addressing teaching weaknesses could elevate already positive experiences to excellence.

Table 4: Correlation Between Teaching Quality and Learning Experience (N=73)

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Teaching Quality Dimension	Learning Experience Correlation	Significance
Subject matter expertise	$r = 0.742^{**}$	$p < 0.01$
Pedagogical competence	$r = 0.831^{**}$	$p < 0.01$
Instructor-student interaction	$r = 0.789^{**}$	$p < 0.01$
Assessment and feedback	$r = 0.714^{**}$	$p < 0.01$
Overall teaching quality	$r = 0.846^{**}$	$p < 0.01$

Note: ** Correlation significant at $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed)

Source: Primary Data, 2026

The correlation analysis demonstrated very strong positive relationships between all teaching quality dimensions and learning experience. Overall teaching quality showed a very strong correlation with learning experience ($r=0.846$, $p<0.01$), providing compelling evidence that teaching quality was the primary determinant of how students perceived their educational value. Pedagogical competence exhibited the strongest correlation ($r=0.831$, $p<0.01$), suggesting that how instructors taught mattered more than what they taught in shaping learning experiences. This aligned with research showing that teaching methods significantly influenced graduate student satisfaction and learning outcomes (Trigwell et al., 1999). Instructor-student interaction ($r=0.789$, $p<0.01$) and subject matter expertise ($r=0.742$, $p<0.01$) also demonstrated strong correlations, while assessment and feedback, despite its lower mean score, still correlated significantly with learning experience ($r=0.714$, $p<0.01$).

Table 5: Multiple Regression Analysis - Teaching Quality as Predictor of Learning Experience (N=73)

Predictor Variable	Beta	t-value	Significance	95% CI
Subject matter expertise	0.223	3.124	$p < 0.01$	[0.082, 0.364]
Pedagogical competence	0.398	5.467	$p < 0.001$	[0.253, 0.543]
Instructor-student interaction	0.267	3.789	$p < 0.001$	[0.128, 0.406]
Assessment and feedback	0.198	2.891	$p < 0.01$	[0.063, 0.333]
Model Summary				
R ²	0.758			
Adjusted R ²	0.744			
F-statistic	53.267		$p < 0.001$	

Note: CI = Confidence Interval

Source: Primary Data, 2026

The multiple regression analysis revealed that teaching quality dimensions collectively explained 75.8% of variance in learning experience ($R^2=0.758$), representing very strong predictive power. The adjusted R^2 of 0.744 confirmed model stability, while the highly significant F-statistic (53.267, $p<0.001$) validated overall model fit. Pedagogical competence emerged as the strongest predictor (Beta=0.398, $t=5.467$, $p<0.001$), indicating that for every one standard

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deviation increase in pedagogical competence, learning experience improved by 0.398 standard deviations when other factors were held constant. This underscored the critical importance of teaching methodology over content expertise alone. Instructor-student interaction (Beta=0.267, $t=3.789$, $p<0.001$) was the second strongest predictor, highlighting the relational dimension of quality teaching (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Subject matter expertise (Beta=0.223, $t=3.124$, $p<0.01$) and assessment/feedback quality (Beta=0.198, $t=2.891$, $p<0.01$) also contributed significantly, demonstrating that multiple teaching quality facets worked synergistically to create positive learning experiences. The 95% confidence intervals for all predictors excluded zero, confirming the stability and reliability of these effects (Field, 2018).

Conclusions

The study established that teaching quality significantly influenced learning experience among graduate students at Makerere University Business School, with pedagogical competence emerging as the strongest determinant. While faculty demonstrated strong subject matter expertise, opportunities existed to enhance pedagogical approaches, strengthen instructor-student relationships, and improve assessment feedback practices. The very strong correlation ($r=0.846$) and high explanatory power (75.8% variance explained) confirmed teaching quality as the primary driver of learning experience quality, validating its central importance in graduate business education.

Recommendations

The institution should establish a comprehensive faculty development program focusing on graduate-level pedagogy, active learning strategies, adult learning principles, and student-centered teaching approaches. New faculty should undergo mandatory pedagogical training before teaching, while experienced faculty should participate in continuous professional development workshops on innovative teaching methods, technology integration, and assessment design. A Center for Teaching Excellence should be created to provide ongoing support, resources, and pedagogical consultation to faculty.

Instructors should diversify teaching methods beyond traditional lecturing to include case-based teaching, problem-based learning, flipped classroom approaches, peer instruction, and experiential learning activities. They should prioritize providing timely, specific, and constructive feedback on student work, ideally within two weeks of submission. Faculty should also develop stronger mentoring relationships with graduate students through regular office hours, individual consultations, and informal academic advising that extends beyond course content to career guidance and professional development.

MUBS should implement systematic teaching quality monitoring through regular student evaluations, peer teaching observations, and teaching portfolios that document pedagogical practices and innovations. Teaching quality data should be analyzed to identify patterns, recognize excellence, and target support where needed. The department should

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develop minimum teaching quality standards and provide structured improvement plans for faculty whose teaching falls below acceptable levels.

Teaching effectiveness should be weighted more heavily in faculty recruitment, promotion, and tenure decisions. Performance appraisal systems should include multiple measures of teaching quality including student evaluations, peer reviews, teaching innovations, and learning outcome evidence. Incentives and awards should recognize teaching excellence to motivate pedagogical improvement and signal institutional values.

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