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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Personalized Positive Behaviors on the Sustainable Development Goal on Quality Education among Multidisciplinary Instructors in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The pursuit of quality education has become increasingly prominent due to its recognized role in building individual empowerment, national development, and global sustainability. Global frameworks such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG 4) have elevated the urgency of ensuring inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education for all, framing it not merely as a developmental objective but as a human right and catalyst for lifelong learning, innovation, and social cohesion. This qualitative exploration examined the perceptions and positive behavior of higher education teachers in achieving quality education. Teachers (n=17) were purposively sampled to be interviewed about their perceptions and personal efforts in promoting quality education. Narrative data revealed that higher education teachers perceived quality education as deeply rooted in student-centered learning, professional integrity, and ethical responsibility. Teachers emphasized that learners should be active participants in the learning process and that instructional strategies must be responsive to students' diverse needs, learning styles, and feedback. Teachers also associated quality education with professionalism and moral responsibility, viewing their roles beyond academic instruction to include character-building and social awareness. Their teaching practices reflected a high degree of self-reflection, accountability, and dedication to continuous improvement. Through responsive pedagogy, ethical consistency, and reflective teaching, they actively shaped inclusive and empowering learning environments aligned with the broader goals of equity and lifelong learning. This suggests the need for policy reforms and professional development programs that prioritize ethical conduct, student-centered approaches, and reflective practice as foundational pillars of quality education.

Keywords: education equity, student-centered learning, quality education, Sustainable Development Goals

1. Introduction

In September 2015, a remarkable summit held concurrently with the United Nations General Assembly witnessed the unanimous adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by all 193 United Nations Member States. The SDGs were designed to serve as a global framework guiding both developed and developing nations towards the pursuit of development that is inclusive, equitable, and environmentally

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sustainable. However, despite the aspirations of these goals, current trajectories indicate that the global community is not on course to achieve them by the intended 2030 deadline [1]. In a 2023 UN's report, over half of all SDG targets are experiencing inadequate or insufficient progress; approximately 30% have seen stagnation or even regression, and only 15% are projected to be fully achieved by 2030.

Among these goals, SDG 4, which is exclusively devoted to education, stands out for its extensive and multifaceted agenda encapsulated under the phrase "quality education for all." Despite the simplicity of its wording, SDG 4 covers large scope of objectives and indicators, including: (a) educational access across all levels from early childhood to higher education—as well as technical, vocational, adult, and lifelong learning; (b) the development of skills essential for employability, entrepreneurship, literacy, numeracy, digital proficiency, global citizenship, and sustainability; (c) the eradication of disparities in education caused by gender, language, or financial inequities; (d) the establishment of learning environments that are safe, inclusive, and responsive to children's needs; and (e) the expansion of a professionally qualified teaching workforce. Given its ambitious scale and complexity, it is not surprising that the realization of SDG 4 has been slow and fraught with challenges [2+3].

Researchers have examined critical issues relevant to SDG 4, including equitable access to education, the professional development of teachers, gaps in digital learning opportunities, and the implementation of inclusive educational policies, especially within low- and middle-income nations [4-6]. Emerging learning challenges in the 21st century demand that higher education institutions take an active role in addressing these issues and fostering sustainable quality education. This necessitates the continual revision of university curricula, teaching methodologies, and educational materials to remain responsive to evolving educational demands [7].

Universities are regarded as catalysts of innovation, contributing significantly to industrial progress and economic development [8]. It has been argued that encouraging academic collaboration across diverse disciplines is essential to responding effectively to the pressures brought by globalization [9]. Similarly, scholars have highlighted that enhancing the quality of university-level education is imperative, given the capacity of higher education institutions to lead in advancing local, national, and global SDGs through cross-sectoral partnerships and educational advocacy.

A key gap identified in the literature is the persistent lack of conceptual clarity regarding how "quality education" is interpreted and operationalized by educational stakeholders [10]. While the term is frequently used in national and international frameworks, its application often remains vague and inconsistent. Despite its ideological and political prominence [11], there is limited understanding of how front-line teachers define and implement it in real-world settings.

This study addressed the conceptual and practical gap by focusing specifically on the perspectives of higher education teachers. The Philippines, as a developing country facing unique challenges such as limited infrastructure, insufficient training, and curriculum overload [12], presents a particularly relevant context in which to investigate these dynamics. The study expanded on the role of individual-level factors—such as teacher motivation, professional identity, and pedagogical commitment—as determinants of educational quality [13-14]. It emphasized how teachers, despite systemic barriers, actively shape learning environments through reflective practice, empathy, and adaptive instruction. In doing so, provided narrative evidence that supports the integration of teacher voice into educational reform efforts. This aligns with broader calls in the literature for participatory, evidence-based approaches to policy development and implementation [15], reaffirming the critical role of teachers as both agents and interpreters of quality education.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Global Foundations of Quality Education

The concept of "quality education" has undergone substantial transformation over time. Historically associated with access, literacy, and completion rates, the discourse has evolved toward more complex considerations involving equity, inclusivity, and lifelong learning. The landmark report Education for All: The Quality Imperative, formally positioned "quality" as a global social concern, emphasizing that access alone is insufficient without meaningful learning outcomes. This shift marked the transition from quantitative expansion of schooling systems to qualitative enhancement of learning processes. The institutionalization of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 4 further expanded this perspective by framing quality education as both a technical and moral imperative. SDG 4 calls for inclusive and equitable educational environments capable of sustaining lifelong learning. The broadened scope of quality education beyond foundational literacy and numeracy to encompass vocational readiness, life skills, disability inclusion, qualified teaching personnel, and gender equity. Such multidimensional framing reflects the recognition that educational quality must address cognitive, social, ethical, and economic dimensions simultaneously.

At a philosophical level, quality education also pertains to intrinsic aspects of the learning process. Quality includes internal motivation shaped by the influence of educators, caregivers, and policymakers. Similarly, Runde et al. [16] and Ullah and Usman [17] argued that quality education transcends technical proficiency and must promote transformative, humanistic, and socially responsible development. These perspectives highlight that quality education is not merely a measurable output but a value-laden process rooted in ethical and societal aspirations. Despite this conceptual richness, ambiguity persists in how stakeholders interpret and operationalize "quality. The absence of conceptual consensus complicates implementation efforts. The United Nations [18] provide normative frameworks, translation into classroom practice remains uneven. This persistent gap between global rhetoric and localized enactment necessitates empirical inquiry into how educators themselves define and practice quality education.

2.2. Policy Aspirations and Systemic Constraints

Although international frameworks articulate ambitious goals, the implementation of quality education remains uneven, particularly in developing contexts. In the Philippines, education is widely recognized as central to national development, prompting government initiatives aimed at strengthening inclusive and high-quality systems [19]. However, progress toward SDG 4 targets remains partial, suggesting a misalignment between policy aspiration and institutional capacity. Several structural factors contribute to this challenge. André et al. [20] identified inconsistencies in instructional quality across systems, while Hidayat et al. [21] emphasized integrative barriers affecting educational improvement. Macatangay et al. [22] further pointed to infrastructure deficits, curriculum overload, insufficient technological integration, and limited professional development opportunities as systemic obstacles. These structural constraints limit the realization of the multidimensional vision articulated by UNESCO [23]. The Philippine case illustrates a broader global tension: while policy frameworks such as SDG. Zickafoose et al., [24] establish aspirational standards, actual educational systems operate within resource, governance, and institutional limitations. Baclig [25] reported that progress indicators remain inconsistent, reinforcing the need to examine how quality education is interpreted and enacted at the institutional and classroom levels. Thus, systemic realities must be considered when evaluating teacher-level contributions to quality.

2.3. Teacher-level determinants of quality and professional agency

Within the context of structural challenges, literature consistently identifies teachers as pivotal agents in advancing educational quality. Kurniawan et al. [26] found that innovative work behavior among teachers is

largely influenced by proximal or individual-level factors rather than solely environmental conditions. This suggests that teacher agency can function as both a mediating and transformative force within constrained systems. Psychological and professional attributes significantly shape instructional quality. Huang et al. [27], and Yasin et al. [28] highlighted proactive personality, creative self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, occupational self-efficacy, job autonomy, and affective states as critical determinants of innovative teaching. These factors influence not only pedagogical creativity but also sustained professional commitment.

Additional research underscores the complexity of teacher effectiveness. Gkontelos et al. [29] linked innovative behavior to self-efficacy and burnout management, while Johari et al. [30] emphasized teamwork and leadership support. Phuong et al. [31] identified informal learning as a mediating factor in professional innovation. Collectively, these findings suggest that quality education emerges from an interaction between internal dispositions and professional environments. Beyond technical competence, teachers also contribute to students' social competencies, behavioral development, and character formation. Teachers' contextual knowledge is essential for shaping meaningful reform initiatives. Dara and Kesavan [32] and Smeplass [33] demonstrated that collaborative professional development enhances pedagogical responsiveness. Whitehead and Huxtable [34] further contended that educational standards must be grounded in evidence-based professional practice rather than ideological mandates. Therefore, it indicates that teacher-level factors motivation, ethical orientation, reflective capacity, and professional identity are integral to the realization of quality education. However, these factors operate within broader systemic frameworks that may either enable or constrain their effectiveness.

2.4. Quality of accountability and holistic education

Despite multidimensional understandings of quality, educational evaluation systems frequently prioritize standardized performance indicators. İdil et al. [35] and Prabawa et al. [36] documented the growing reliance on international assessments such as PISA to evaluate national systems. Alhussam et al. [37] noted that policymakers often equate quality with consistently high achievement or measurable gains among disadvantaged populations. While such accountability mechanisms serve important benchmarking purposes, they risk narrowing the conceptual scope of quality education. The emphasis on quantifiable outcomes may overlook ethical development, relational pedagogy, and transformative learning dimensions. Furthermore, the reliance on testing frameworks may not fully capture the inclusive aspirations outlined in SDG 4.

This tension between measurable performance and holistic educational aims reinforces the conceptual ambiguity identified. In contexts like the Philippines, where systemic constraints intersect with global accountability pressures understanding how teachers interpret and navigate these competing demands becomes particularly important. Therefore, examining teachers' perceptions and positive professional behaviors provides insight into how quality education is enacted within real-world institutional conditions. By focusing on higher education instructors in the Philippine context, the present study responds to calls for evidence-based reform [38] and contributes to clarifying how internal, individual-level factors interact with structural conditions to shape the lived meaning of quality education.

Objectives

This paper explored the context of quality education in higher education through the lens of teachers' perceptions and their teaching practices. Below are the specific objectives that guided this study.

1. To explore the perception and personal values of higher education teachers towards quality education.

2. To examine how personal teaching practices and values among college instructors contribute to the promotion of quality education in higher education settings.

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

This paper explored the positive behaviors of higher education teachers towards achieving quality education. Exploratory research is oftentimes carried out to investigate novel or underexplored phenomena and to extract preliminary understandings in areas lacking substantial academic inquiry [39-40]. This study design generally utilizes organized and deliberate procedures to identify meaningful trends from narrative data [41-42], which could help in examining both sociocultural and psychological variables [43-44]. Despite ongoing debates concerning the credibility and methodological soundness of exploratory approaches, recent scholarly literature highlighted their value in building preliminary concepts and in ensuring the systematic gathering of qualitative evidence [45]. One of the principal strengths of this research design lies in its methodological flexibility, which allows researchers to adaptively respond to evolving data [46]. Such flexibility is vital when exploring subjects that have not been extensively addressed in existing research [47]. This work addressed one critical question in teaching: how higher education teachers respond to the call for quality education. This exploration is especially important in the context of evolving educational standards, increasing student diversity, and the global demand for competent graduates. Understanding the behaviors and motivations of teachers provides context on how institutional goals for quality learning are translated into everyday practice.

3.2. Participants and sampling

Most exploratory research uses small number of participants to facilitate a comprehensive exploration of key concepts in their study [48-49]. Rather than pursuing statistical generalization, this design wants to capture the perceptions, experiences and shared meaning of a targeted population. Hunter, McCallum and Howes [50] noted that the average number of participants in exploratory-descriptive qualitative study is only 15 individuals. While the determination of a suitable sample size remains adaptable, it is primarily guided by the richness and significance of the data participants can provide, as well as the stage at which no new insights emerge, commonly referred to as data saturation [51]. Purposive sampling is a widely adopted technique for selecting participants in a qualitative study [52], whereby individuals are identified through a systematic and intentional process based on their capacity to provide relevant data [53]. A total of 64 college instructors completed the initial screening questionnaire, from which 17 participants were purposively selected for in-depth interviews. Among the selected participants, 9 were female and 8 were male. Eight were employed in public higher education institutions, while nine were affiliated with private institutions. Teaching experience ranged from 5 to 22 years. Participants represented multidisciplinary fields including education, business, social sciences, and applied sciences. Online purposive sampling was implemented through the distribution of Google Forms to college instructors across selected higher education institutions in the Philippines via professional academic networks and institutional mailing lists. The participation in both the screening and interview phases was entirely voluntary. All 64 respondents indicated informed consent before submitting the form. From these, 17 who met inclusion criteria were invited; acceptance of the interview invitation remained voluntary, and participants were informed that withdrawal was possible at any stage without consequence. Five sample characteristics were included in the selection: (1) a college teacher, (2) employed as a teacher for at least 5 years, (3) familiar with the concept of quality education, (4) engagement in instructional or academic responsibilities within HEIs, and (5) willingness to participate in one-on-one interviews.

3.3. Instrumentation

A semi-structured interview protocol was designed to ensure a coherent and systematic approach to data collection. Its construction adhered to the process proposed by Kallio et al. [54], which involved essential stages such as identifying preconditions, reviewing relevant literature and studies, drafting preliminary questions, executing a pilot assessment, and revising the instrument in response to expert input. To elicit in-depth responses, the interview guide incorporated probing questions intended to move beyond superficial answers [55-56]. The interview guide underwent a comprehensive expert review process to enhance the trustworthiness and consistency of the qualitative data [57]. Three specialists each with expertise in qualitative methodology, teacher education, and classroom practice were consulted to evaluate the clarity, relevance, and alignment of the interview questions with the study purpose, including the suitability of the follow-up probes. After expert validation, a pilot study was conducted to test the interpretability, contextual relevance, and efficacy of the questions in generating rich and meaningful responses [58]. The final version of the guide was revised based on feedback from experts and pilot test participants.

Table 1. Instrument of the study

Objectives	Interview Questions
To explore the perception and personal values of higher education teachers towards quality education.	1. How do you personally define or understand the concept of quality education in the context of higher education? 2. What core values guide your teaching philosophy and how do these values shape your views on quality education? 3. In your experience, what are the most important characteristics of a teacher who contributes to quality education?
To examine how personal teaching practices and values among college instructors contribute to the promotion of quality education in higher education settings.	1. Can you describe specific teaching practices you implement that reflect your personal commitment to quality education? 2. How do your values influence the way you design your lessons, engage with students, or assess learning outcomes? 3. In what ways have your individual teaching approaches positively impacted students' learning experiences and supported the goals of quality education?

3.4. Data collection

Semi-structured interviews served as the principal technique for gathering data, enabling a structured yet flexible approach to investigate participants' perspectives, behaviors, and the meanings they ascribe to their experiences [59]. This guided interview provided a balance between following a systematic method and allowing open, in-depth conversations to develop naturally [60], making it particularly suitable for exploratory research designs. Participants were selected through online purposive sampling, with eligibility determined by predefined criteria aligned with the study objectives. Following the selection process, formal invitations were extended, and individual interviews were scheduled accordingly. Each session followed a consistent protocol that addressed informed consent, ethical standards, confidentiality, and systematic handling of data [61-62]. Participants were encouraged to communicate in the language they were most fluent in, which then helped in minimizing linguistic barriers and ensuring natural engagement [63]. Probing strategies were applied to expand narratives and uncover underlying meanings, thus enriching the quality of the collected data [64]. With participant consent, interviews were recorded using secure mobile devices, and emerging themes and key reflections were initially documented in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to facilitate subsequent analysis.

3.5. Data analysis

The primary data in this study was the narratives of participants from one-on-one interviews. Reflexive thematic analysis was conducted to examine the qualitative data collected from individual interviews. This analysis was expected to uncover dominant themes and recurring patterns that capture participants shared

perceptions and experiences. This approach involved a structured yet flexible process of sorting, coding, and interpreting textual information, allowing ideas to emerge directly from participants' narratives [65]. Its flexibility made it highly appropriate for exploratory research, as it promotes the inductive development of themes rather than applying pre-existing theoretical frameworks [66]. Initially introduced by Braun and Clarke [67], reflexive thematic analysis follows familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, identification and refinement of themes, definition of thematic content, and integration into final analysis (see **Figure 1**). An essential element of this method is reflexivity, where researchers actively engage with their interpretive role [68]. A Regular peer debriefing sessions were conducted with two qualitative researchers to challenge interpretations and ensure that themes were grounded in participant narratives rather than researcher assumptions. To help reduce researcher bias, an inductive approach was used, making sure the themes were based directly on the participants' views [69]. This process facilitated the natural emergence of themes, preserving the authenticity of participant voices and allowing for rich, detailed, and contextually embedded interpretations.

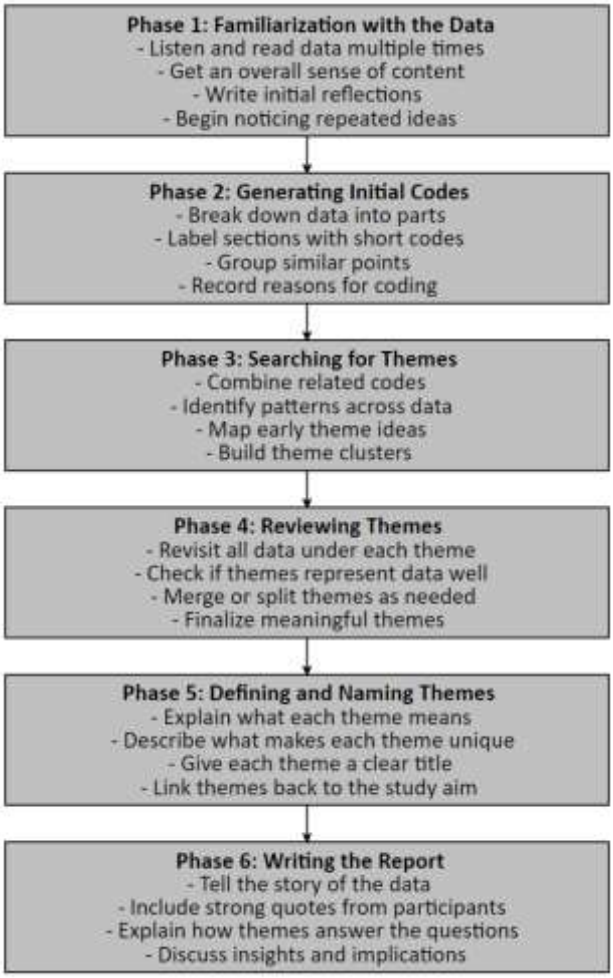

Figure 1. Workflow of reflexive thematic analysis

4. Results

Objective 1. To explore the perception and personal values of higher education teachers towards quality education.

Theme 1: Commitment to Student-Centered Learning

Most teachers viewed learners not merely as recipients of knowledge but as active participants in shaping their educational experiences. Placing students at the center indicates a commitment to responsive and relevant instruction tailored to students' contexts and goals. It also suggests that the teacher perceived success in education as measured by student growth and active involvement.

> "I believe that placing students at the core of the learning process is essential to achieving quality education."

Given their belief in teacher commitment, they acknowledged that students bring varied backgrounds, abilities, and learning preferences into the classroom, which must be recognized and addressed through adaptive teaching. It reflects a philosophy of education that prioritizes fairness and inclusion as critical components of quality.

> "I value the importance of adapting my teaching strategies to accommodate different student needs and learning styles."

> "I view personalized instruction as a reflection of my commitment to ensuring inclusive and equitable learning environments."

They emphasized the necessity of creating learning environments where students are mentally, emotionally, and behaviorally involved. It also demonstrates a value for participatory learning, where students construct meaning through dialogue, inquiry, and collaboration.

> "I perceive active student engagement as a fundamental indicator of effective and meaningful instruction."

They also valued feedback not only as an evaluative mechanism but as a dialogue that informs effective teaching. The integration of feedback into instructional design shows a commitment to responsiveness and learner-centered pedagogy. This approach positions students as partners in the educational process, with insights that are vital to shaping effective learning environments.

> "I considered student feedback as a critical tool for improving both my instructional methods and their learning experiences."

Theme 2: Professional Integrity

Teachers regarded integrity in intellectual work as indispensable, not only for personal credibility but also for fostering a culture of trust within the academic community. This perspective emphasized that upholding honesty was not a selective or occasional act, but a consistent standard embedded in all instructional practices.

> "I uphold academic honesty as a non-negotiable standard in all aspects of my teaching practice."

For example, teachers noted that openness in evaluating student performance was central to the pursuit of quality education. They viewed transparency as a mechanism for fairness, clarity, and trust-building in academic interactions. For them, transparent assessment practices promoted a culture of trust and open communication.

> "I perceive maintaining transparency in assessment and grading as a key component of educational quality."

They also believed that being consistent in both speech and actions was essential in gaining students' trust. The teacher saw consistency as a reflection of personal values that support quality education. It also

demonstrated the belief that students learn not just from content but from the behavior and character of their instructors.

> "I believe that consistency between my words and actions builds trust and credibility among my students."

Teachers viewed accountability as a reflection of their seriousness toward teaching, which likely translated into careful planning, honest communication, and timely follow-through. They emphasized that excellence in education demanded continuous self-assessment and adherence to clearly defined responsibilities.

> "I consider being professionally accountable as an expression of my personal commitment to excellence."

They associated punctuality, preparation, and reliability with integrity, presenting a belief that consistent practice was just as important as philosophical commitment. These behaviors were seen not as mere obligations, but as acts of professionalism that set the tone for an organized and effective learning environment. The teacher's values aligned with a broader understanding of quality education as requiring both ethical substance and professional discipline.

> "I value punctuality, preparedness, and reliability as indicators of a teacher's integrity in delivering quality education."

Theme 3: Ethical Responsibility

Teachers noted that their responsibility extended beyond content delivery to include moral development and social awareness among students. Ethical responsibility was seen not as an optional aspect of teaching, but as a core obligation deeply embedded in the role of an academic. They believed that instilling ethical values helped students become conscientious citizens and future professionals.

> "I view ethical responsibility as central to my role in shaping morally grounded and socially responsible learners."

For example, for them, respect was understood not only in terms of politeness but as genuine recognition of student dignity and individuality. The teacher believed that when students felt respected, they became more engaged, motivated, and confident in their learning. They associated fairness with transparency in grading, balanced participation, and consistent enforcement of rules. Such practices were perceived as mechanisms for avoiding bias and maintaining professionalism.

> "I believe that treating students with fairness and respect was essential to develop a positive learning environment."

> "I consider it my duty to avoid favoritism and ensure equal opportunities for all students in the classroom."

Another important component of ethical quality education is sensitivity to students who face challenges. Sensitivity to student challenges was seen as a moral duty that extended beyond the academic role. Ethical responsibility, in this case, included emotional intelligence and compassion in dealing with student needs.

> "I perceive sensitivity to student issues as part of my ethical obligation as an educator."

Lastly, some emphasized that their actions needed to reflect professional and moral standards, not merely institutional rules. Teachers believed that modeling ethical conduct had a significant impact on

students' character development and decision-making. For them, this ethical consistency further shapes a classroom environment grounded in trust and respect.

> "I value the alignment of my decisions and actions with ethical standards to model responsible behavior for my students."

Objective 2. To examine how personal teaching practices and values among college instructors contribute to the promotion of quality education in higher education settings.

Theme 1: Instructional Adaptability and Responsiveness

Although teachers consistently described engaging in responsive pedagogy, closer examination of their narratives revealed varying degrees of implementation. While many articulated flexibility and adaptability as core practices, some accounts suggested that responsiveness was often constrained by institutional pacing guides, administrative expectations, or large class sizes. This indicates a possible tension between teachers' espoused values and contextual realities. Rather than uniformly demonstrating student-centered practice, the findings suggest a spectrum of enactment, where values strongly inform intentions but are negotiated within structural limitations.

> "I consistently adjusted my teaching methods based on the needs and performance levels of my students."

One component of responsiveness was being sensitive to students facing challenges during discussion. For example, they exercised professional discretion in slowing down, elaborating, or simplifying content as needed. This pedagogical responsiveness suggested a high level of attentiveness to classroom dynamics and individual learning barriers. The teacher acknowledged that meaningful learning occurred only when content was accessible and cognitively manageable for students.

> "I modified lesson content and pacing when I observed that students were struggling to understand key concepts."

Similarly, teachers showed openness to student voice and their willingness to adjust practices based on learners' experiences. They see student feedback not as criticism but as a tool for enhancing instructional quality. Redesigning activities in response to feedback showed a strong value for continuous improvement and responsiveness. The teacher acknowledged that ineffective activities hindered learning and required timely changes to maintain instructional relevance.

> "I actively sought feedback from students and peers to enhance my instructional approach."

> "I made it a priority to respond to student feedback by redesigning activities that were not effective."

Another notable component of responsiveness was flexibility to students' learning. The teacher believed that rigid teaching approaches risked marginalizing students whose learning needs did not align with standard methods. Flexibility allowed the instructor to adjust lesson formats, assessment types, and support mechanisms based on observed or expressed learner needs. This approach positioned the learner as the central figure in the educational process, with teaching strategies serving their development.

> "I believed that flexibility in teaching was essential for creating an inclusive and learner-centered environment."

Some used technology to respond to students' varying learning needs and styles. Integration of tools was motivated by a desire to make learning more interactive, flexible, and student-centered. For them, digital and multimedia tools could bridge learning gaps and stimulate interest.

> "I integrated varied instructional tools and technologies to enhance engagement and accessibility."

Theme 2: Values-Driven Pedagogical Commitment

Professional values were relevant to achieving quality education. For example, teachers viewed teaching as a responsibility requiring constant effort and excellence. They associated instructional quality with clear objectives, well-prepared lessons, and meaningful engagement. They believed that students deserved a learning experience grounded in intellectual rigor and high academic expectations.

> "I maintained a strong sense of responsibility and dedication to delivering instruction that meets high standards."

The ethical and professional dimensions of their role were generally linked to their instructional responsibilities. Integrity was treated as a guiding principle in how lessons were planned, how students were assessed, and how challenges were addressed. The teacher considered every decision in the classroom a reflection of their character and professional identity.

> "I viewed teaching as a vocation, where moral and professional integrity guided my classroom practices."

Empathy and fairness in the classroom should serve as active principles shaping daily classroom decisions. For them, understanding and responding to students' needs requires emotional sensitivity and an equitable approach. This involved providing support for struggling learners, treating all students without bias, and listening attentively to individual concerns.

> "I allowed my core values, such as empathy and fairness, to guide the way I interacted with students."

Teachers sought to create an environment where students could not only learn content but also discover purpose, agency, and potential. Each decision made was viewed through the lens of long-term impact on students' academic and personal trajectories. The teacher valued practices that encouraged critical thinking, self-reflection, and social responsibility. Their instructional choices were thus aligned with a larger educational philosophy rooted in empowerment and transformation.

> "I made decisions in the classroom that reflected my belief in the transformative power of education."

In instances when they face challenges whether administrative, systemic, or personal, teachers' commitment to quality education did not diminish their responsibility toward student growth. This was rooted in a belief that quality education required consistent support, especially when students were vulnerable. They likely adapted to obstacles with creativity and determination to ensure that learning continued.

> "I remained committed to my students' development, even when facing institutional or personal challenges."

Theme 3: Continuous Professional Reflection

Teachers consistently assessed the effectiveness of their instructional strategies, using reflection as a deliberate process to improve their methods and ensure alignment with student learning outcomes. Self-assessment served as a practical mechanism for measuring the impact of their teaching on student achievement. Through this continuous process, instructors demonstrated a deep sense of responsibility, professionalism, and a learner-centered mindset.

> "I considered reflection as a tool to align my teaching practices with student learning outcomes."

They recognized that without periodic self-evaluation, instructional methods could become outdated or misaligned with learners' evolving needs. Professional reflection, in this context, served as a quality control measure that ensured consistency, improvement, and responsiveness. For them, relevance in teaching required attentiveness to changing content demands, student demographics, and educational innovations.

> "I viewed professional reflection as essential to maintaining the quality and relevance of my teaching."

For example, regular assessments allowed the participant to recognize which strategies facilitated learning and which ones needed refinement. This practice demonstrated a growth-oriented mindset and a desire to deliver meaningful instruction. Such were integral to sustaining high standards in teaching and ensuring responsiveness to students' academic needs.

> "I regularly evaluated the effectiveness of my teaching strategies to identify areas for improvement."

Some teachers do self-reflection to assess their strategies towards quality education. Self-assessment was seen as a structured, reflective activity designed to connect teaching efforts with student performance. Their consistent engagement in this process demonstrated discipline, accountability, and pedagogical intentionality. Self-assessment acted as a form of quality assurance, anchoring teaching practices in evidence and reflection.

> "I consistently engaged in self-assessment to ensure that my practices supported my students' academic success."

> "I engage in self-reflection after each discussion to evaluate the effectiveness of my teaching."

5. Discussion

Sustainable development and sustainability have emerged as important concerns gaining prominence across various societies and nations. This growing emphasis continues to influence the reassessment and revision of policy frameworks, national development agendas, and other pertinent documents in pursuit of long-term relevance and global alignment [70]. Within this global repositioning, quality education is no longer framed solely as access or completion but as a multidimensional construct requiring ethical grounding, inclusivity, and sustained institutional commitment. The present findings must therefore be interpreted not merely as teacher perceptions, but as localized enactments of a broader global educational agenda.

To address the need for a new quality education framework, this work explored the perceptions and experiences of higher education teachers regarding their pedagogical practices, personal values, and professional responsibilities. The findings revealed that higher education teachers perceived quality education as deeply connected to student-centered learning, professional integrity, and ethical responsibility. However, when situated within the broader national context where reports indicate continuing systemic

decline in educational outcomes in the Philippines [71], a critical tension emerges. While teachers articulated strong commitments to inclusive and responsive pedagogy, these commitments are enacted within structural realities characterized by curriculum overload, limited infrastructure, and uneven institutional support. This indicates that quality education cannot be understood exclusively through individual teacher motivation or values. Instead, the findings suggest a structural–individual disconnect: teachers demonstrate alignment with quality principles at the classroom level, yet systemic constraints may limit broader measurable impact. Thus, the persistence of quality challenges reflects not an absence of teacher commitment but a misalignment between professional dispositions and structural conditions.

Within the relevant literature, terms such as "good," "ideal," "competent," and "respected" are frequently employed interchangeably with "effective teacher" [72]. In some studies, students emphasized interpersonal qualities, suggesting that effective teachers demonstrate care and establish strong communication with learners [73-74]. Other studies stressed subject matter expertise and the use of varied instructional strategies to enhance learning outcomes [75-76]. The present findings confirm these dimensions but extend them analytically. Participants did not merely describe competence as technical proficiency; they framed it as relational, ethical, and reflective practice. For instance, the prioritization of placing students "at the core of the learning process" reflects more than strategy selection—it reflects an epistemological stance about how learning occurs and who holds agency in the classroom. This deepens existing literature by showing that teachers operationalize effectiveness through moral orientation and adaptive responsiveness rather than through performance metrics alone.

Fundamentally, teachers' perceptions of quality education were grounded in principles associated with the constructivist perspective. Within the constructivist framework, quality education emphasizes the learner's active role as the central agent in the learning process [77]. The teacher functions as a facilitator who guides students in constructing knowledge [78]. Participants' emphasis on feedback as "a critical tool" demonstrates alignment with this theoretical orientation. However, deeper examination reveals that constructivist alignment operates within negotiated boundaries. While teachers expressed commitment to dialogue and responsiveness, the implementation of these ideals is shaped by pacing demands, administrative oversight, and class size considerations. This suggests that constructivist enactment is aspirational but contextually moderated. Quality education, therefore, becomes a dynamic process rather than a fixed instructional model.

Notably, shifts in the modern conception of quality education emphasize equity and inclusion. Fatima [79] argued that quality education must involve educational equity, ensuring that all learners access essential resources for full academic and social development. Equal opportunity is associated with enhanced student performance [80] and stronger commitment to improvement [81]. Participants' narratives reflect this equity-oriented understanding, particularly in their emphasis on empathy, fairness, and avoidance of favoritism. However, the findings also reveal that equity is interpreted primarily as interpersonal fairness and adaptive pedagogy. While this aligns with normative definitions, it does not automatically resolve structural inequities embedded within institutional systems. Thus, teacher-level equity practices are necessary but insufficient in isolation. Broader institutional investment and structural reform remain essential for scaling these commitments beyond individual classrooms.

The findings of this study carry significant implications for educational policy, teacher development programs, and institutional strategies in higher education. The emphasis on student-centered learning supports the argument that teacher training should foreground inclusive pedagogical frameworks and adaptive instructional design [82]. Likewise, the strong orientation toward ethics and accountability reinforces

the importance of embedding professional conduct within evaluation systems and institutional codes [83-84]. Instructional adaptability and responsiveness, as articulated by participants, require administrative flexibility and adequate resource allocation, including technological integration [85]. However, these implications must be understood within the broader context of accountability expansion. The quality of education and its assessment have been gaining growing attention in recent years. Historically, formalized large-scale assessment systems were less institutionalized compared to contemporary accountability frameworks. While student evaluation has long existed, the systematic use of standardized national and international testing as primary indicators of educational quality has intensified only in recent decades [86]. This shift reflects the growing influence of global benchmarking movements in defining and measuring quality. While participants strongly articulated commitments to ethical and student-centered practice, their accounts also revealed an implicit assumption that individual teacher agency is sufficient to produce quality outcomes. This assumption contrasts with systemic analyses highlighting structural determinants of educational decline. The findings therefore suggest that teacher-level reform, though necessary, is insufficient in isolation. A multi-level framework integrating teacher agency with institutional accountability may better address quality concerns.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the perceptions and self-reported practices of higher education teachers regarding the promotion of quality education. The findings indicate that participants conceptualized quality education as a multidimensional construct grounded in student-centered learning, professional integrity, and ethical responsibility. Teachers described adapting instructional strategies to diverse learning needs, prioritizing student engagement, and integrating feedback mechanisms as part of their commitment to meaningful instruction. They also emphasized honesty, accountability, fairness, and respect as integral components of professional practice. Beyond content delivery, participants viewed their roles as extending to moral guidance, character formation, and the cultivation of socially responsible graduates. Continuous professional reflection emerged as a recurring practice, with teachers reporting regular self-assessment to evaluate the alignment between their teaching strategies and student learning outcomes. These narratives suggest that participants perceive their values and pedagogical commitments as closely aligned with the principles underlying quality education. However, it is important to situate these findings within the methodological scope of the study. The conclusions are based on teachers' perceptions and self-reported accounts rather than direct classroom observation or documentary evidence of practice. While the study provides insight into how instructors interpret and intend to enact quality education, it does not empirically verify the extent to which these practices consistently translate into measurable improvements in educational outcomes. Furthermore, the persistence of broader systemic challenges in higher education suggests that individual teacher commitment, although essential, is insufficient on its own to resolve structural concerns related to educational quality. Overall, the study demonstrates that higher education teachers perceive ethical conduct, professional values, instructional adaptability, and reflective practice as central to promoting quality education. These individual-level factors represent critical foundations for effective teaching. Nevertheless, their broader impact depends on alignment with institutional support systems, resource allocation, and policy-level reforms. Strengthening quality education, therefore, requires an integrated approach that combines teacher agency with structural and systemic transformation.

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