

**RESEARCH PAPER****Effect of Activity-Based Learning on Students' Academic Achievement at Primary Level****<sup>1</sup>Sadia Bibi, <sup>2</sup>Saba Shakeel and <sup>3</sup>Dr. Gulnaz Akbar**

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This study aimed at the effect of Activity Based Learning (ABL) on students' academic achievement in the primary school. Education plays an important role in the cognitive, social and emotional development of the children, the selection of appropriate teaching methods has a great influence on the learning outcomes of the children. Activity Based Learning is a teaching style that enables students to be active learners who engage with classroom activities, practical activities, group activities, role play, games and experiments instead of simply listening to lectures. This study aimed to investigate the effect of Activity-Based Learning (ABL) on students' academic achievement at the primary level. The study was delimited to one private primary school in District Sialkot and focused on students aged 6–11 years. Activity-Based Learning is a learner-centered approach that promotes learning through participation, experimentation, discussion, and practical activities. It has gained importance because traditional lecture-based methods often fail to maintain students' interest, motivation, and academic performance. A qualitative research approach using a single case study design was adopted. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with six teachers and a focus group discussion involving ten students from Grades 3, 4, and 5 of Perfect Foundation School. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data. The findings revealed that Activity-Based Learning improved students' academic achievement, classroom participation, confidence, communication skills, and motivation. Teachers reported improvement in students' marks from approximately 40–50% to 65–75% after implementing ABL strategies. Students stated that group work, role play, poster making, games, and science experiments helped them understand and retain concepts more effectively. Schools should provide teacher training, sufficient learning materials, and supportive classroom environments for implementing ABL. Parents and school administrators should also be sensitized regarding the educational benefits of activity-based instruction.

**KEYWORDS** Activity Based Learning, Academic Achievement, Primary Education, Student Engagement, Teaching Methodologies, Pedagogy**Introduction**

Primary level of child development requires the education every child needs for his/her basis. Activity-based learning is a valuable approach to learning for the education system but it is also a necessary approach to learning, resulting in efficient teaching outcomes. Students of this learning method learn by doing: they gain knowledge by being involved in practical activities where they build up understanding of the important concepts. Activity-based learning is used as a teaching method for teachers to demonstrate their teaching style by engaging the students in activities that help them achieve their

learning goals. The process enables the child to develop interest in which he or she thinks and experiences everything. Psychological information processing theory demonstrates the process of information for students who are learning to become active learners who explore the environment around them. The theory suggests that there is an innate urge in humans to explore their world around them. Learning is through direct experience, resulting in retention and understanding. Pupils need to be given factual information and key resources that will help them focus on the tasks they are given during their session, in order to learn. There are a number of activities that students can do from Primary to High School that give them a hands-on learning experience of different concepts. Activity based learning positively transforms students making it possible for students to achieve multiple success points in their academic progress because of its cognitive enhancement, emotional development and motor skills enhancement. Activity based learning helps students to learn knowledge by explaining and testing it practically so that students can get valuable learning experience. Primary students require firsthand knowledge of teaching strategies that teachers should employ since they must be able to see the educational value realized from their learning right away. Children learn better when they actively participate than when they listen passively; they tend to remember more when they learn through enjoyable activities which teachers should utilize in enhancing student learning. Primary students are developing a higher level of understanding in their learning through activity-based learning, which allows them to more effectively understand what they are learning. Students should apply active learning technique because, by simply being taught, the students will not achieve better understanding about human digestive system, the learning in this can be achieved by educational activities both with teacher and students to build educational models. The aim of the present study is to find out the impact of Activity Based Learning on students' academic performance at primary school level, to compare the academic performance of students in Activity Based Learning and conventional classroom instruction, to measure the level of students' participation in Activity Based Learning and assess their interest in Activity Based Learning, to examine how Activity Based Learning helps to improve academic performance during classroom activities, and to analyze the effect of Activity Based Learning as an educational method on students' academic performance. The study highlights its significance for all the educational stakeholders such as student teachers, educational institutions, and the Educational Policy makers.

The study shows the efficiency of Activity Based Learning (ABL) method in the teaching of the primary level. The research gives students the opportunity to learn how Activity Based Learning enhances their academic outcomes by better knowledge understanding thereby helping them to remember the content they learn throughout their academic career. Active involvement in learning keeps students more involved in the learning process, thereby enabling them to acquire the skills of critical thinking problem solving and creativity. The ABL approach fosters a positive learning environment and makes learning a pleasure for young learners. The research also provides teachers with practical insights into effective learner-centered instructional strategies that promote active participation and improved classroom performance. The research study is conducted in one area, primary schools, and the age range of 6-11 years. The main focus of the research is the effect of Activity Based Learning on the academic achievement, while other factors such as intelligence, family background and school facilities are excluded.

### **Literature Review**

The educational system must have the techniques of instruction as tools that must be used for student learning to be successful. The prevailing trend in the classroom is the use of more learner-centered methods, which are more effective than traditional lecture approaches. Task Oriented Learning (TO) has made significant development because it

focuses on activities and provides a collaborative/proactive learning environment. Research (Mehmood et al., 2021) indicates that this hands-on approach will enable students to attain self-directed learning skills and analytical thinking skills that will eventually prove to be an effective approach in improving student engagement to achieve a good learning experience. Learners' preferences and interests differ, and teachers should use a variety of teaching methods to meet them (Scholars). Hands-on learning allows students to learn from their experience, which will improve their working memory and increase their comprehension skills. In this context, teachers assume new roles as mentors and coordinators, providing essential assistance during the learning process. The teacher should have detailed lesson plans and select appropriate teaching methods that are aligned with students' learning needs. The process of experiential learning is not a random process, but is carefully arranged and implemented in order to reach certain educational goals. A student's education is significantly improved if they learn through activities rather than from a standard, lecture format.

The academic achievement of students is a key indicator that evaluates their real educational achievement. Evidence shows that students who experience hands-on learning in their learning process are currently obtaining better learning outcomes. (Raza, K & Ali 2025) studied two groups of students and observed that the active group of students in the lessons performed better than the passive group. The findings of (Hussain, Q & Ishtiaq 2025) shows that it was found that students' learning of complex concepts was effective in classroom activities. Students' performance in science was improved due to their knowledge of and understanding of the science content on their assessments. Research has shown that the students' academic outcome is significantly better when they are involved in class activities.

Recent studies have revealed the benefits of active teaching for developing students' mental skills. Experiential learning helps students improve their memory skills and creative thinking abilities and their advanced analytical capabilities according to a study conducted by Iqbal, (Iqbal, & Ayaz 2024). Their research reveals that students who are involved in the practical and group activity, have better concentration and energy during the learning process. The research of (Masood, Ghafoor, & Ullah 2023) revealed that the students taught as per the activity-based teaching methods showed greater achievement in three different academic performance areas as compared to other students. The study showed that the dynamic teaching method led to better achievement results, because it was able to develop students' advanced reasoning abilities and problem solving ability. Activity-based instruction is based on different teaching methods such as collaborative team activities, inquiry-based assignments and interactive participatory activities.

As illustrated in the research of (Rehman et al., 2023), the implementation of education programs based on missions has a positive effect on students' problem solving skills and provides opportunities for students to learn by involving them in real life situations. When young learners engage in full projects, they learn the 21st-century skills needed for their future, such as communication skills and perseverance, which enable them to link theory and practice in the classroom with everyday contexts. In the existing education system, students are subjected to different teaching methods such as digital learning and educational games. In 2024, Rahim et al. found that integrating game elements in the learning process enhanced student's motivation and attention, leading to improved academic outcomes. The method is implemented by the use of competition and reward systems to motivate and encourage students to seek academic achievement, thus changing the style of learning from passive to active. The method given in this study is the implementation of competition and reward systems in changing passive learning into

active learning. The study conducted by Adeyele (2024) has shown that interactive teaching techniques in combination with virtual learning environment produce effective learning outcomes in science teaching. The techniques allow students to experience complex scientific phenomena in virtual environments, allowing them to gain a better understanding of basic principles and improve their grades. These results show that educational institutions should implement educational technology and technology-based learning activities in their classrooms by creating deeper educational experiences that will be more long-lasting.

Experiential instruction presents multiple advantages but also comes with various challenges. Teachers face significant challenges due to the lack of teaching materials available for them to use, as well as too many students in their classrooms and the lack of professional development opportunities available to them. The full adoption of active learning methods can be realised since the institutional support and systematic organisation can reduce existing barriers. There is clear research evidence that activity-led teaching methods are effective in improving student achievement and motivation and in developing desired essential skills in young children. The previous studies indicate that it is better to improve the learning outcomes by active participation and learning experiences in practice rather than by traditional teaching approaches which are lectures.

### **Material and Methods**

This study adopted a qualitative research design with single case study design to explore the effectiveness of Activity Based Learning (ABL) at primary level. It was done at one private school of Sialkot in a real classroom environment of subjects of Mathematics, Urdu and English, Social Studies (SST). The subject of the study were primary school teachers and students. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling technique in which the participants have relevant experience in activity based learning. Six teachers, who have a minimum of three years teaching experience at the primary level, and five students from each primary class were included in the sample. Participants who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study were chosen. Semi-structured interviews with teachers and focus group discussions with students were used to gather data. An interview guide consisting of open ended questions was formulated and brought to the attention of the research supervisor and subject matter experts for validation of clarity, relevance and accuracy. The researchers made a school visit and had face-to-face interviews and discussions to find out detailed information about the participants' experiences and perceptions of classroom ABL practices.

The collected data was analyzed using the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) with six steps. This approach allowed the researchers to recognise, understand and interpret common themes and patterns in the participants' responses. The analysis was on exploring perceptions, experiences, benefits and challenges of teachers and students towards Activity Based Learning. The results were presented in the themes and sub-themes to get a detailed picture of how effective ABL was in improving students' academic achievement and in involving students in the classroom at the primary level.

### **Result and Discussion**

The results of this research study indicated that the use of Activity Based Learning has positive influence on students' academic achievement at the primary level. Answers obtained from teachers and students indicated that activity-based teaching methods are effective, interactive and enjoyable teaching methods even when the learning is a difficult one. Teachers clarified that ABL supports the learning of concepts better as the learner

learns by doing, observing and participating. The teachers also noted increased test scores, confidence, communication skills and class participation. Results from the activities showed that students who were previously doing poor academic work made significant improvement in their academic performance. A higher number of students participated in class, with teachers reporting that in a traditional lecture format, a small number of students participated, and a much higher number participated in an activity-based format. Pupils expressed themselves and shared their ideas with confidence through group work, games, role play and discussions. These results support the opinions of (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) that the effectiveness of learner-centered instruction is to motivate and engage students. Students also possessed positive attitudes towards ABL, saying that they could easily learn ABL lessons and remember the ideas for a longer period through the experiments, games and poster making. They observed that activities helped to keep them active and interested, while the traditional teaching method created boredom. The results are consistent with Brown (1994) who said that if students participate in class, they will pay more attention and get better learning results. The study found that collaborative learning enhanced teamwork and self-confidence, especially among shy students. Hymes (1972) proposes that communication and interaction is an important component of effective learning in social participation. There were challenges identified, however, that included additional time and effort needed for preparation, an overcrowded classroom and limited materials. Some teachers reported that they did not have any professional training in ABL methods. These findings align with Vijay (2023) who noted some of the barriers to classroom management and resource in learner-centered approaches. Moreover, it was observed that there was lack of understanding of parents, some parents considered activities as games. Teachers highlighted the importance of sensitizing the parents and administrators on the importance of ABL. Finally, the research was conclusive that ABL is a great tool for the primary classes and it has shown to improve academic achievement and build communication, confidence, creativity, teamwork and critical thinking skills.

## Interview Data and Construction of Themes

### Reflexive Thematic Analysis: Overview of Themes

Following an iterative process of ten overarching themes were constructed from the teachers' dataset, each corresponding to a research question:

**Table 1**  
**Overview of Themes - Teachers**

Theme	Title
Theme 1	Teachers' Understanding of Activity Based Learning
Theme 2	Implementation of Activity Based Learning in the Classroom
Theme 3	Significance of Activity Based Learning at Primary Level
Theme 4	Impact on Students' Academic Achievement
Theme 5	Impact on Student Engagement and Participation
Theme 6	Challenges in Implementing Activity Based Learning
Theme 7	Students' Response to ABL vs. Traditional Teaching
Theme 8	Strategies for Student Engagement
Theme 9	Teachers' Preference for Traditional Teaching
Theme 10	Recommendations for Enhancing ABL in Primary Schools

### Part I: Teachers' Perspectives (T1-T6)

The reflexive thematic analysis of the six primary teachers' datasets generates ten core themes mapping directly to the study's research questions:

- **Theme 1: Teachers' Understanding of ABL:** Teachers define ABL as a learner-centered, experiential approach where students construct knowledge by doing rather than passively listening. As T1 notes: "*Students touch materials, discuss in groups, and experience the concept themselves.*"
- **Theme 2: Implementation in the Classroom:** Teachers embed activities into daily lessons using low-cost materials like bottle caps, flashcards, charts, and science kits. T5 shares: "*I conduct experiments... the room is active and everyone is involved.*"
- **Theme 3: Significance at Primary Level:** Teachers agree that young children possess limited attention spans and learn best via physical, sensory engagement.
- **Theme 4: Impact on Academic Achievement:** A clear upward trend in assessment scores is reported. T1 states: "*Students who were getting 40% to 50% started getting 65% to 75% after we began using activities.*"
- **Theme 5: Impact on Engagement:** ABL transforms classroom dynamics, drawing in quiet and lower-achieving students.
- **Theme 6: Challenges Encountered:** Key barriers include intense preparation time, lack of materials, and managing behavior in large sections. T4 notes: "*Managing 40 students during activities is very challenging.*" Parents also frequently misinterpret activities as mere playtime.
- **Theme 7: Student Response to ABL vs. Traditional:** Students show a massive preference for ABL, marked by higher attendance and prolonged excitement.
- **Theme 8: Engagement Strategies:** Teachers utilize group competitions, races, stickers, and precise role assignments (e.g., leader, presenter) to ensure total participation.
- **Theme 9: Preference for Traditional Methods:** Some colleagues prefer lecturing because it allows faster syllabus coverage and easier classroom discipline.
- **Theme 10: Teachers' Recommendations:** Participants call for practical, low-cost training workshops and administrative advocacy to educate parents.

### Reflexive Thematic Analysis: Overview of Themes

Following an inductive thematic analysis of students' interview data, ten themes were constructed corresponding to the research questions explored with student participants:

**Table 2**  
**Overview of Themes - Students**

Theme	Title
Theme 1	Students' Interest in Activity Based Learning Activities
Theme 2	Students' Feelings During Activity Based Learning
Theme 3	Activities That Support Lesson Comprehension
Theme 4	Favorite Classroom Activities
Theme 5	Activities That Support Memory and Retention
Theme 6	Perceived Differences Between ABL and Traditional Teaching
Theme 7	Modes of Student Participation in Activity Based Lessons
Theme 8	Factors That Influence Student Interest
Theme 9	Challenges Faced by Students During Activities
Theme 10	Students' Suggestions for Improving ABL

### Part II: Students' Perspectives (S1-S15)

The focus group discussions with fifteen students across grades 3 to 5 yield ten matching thematic areas:

- **Theme 1: Interest in ABL:** Students find hands-on learning exciting. S11 shares: "*I am not just watching, I am doing.*"

- **Theme 2: Emotions During ABL:** Active lessons evoke joy, energy, and confidence, contrasting with the boredom or sleepiness of lectures.
- **Theme 3: Activities Aiding Comprehension:** Visual tasks, poster-making, and peer discussions are cited as highly effective.
- **Theme 4: Favorite Activities:** Role-plays and science experiments are the most popular due to their immersive, game-like nature.
- **Theme 5: Memory and Retention:** Students find that explaining concepts to friends (peer teaching) and designing posters anchors information long-term.
- **Theme 6: Perceived Differences:** Traditional classes feel "one-sided," whereas ABL feels collaborative and mobile.
- **Theme 7: Modes of Participation:** Students engage by asking questions, taking group roles, and helping struggling classmates.
- **Theme 8: Factors Influencing Interest:** Short, contextual, real-world activities sustain interest; lengthy instructions destroy it.
- **Theme 9: Challenges Faced:** Students experience occasional social anxiety during presentations and frustration with uncooperative group members.
- **Theme 10: Suggestions for Improvement:** Students request more educational games, outdoor learning opportunities, and small reward systems (stickers/prizes).

**Table 3**  
**Teachers' Perceptions of Activity-Based Learning**

Theme	Teachers Reporting (n=6)	Percentage
Improved Academic Achievement	6	100%
Increased Participation	6	100%
Enhanced Confidence	5	83%
Better Communication Skills	5	83%
Improved Motivation	6	100%
Challenges in Implementation	6	100%

**Table 4**  
**Students' Perceptions of Activity-Based Learning**

Theme	Students Reporting (n=10)	Percentage
Learning is More Enjoyable	10	100%
Better Understanding of Concepts	9	90%
Improved Memory Retention	8	80%
Increased Participation	9	90%
Improved Confidence	7	70%
Preference over Traditional Teaching	10	100%

## Conclusion

Overall, based on the research study, it was found that Activity Based Learning is effective to improve academic performance in primary classes. Activities such as discussion, role play, experiments, games and specific tasks are helpful in learning concepts. Implementing ABL strategies resulted in significant improvements in academic achievement, participation, confidence, and communications skills of students. More interest and motivation were demonstrated by students than traditional lectures. Results indicate that ABL promotes collaboration, creativity, problem-solving and thinking. It allows students to focus and helps students who are shy or less confident to participate in the class. Activity-Based Learning can overcome the obstacles of limited resources, overcrowded classes, insufficient teacher training, and so on. Consequently, it is concluded that Activity-Based Learning has great value in Primary schools.

**Recommendations**

The recommendations presented below have been drawn from the research findings of the current study:

- Schools need to arrange workshops for teachers so that they gain better insight into the use of Activity-Based Learning techniques.
- More emphasis needs to be placed on classroom activities like cooperative learning, games, experiments, role-playing and discussions, which will help improve students' performance as well as participation in class.
- There should be sufficient availability of teaching material in schools for carrying out the activities associated with Activity-Based Learning.
- Classrooms should be smaller in size so that teachers can properly handle classroom activities and attend to all the students with equal attention.
- Parents need to be made aware of the benefits of using Activity-Based Learning techniques in classrooms.
- Shy children should be motivated to take part in classroom activities.
- Schools should try to develop an encouraging classroom environment where students feel free to contribute ideas.
- Future researches may be carried out on the same topic in secondary and higher level education institutions.

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