



Teachers' Perceptions about Standards fixed by the National Accreditation Council for Teachers' Education (NACTE): A Case Study

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Abstract: *The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover the opinions of the faculty of the education department in one of the public sector universities in Karachi Sindh about the quality assurance and accreditation process developed by one of the HEC's subunit NACTE and their readiness to initiate this process in their respective department. A mixed item questionnaire comprising close and open-ended questions was used to collect data from 16 faculty members teaching in the education department of the university. The faculty members serving at various positions were purposively selected for the study. Triangulation was attained using analysis of the collected data, document analysis of NACTE manuals, and HEC directives. The study concluded that the faculty of the education department lack awareness about the quality assurance and accreditation process, lack preparedness in many aspects for the achievement of national accreditation but they demonstrated interest in learning about the accreditation process. It is recommended that the National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education must set new goals, including awareness of training sessions for the faculty of education, so they understand its importance and outcomes.*

Key Words: Teachers' Perception and NACTE Standards.

Introduction

People all over the world are competing with each other and improving their standards to prove that they are better than others and this phenomenon in higher education is continuously growing ([Knight, 2004](#), 2010; [Vander Wende, 2007](#)). [Knight \(2015\)](#) indicated that globalization is a process in which we integrate regional, national, and international set standards in education to have global dimensions. English-speaking countries started integrating this process in the 1990s, especially the United States America, United Kingdom, and Australia ([Alawad, Bai, DeMara & Lin, 2014](#)); the 1990s was the era when education began to be dealt with as an exportable product. Internationalization has consistently existed in higher education, and universities have been predisposed internationally by social, cultural, and physical developments all around the world. These developments have given universities the capacity not to limit themselves but exceed specific spatial parameters ([Van Damme, 2002](#); [De Wit, 201](#); [Shin & Toutkoushian, 2011](#)).

Today, most of the European and Asian countries have developed their systems of quality assurance to meet the demands of internationalization and globalization of higher education, and quality assurance and regulatory authorities assist governments in promoting higher education for the sake of international competitiveness ([Salmi, 2011](#); [Hazelkorn, 2015](#)). Many quality assurance organizations as International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN), Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), etc. are paying more attention

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to the impact of ranking on higher education ([Hou, 2012](#)). Following the global trend, Pakistan has also established the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (NACTE), which have developed quality criteria of international standards for the evaluation of programs offered at higher education institutions to improve the quality of faculty, infrastructure and research ([Batool & Qureshi, 2007](#); [Khan, Janjua, Naeem & Kayani 2014](#); [Mirza, 2015](#)).

The competitive environment influenced by globalization and the internationalization of higher education is not just creating growth in the international labor market; it is threatening the sustainability of traditional culture and local languages of various communities as well ([Knight, 2013](#); [Venkatesh, 2013](#)). English as a foreign language is the official language of higher education in Pakistan; therefore, reading and writing in local languages are becoming extinct and native languages cannot enrich themselves with new knowledge. On the one hand, the pressure is increasing on the government to pay attention to quality assurance, research integration, teaching in English, growth in publishing research, and the use of ICTs. Moreover, according to [Knight \(2013\)](#), commercialization has occupied and infused every feature of academic life.

As per [Rivza & Teichle \(2007\)](#), the agility of students at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels is assumed as the key to internationalization for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the globe. Universities should form vibrant plans for their students to study overseas as well as having foreign students on their campuses, either through an exchange program or through regular admissions ([Bhandari & Blumenthal, 2013](#); [Altbach, 2015](#)). [Rizescu, \(2013\)](#) describes that the HEIs need to build up a policy to pursue their international goals; an indiscriminate approach labelled “the more-the best” and pushing the limits of academia in the domains of content and delivery will not work anymore. Every university needs to make its own particular and distinct international record, determine its strengths and weaknesses, and benchmark some leading international HEIs for quality improvement. Here an interesting question arises; whether HEIs can adapt themselves to internationalization by adopting specific quality frameworks and methodology? This research seeks the answer to this question in the context of schools/departments of education in Pakistani universities.

[Knight \(2014\)](#) describes that whatever is the policy, internationalization should be supported by an arrangement of structures and systems with a specific end goal, which ought to be actualized appropriately. The essentials to reach internationalization or getting international accreditation for programs and institutions include the following:

- Internationalization of curricula and syllabi
- Student and teacher mobility through exchange programs
- Focus on standardized learning outcomes for all students

To achieve these central objectives, quality assurance of services are needed, such as proper infrastructure (building, equipment, and facilities), teachers' qualification, research capacity, and facilitative leadership empowering faculty and staff ([Arif, Ilyas & Hameed, 2013](#); [2017](#)). Since customer satisfaction is the main focus, therefore, creating an alumni network is critical. Similarly, to promote research to establish professional communities and industry, the academic linkage is vital. Here, the question arises that how much awareness has been created among faculty and management for the utility and importance of taking these steps in the education departments of Pakistani universities?

[Fullan \(2015\)](#), who is considered the change gurus, explains that hostility could not be overwhelmed if teachers willingly assume their role as “change agents.” Readiness comes before implementation. Although there are many blind attempts at the implementation of quality and accreditation programs going on in the education departments of various universities of Pakistan, however, nothing fruitful has been achieved yet. Only seven universities of Pakistan have qualified to be included in the first 1000 universities of the world, and only two of them are included in the first 500 ([Academia, 2019](#)). What is lacking is the will, motivation, resources, and/or policy, which can make things smoother for Pakistani universities to qualify for better ranks in international rankings. Indeed, getting local accreditation is the first step; therefore, HEIs must aim to pursue it. This research attempts to define how successfully this step is being taken by one of the education departments of universities in Karachi.

[Spilka & Dobson \(2015\)](#) have concluded that the institutions and networks which deliver cross-border programs or courses are required to be registered, recognized, or licensed from both receiving and sending countries. Therefore, quality assurance and accreditation are the essential requirements to reap the benefits of internationalization. There is also a lack of capacity and political will in many countries to develop a regulatory framework for the evaluation of quality assurance and accreditation of foreign course providers and programs ([Rector & Beck, 2012](#)). The same problems are faced by Pakistani universities as well ([Nadeem, Abbas & Javed, 2014](#)). Higher Education Commission in Pakistan serves the purpose of both quality assurance and accountability of higher education. One of its key objectives is also setting parameters for internationalization and ranking upgrading of Pakistani universities ([Nadeem et al., 2014](#); [Shahid, Wahab & Ahmed, 2016](#)).

The quality of higher education in Pakistan is relatively lower as compared to the western countries; hence, seriously planned efforts are needed for quality assurance and quality enhancement ([Akhtar, 2007](#); [Jabeen, 2010](#); [Dilshad & Iqbal, 2010](#); [Khan, 2011](#); Arif et al., 2013;2017). Some efforts in this respect have been made by the government of Pakistan, such as in 2006 a National Assessment and Accreditation Council were established, and Education Sector Reform (ESR) and National Education Assessment System (NEAS) were implemented to improve teachers' qualification and educators' cadre and to assess and monitor the quality of teaching in the institutions of teachers' education in Pakistan. The findings of Dilshad and Iqbal (2010) about the indicators of quality assurance in institutions of pre-service teachers' education in Pakistan indicated the urgent need for the implementation of an assurance system in the Pakistani context which resulted in the development of standards for teachers' education (NACTE 2009) by the Accreditation Council of Teacher Education (ACTE). An autonomous body (NACTE) has been set up by HEC through notification of the Federal Government in the gazette of Pakistan to ensure and enhance the quality of teachers' education. The mission of NACTE is to ensure the quality of teachers' education programs through internal and external professional and academic evaluations for accreditation and also to provide support for the facilitation of teachers' education intended for their capacity building and self-improvement.

According to [Mirza \(2015\)](#), NACTE has developed Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and this framework comprises seven National Accreditation Standards (NAS). A conceptual framework is mandatory to be adopted as an initial accreditation requirement and subsequently to implement the seven standards for long-term planning. These standards are used to measure and evaluate the quality by dividing it into further measurable indicators. These standards have been created through the coordination of NACTE, HEC, and USAID's STEP program ([Huma, 2013](#)). NACTE evaluates the teachers' evaluation programs provided by public universities, private institutions, and foreign-affiliated institutions since all teacher education programs are mandatory for accreditation. The government of Pakistan is keen on the improvement of higher education and especially teacher education in Pakistan, and it has taken many valuable initiatives in this regard.

Objectives of the Research Study

National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education is a sub-body of HEC which was established with the purpose to develop and implement such standards that could take the system of teachers' education in Pakistan to international standards. The objective of this research study was to discover:

- The level of information possessed by the faculty of education about standards fixed by NACTE
- and their perceptions (willing to follow and engage themselves in that process) about those standards.

Research Questions

Following are the research questions that guided the present research study:

- How much knowledge do they have about the standards for quality education developed by NACTE?

- To what extent the departments of education are following the guidelines for quality assurance given by NACTE?
- Whether or not the faculty of education is willing to engage in the internationalization process? If not, then why is it unwilling?

Research Design

A questionnaire having both open-ended and close-ended was developed to be used as a research tool. The items included in the questionnaire were derived from an extensive literature review and were aimed at gathering information about the faculty's knowledge and involvement in the process of accreditation and the challenges they face in this process. The questionnaire was reviewed by the experts to ensure content validity and was further reviewed by a language expert for the use of language and its understanding. The questionnaire comprising 23 items with multiple options along with the space to enter personal comments was used for the final data collection. The researcher visited each faculty member at least thrice as a follow up for successful completion of data collection.

All data were screened, cleaned, and transcribed for final analysis. The data comprised responses to 23 open-ended items of the questionnaire. Summative qualitative content analysis was considered the best method for data reduction, suiting the needs of a phenomenological approach and the best-recommended technique for analyzing content yielded by the current research ([Elo & Kyngas, 2008](#); [Hsieh & Shannon, 2005](#)). Guidelines for summative qualitative content analysis given by Hsieh and Shannon (2005). In the way data collected through open-ended questions was analyzed. were followed:-

- Data collected through questionnaire were organized according to pre-structured themes and analyzed through 'summative content analysis'; the responses were explained in percentages. The findings were discussed in the light of global literature and theories of internationalization and globalization.
- Finally, conclusions were drawn about the collective understanding of the phenomenon of accreditation and internationalization by the faculty of education departments in Pakistani universities and their willingness to learn and continue with this phenomenon to compete in the international market of higher education.

Population and Sampling

The population of this research study was the teachers teaching in two of the public sector universities of Karachi. A random sampling procedure was followed to select the sample. The sample of the present research study consists of two professors, four associate professors, eight assistant professors, and sixteen lecturers.

Analysis of Data

The analysis of collected data is elaborated and discussed as under:

Follow Nacte Guidelines

NACTE assesses the department of education according to a certain criterion. Key aspects of this criterion are discussed below to know the extent to which the NACTE guidelines are being followed.

Organizational Structure of the Universities

Regarding management styles, 72% of respondents opined that their universities are operated in bureaucratic and top-down styles of management, whereas 10% of respondents reported democratic decision making and organizational structure. Regarding shared decision-making, 18% opined that delegation and empowerment are missing in their departments, and junior faculty are kept silent and expected to comply.

Professional Development of Faculty Members

70% of respondents from the education department reported that they had been involved in professional development activities. Regarding the occurrence of professional development activities, 13% of respondents reported that such activities occur twice a year, while another 17% of respondents stated that professional development activity occurs only once a year in their department.

Student Scholarships

According to respondents, 84.22% of students are offered scholarships; while 15.78% reported that they are not offering any scholarships. More for nature of scholarship their responded that the scholarships offered to students include need-based (45%) scholarships, merit-based scholarships (36%), kinship-based (11%), and government scholarships (8%).

Industry-Academia Linkage

Regarding industry-academia linkage, 54% of faculty members teaching in the education department reported that their department is associated with schools, while 46% of faculty members reported that they are not associated with any school. 41% of faculty members reported that their department is associated with public schools, while 29% of faculty members said that they are associated with private schools. 30% of faculty members informed that their department is associated with both types of schools. 41% of faculty members reported having coordinated with national institutions for the internationalization of their curricula only, while 29% of faculty members reported that they have coordinated with international institutions only. Another 30% of members reported that they have links with both types of institutions.

External Linkages and Funding

38% of faculty members teaching in the education department reported that their institutions had signed MOUs with other institutions, while 12% of faculty members reported that they are in the process to sign MOUs. Although the majority did not consider it an important activity and 49% of faculty members described that they had not signed MOUs with any other institution, whether local or international.

Managing Alumni Network

32% of faculty members affirmed that they manage their alumni network, while 68% of faculty members do not have any alumni network. 57% of members reported that they engage alumni for the branding of their university and especially their department of education, while 43% of faculty members follow no such practice. 79% of faculty members reported that they do not maintain any alumni network or private endowment funds, while only a few, that is 21% faculty members reported that they have a proper alumni network and maintain endowment funds.

Student Engagement in Social Welfare Activities

According to 73% of faculty members, there is no trend of engaging in social welfare activities in their departments, while only 27% of faculty members reported that their students are engaged in social activities for the betterment of society. Student engagements include voluntary work at special peoples' institutions (74%) and in old age homes (26%), respectively. 75% of faculty members reported that their departments are not involved in any national cause such as an increase in literacy or gender equality; only 25% of faculty members have some involvement in national causes and movements.

Status for NACTE Accreditation

NACTE is the accreditation agency for teacher education in Pakistan. According to faculty members, all teacher education programs are supposed to be accredited with NACTE. 66% of faculty members informed that their departments are undergoing the process of accreditation for their teacher education programs. However, 34% of faculty members reported that their departments have not yet started any

efforts for accreditation with NACTE.

Willingness for Internationalization

Involvement in Quality Assurance Activities

All universities must have a Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) according to HEC directives. Still, only 65% of faculty members teaching in the education departments reported that they were actively involved with the QEC of their universities, whereas, 35% of faculty members reported that they had no quality enhancement activities going on in their departments.

Regarding quality assurance activity, that is, 'conducting student feedback for courses taught', 39% of faculty members reported that student feedback was conducted regularly in their departments, whereas, 61% of faculty members informed that they had not conducted any student feedback for the teaching of courses in their departments. Evidence-based strategic planning was also found to be a rare activity. According to most faculty members, that is, 76% of faculty members were not using student feedback data for any future planning, while only some (24%) had used this data for future planning as reported by their faculty members numbering.

Most of the faculty members, that is, 81% reported that their promotion was not dependent upon feedback and performance reviews. Indeed, most of the universities have not developed an effective system for the evaluation of teachers' performance. Only 19% of faculty members reported that their university had established a system of faculty promotion dependent upon feedback and performance reviews.

Intentions to Pursue Internationalization

Most of the faculty members, that is, 66% did not express any intention to pursue any form of internationalization. However, 34% declared that their department and/or university has some future agenda to pursue international ranking. 82% described that they are considering QS Ranking, and only a few, that is, 18% stated that they are considering TIMES Ranking. The faculty rendered such a high ranking as a dream only because it is a very expensive process. 54% pointed out the lack of funding as a major hurdle in applying for international ranking. 34% attributed their lack of willingness for internationalization to the lack of interest exhibited by the university leadership and management. 12% viewed the lack of willingness as an outcome of ignorance and the lack of information/knowledge about the process of internationalization.

Discussion

University has always been an international institution claiming its global rights for students and faculty. After the Second World War, the creation of nation-states halted this process for some time, but the recent revolution in ICTs and global media has broken all borders and barriers ([Henderson, Barnett & Barnett, 2017](#)). Quality assurance and internationalization are the basic objectives for the institutes of higher education. In the international market, accreditation and ranking of universities are getting more and more popular which is affecting the perception of all stakeholders and beneficiaries of the higher education sector ([Altbach, 2015](#); [Knight, 2015](#)). All universities around the world need to pay close attention to it; opportunities for accreditation and internationalization must be available to education departments as well because the quality of the whole education system depends upon teacher quality ([Siddiqui, 2010](#)).

The importance of the quality of education was not as crucial in the past as it is today. Students have now an open choice to study at home or the nearby international hub; similar are the choices for faculty. Higher education is no more understood as public service, but it has achieved the status of an industry and has become a business. For the regulation of this new commodity, World Trade Organization's (WTO) rules and regulations provide the necessary framework ([Kirp, 2003](#); [Altbach, 2004](#); [Altbach & Knight, 2007](#); [Altbach, 2015](#)) for its open and free trade. Research tells us that the education departments of Pakistani universities are lagging far behind in following this vision. Awareness, knowledge,

motivation, initiative, attitude, and interest should be built in all stakeholders to play their role to enhance the quality of education and overcome the hurdles in the process of internationalization.

Strategies for internationalization of higher education vary from country to country ([Warwick & Moogan, 2013](#)), ranging from international placement of students, student and faculty exchange programs, adopting quality standards, and teaching in English ([Tossavainen, 2009](#)). One way is to increase budgets on research like many developed countries such as the USA, UK, and Australia; many universities are transforming themselves to become research universities following this model. Pakistan also needs to develop some models ([Geiger, 2004](#); [Huang, 2015](#); [Altbach, 2015](#)). Although HEC and other accreditation agencies have provided clear guidelines in this aspect, still newly emerging private institutions are not registered with local and international agencies of accreditation and the graduates are facing difficulties in getting jobs and further admissions; some of them even find it hard to get their degrees attested and recognized by HEC. Therefore, accountability standards for quality assurance should be made stricter; since service quality provided at all universities must be regulated to save people's money, time, and effort ([Arif et al., 2017](#)).

[Knight \(2014\)](#) expounded that whatever is the policy, internationalization should be supported by an arrangement of structures and systems with a specific end goal that ought to be appropriately actualized. The benchmarking of curriculum and course outlines serves as a useful model to attract not only good students but may increase the inward mobility of international students as well. The age of information has changed the space and location of teaching and learning as well. In this hectic world, distance learning in the form of e-learning is preferred over the face to actual face learning, especially for continuing professional education. Most of the education departments do not offer e-learning programs to international participants as yet. Effective and efficient management is required by providing training programs, motivation, financial security, and resources to raise teachers' and management's awareness about the potential benefits of international ranking.

Internationalization has dependably existed in higher education despite the renewed recognition for this venture ([Knight, 201](#)). Quality assurance and internationalization or globalization are the phenomena to stay ([Arif et al., 2013](#); [2017](#)); therefore, policymakers must look beyond the utilitarian and politicized implications of internationalization. Timely decisions matter; we live in a global world where closed countries like China, Russia, and other communist countries have opened their doors to follow international standards of quality assurance and accreditation ([Van Damme, 2002](#); [Shin & Toutkoushian, 2011](#); [De Wit & Beelen, 2014](#)). Researchers, therefore, highly recommend universities and departments not limit themselves to spatial limits.

Many institutions link accreditation tasks with quality assurance and perceive it as a slow, unending, and laborious task. The university management that is responsible for decision making and action lacks the capacity or political will to create an efficient regulatory framework to systemize quality assurance and accreditation. They hesitate in spending high fees for accreditation to national or international agencies. This lack of interest is transferred to the department level; the faculty is already burdened, and they don't want to take further responsibilities without any tangible benefits. NACTE should develop such policies for accreditation, which should be within reach of all departments pursuing accreditation. International quality indicators should be implemented and used to scientifically assess the quality of education through strict adherence to international quality standards.

Conclusion

The findings regarding the following quality assurance activities of NACTE suggest that education departments of Pakistani universities are not serious about getting NACTE accreditation. A very negligible percentage of faculty (18%) expressed that all programs offered by their departments are not accredited. Neither did the faculty express any enthusiasm about getting involved in NACTE accreditation, nor did they find any relevant activities initiated by their university leadership. However, the faculty expressed a willingness to learn more about quality assurance, accreditation, and its benefits for their departments. The findings of this research conclude that education departments of Pakistani universities are not keenly following the directions for quality assurance and accreditation by NACTE.

The departments have taken few steps for industry-academia linkages or external relations. Strangely, many universities and departments have no association or Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) with public and private schools to send their students for teaching practice. Similarly, the departments are not involved in initiating student and faculty exchange programs. Most of them have no alumni network or endowment funds to regulate their expenses.

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