



Issues and Problems in the Procedure of Quality Assurance Practices in Public and Private Universities of Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract

This study was undertaken to find issues and problems in quality assurance practices in public and private sector higher education institutes of Punjab Pakistan. There was a total of 156 faculty members (male & female) in the selected four departments of 10 selected universities (5 from public and five from private) which constitute an accessible population of this study. All the teachers and head of departments of those selected departments were the respondents of this study. The self-constructed instrument was validated by expert opinion and pilot testing. The responses of the faculty members were measured with the help of frequency and their percentages, mean and standard deviations. Each table is formed on the basis of the variables of the study. It was concluded that the biggest hurdle in quality assurance identified by this research is the unavailability of data for quality assurance. It was recommended by the researcher that the financing system by the HEC should be revised to even the playing field even more. This could be done by expanding the needs-based scholarship program for students attending private HELs.

Key Words: Quality Assurance, Higher Education Commission, Higher Education Institutes

Introduction

The quality assurance system plays a significant role in achieving procedure controller, transparency, responsibility and internationalization in order to keep pace with globalization. By the increase in the number of students and the increase in the cost of advanced education, people are increasingly interested in quality and quality assurance principles. Therefore, with the increase and internalization of private sector participation in higher education and the emergence of demand for quality assurance systems, it is necessary to recognize the importance of quality assurance. With the increase of special higher education institutions, a new and more effective quality assurance system needs to be established, which must be resolved in a timely manner. The quality assurance and degrees obtained by representative institutions play an important role in introducing knowledge enthusiasts to the institution and improving the institution's status among peers (Cetinsaya, 2014).

To eliminate the problems caused by the investment, incentives and fines were taken to the relevant departments of higher education institutions to justify the new investment. Therefore, the understanding of the quality of the organization must comply with world standards, so that continuous seminars and training must be maintained in continuous operations.

The quality of education is an essential area of concern for developed education institutions worldwide. International struggles are being stepped up to improve the quality of education to meet contemporary challenges (Aslam & Akbar, 2017). Higher education in Pakistan is insufficient in both quantity and quality. Pakistan has fewer universities and few students receiving advanced education because there are very few facilities in these institutions, which is not enough to support high-quality education in the republic. The quality of these institutions has been evaluated on the basis of specific and prescribed measures (Shabbir et al., 2014). However,

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the quality of higher education is expected to improve after the speedy increase in the number of universities in 2002. This shocking condition requires universities to provide empirical evidence and research on quality assurance practices. The objective of this research is to explore the "Issues and problems of quality assurance in higher education of Pakistan".

Statement of the Problem

With the passage of time, both public and private higher education sectors in Punjab are developing rapidly. The government has also realized the importance of this underserved sector and has allocated funds for higher education. After the start of HEC, the reform process accelerated for the first time in Pakistan's history. Therefore, this is a timely work aimed at exploring the hindrances of quality assurance in the higher education sector in Punjab. This research attempts to investigate the issues and problems of quality assurance practices in public and private higher education institutions of Punjab, Pakistan.

Objective

To investigate the issues and problems in the procedure of quality assurance practices in the higher education institutes of Punjab.

Research Question

What are the problems and issues in the procedure of quality assurance in public and private universities?

Review of Related literature

The enactment of quality managing in advanced education faces similar obstacles to industrial and health maintenance (Cruickshank, 2011). When TQM platform applying in the higher institute, the following obstacles were found (Vazzana et al.2010) "Managerial principles, hypothetical freedom, time restrictions, study tasks, and uneven teaching strategies." According to Massy (2013), the real conflict to the improvement of higher education quality is the attitude of scholars. These attempts are regarded as another trend of business orientation. Terminology borrowed from the quality assurance business model adds to the intensity of this sentiment. The standards, customs and aim of advanced education institutions have been renowned as the highest trouble in implementing total quality management (Birnbaum, 2010).

Worthington and Hodgson (2005) judgmentally examined the role of quality audit in higher education in the UK and recognized it as a tool for management control and academic supervision. Peer misuse is a term used by authors to clarify avoidable facts that avoid the sense of responsibility and trivial involvement of the academic community, thereby protecting their peculiar research and profession at the expenditure of others. [Harvey \(2005, pp. 271-273\)](#) found many complications related to educational quality assurance programs, including Attach great importance to passivity and responsibility, deficiency of trust among employees, self-assessment will increase the workload, cumbersome and overlapping process, superficial level of personnel involvement, low emphasis on learning and change.

Cheong (2013) recognized that any effort to implement quality assurance in education could be observed by educators as top-down and externally forced. Many researchers believe that some other obstacles to quality management in higher education are, shortage of appreciative and participation of quality management by the older organization and lack of collaboration. The incompatibility among group services and assets ([Walsh, 2012](#); Scott, 2010 and Temponi, 2015). The main hindrance to implementing a quality development plan is the description and documentation of customers or participants (Quinn, Anita, Lemay, etc., 2010).

Methodology

Research Design

This is descriptive research that is primarily based on the quantitative data which was obtained through a self-constructed questionnaire.

Target Population

There is a total of 52 universities in Punjab 29 in the public sector and 23 in the private sector. All these universities, their faculty members, heads of department and heads of QEC's will constitute a target population for this study.

Accessible Population

There is a total of 156 faculty members (male & female) in two departments of 10 selected universities which constitute an accessible population of this study.

Sampling

Random sampling technique was used to select the respondents using three stages. In the first stage, five universities were selected from the public sector and five from private sector randomly. In the second stage, four departments were selected from each university. At the last stage, all faculty members of four departments and heads of department were included in the sample.

Instruments of the Study

Two questionnaires were developed for the heads of department and all the faculty members of the selected four departments.

The validity of the Instrument

The validity of the questionnaire was determined and improved through the experts' opinion. The suggestions of the experts were incorporated and then sent for pilot testing.

Reliability of the Instrument

A pilot test was conducted on 20 teachers (ten from the public sector and ten from private sector universities) who were not included in the sample to determine the reliability of the instrument. Cronbach Alpha test was applied to find the alpha value.

Data Collection

The self-constructed questionnaire having a variety of items, i.e. tabular form, Likert scale items and open-ended questions format was used by the researcher to collect data. Data was collected personally by the researcher. The questionnaire face and content validity were established by the panel of experts in the relevant field area. A Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.78 was obtained for the questionnaire during the pilot study on 20 faculty members. The questionnaire was self-administered by the researcher through direct contact with the sampled population. The return rate was encouraging and recorded to be 80%. Three days were given to the respondents for returning the filled questionnaire. It took more than a month to distribute and recollect the filled instruments from respective university campuses. After receiving the filled questionnaire from the respondents, the researcher entered the results into MS. Excel or SPSS spreadsheets.

Data Analysis

The responses of the faculty members were measured with the help of frequency and their percentages, mean and standard deviations. Each table is formed on the basis of the variables of the study. The results are arranged in descending order to indicate the most agreed quality assurance practices from the instrument.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1. Responses Regarding Hindrances in Administrative Practices

S. No	Statement	MP	P	N. O	Less P	Least P	Mean	S. D
		%						
1		59.0	41.0	0	0	0	4.59	0.49

S. No	Statement	MP	P	N. O	Less P	Least P	Mean	S. D
		%						
2	Commitment from the university administration remains up to the mark	40.4	59.6	0	0	0	4.40	0.49
3	Policies of HEC are implemented by the university.	29.5	70.5	0	0	0	4.29	0.46
4	Support staff remains available for teaching staff at the department	0	55.8	44.2	0	0	3.56	0.50
5	Training is arranged by the department so as to enable the staff to follow Quality practices.	10.9	44.9	14.7	29.5	0	3.37	1.02
	Total	27.9	54.4	11.8	5.9	0	4.04	0.59

The above table indicates the overall response of the faculty members regarding hindrances in following quality assurance practices in administration matters. The responses ranged from Most Prominent (27.9%) to No Opinion (11.8%) with the overall mean score of 4.04 (S. D= 0.59) indicating that the responses were nearest to the highest level of prominence.

Majority of the respondents showed prominence (M= 4.59, S. D= 0.49) about Staff members are properly educated about the quality assurance policies given by HEC. Secondly, the prominent practice was about Policies of HEC are implemented by the university (M= 4.40, S. D= 0.49), and thirdly faculty members feel quite prominent upon Support staff remains available for teaching staff at the department (M= 3.56, S. D= 0.50).

It was observed from the above table that all the faculty members were of the opinion that hindrances were prominent upon the administrative practices as the means scores were nearest to the highest level, i.e. 5.00.

Table 2. Responses Regarding Hindrances in Options for Staff

S. No	Statement	MP	P	N. O	Less P	Least P	Mean	S. D
		%						
1	Administration, management and academics work in co-ordination.	29.5	15.4	55.1	0	0	3.99	0.96
2	Maintenance of the records by the teachers is helped out.	14.7	70.5	0	14.7	0	3.85	0.85
3	Provision of resources by the university come up to the normative levels.	14.7	55.1	30.1	0	0	3.85	0.65
4	Deadlines of completion of any task are duly met	10.3	59.6	30.1	0	0	3.80	0.60
5	Immediate superiors accept a change in the processes without any contradiction	14.7	44.2	41.0	0	0	3.74	0.70
6	Financial incentives are provided to the staff to make them matched with the standard norms.	29.5	15.4	55.1	0	0	3.74	0.89
7	Research by the staff is duly rewarded.	0	70.5	29.5	0	0	3.71	0.46
8	Communication hazards exist from top to bottom and bottom to top.	14.7	55.1	15.4	14.7	0	3.70	0.90
9	Staff members are involved in undertaking quality practices.	0	75.0	25.0	0	0	3.55	0.50
10	Faculty members after adopting the practices aspired by HEC and administration without any contradiction	0	40.4	59.6	0	0	3.40	0.49
	Total	12.8	50.1	34.1	2.94	0	3.73	0.70

The above table indicates the overall response of the faculty members regarding hindrances in following quality assurance practices in options for staff. The responses ranged from Most Prominent (12.8%) to No

Opinion (34.1%) with the overall mean score of 3.73 (S. D= 0.70) indicating that the responses were moderate to the highest level of prominence.

Majority of the respondents showed prominence (M= 3.99, S. D= 0.96) about Administration, management, and academics work in co-ordination. Secondly, Maintenance of the records by the teachers is helped out (M= 3.85, S. D= 0.85) and thirdly Provision of resources by the university come up to the normative levels (M= 3.85, S. D= 0.65).

It was observed from the above table that all the faculty members were of the opinion that hindrances were moderately prominent upon the options for staff as the means scores were moderate to the highest level, i.e. 5.00.

Table 3. Responses Regarding Hindrances in Training and Participation

S. No	Statement	MP	P	N. O %	Less P	Least P	Mean	S. D
1	Teachers are encouraged to organize knowledge sharing sessions	39.7	59.6	0.6	0	0	4.39	0.50
2	Participation by the administration is promoted/appreciated	14.7	85.3	0	0	0	4.15	0.36
3	Promotion is attached in the research output of the staff	10.3	75.0	14.7	0	0	3.96	0.50
4	Participation in workshops etc. is financially appreciated	0	85.3	14.7	0	0	3.85	0.36
5	Staff are exposed to training in a systematic way	0	75.0	25.0	0	0	3.75	0.43
	Total	12.9	76.0	11.0	0	0	4.02	0.43

The above table indicates the overall response of the faculty members regarding hindrances in following quality assurance practices in training and participation. The responses ranged from Most Prominent (12.9%) to No Opinion (11.0%) with the overall mean score of 4.02 (S. D= 0.43) indicating that the responses were near to the highest level of prominence.

Majority of the respondents showed prominence (M= 4.39, S. D= 0.50) about Teachers are encouraged to organize knowledge sharing sessions. Secondly, Participation by the administration is promoted/appreciated (M= 4.15, S. D= 0.36) and thirdly, Promotion is attached in the research output of the staff (M= 3.96, S. D= 0.50).

It was observed from the above table that all the faculty members were of the opinion that hindrances were moderately prominent upon the training and participation as the means scores were moderate to the highest level, i.e. 5.00.

Table 4. Responses Regarding Hindrances in Facilitation for Research Trainings

S. No	Statement	MP	P	N. O %	Less P	Least P	Mean	S. D
1	The library is equipped with the latest books/research journals	44.2	40.4	15.4	0	0	4.29	0.72
2	Furniture is comfortable to sit for long hours	29.5	69.9	0.6	0	0	4.29	0.47
3	Wi-Fi facility is provided to the staff for internet surfing	10.3	74.4	15.4	0	0	3.95	0.50
4	Rooms are made macadamized for making working easier	10.3	44.9	44.9	0	0	3.65	0.66
5	Intimation of research is made available to the staff the sooner it gets published	14.7	16.0	69.2	0	0	3.46	0.74

S. No	Statement	MP	P	N. O	Less P	Least P	Mean	S. D
		%						
6	University subscribes to the prestigious journals	30.1	59.6	10.3	0	0	3.20	0.60
	Total	24.9	57.8	17.3	0	0	3.87	0.59

The above table indicates the overall response of the faculty members regarding hindrances in following quality assurance practices in facilitation for research trainings. The responses ranged from Most Prominent (24.9%) to No Opinion (17.3%) with the overall mean score of 3.87 (S. D= 0.59) indicating that the responses were moderate to the highest level of prominence.

Majority of the respondents showed prominence (M= 4.29, S. D= 0.72) about Library is equipped with the latest books/research journals and Wi-Fi facility is provided to the staff for internet surfing (M= 4.29, S. D= 0.47). Furniture is comfortable to sit for long hours (M= 4.29, S. D= 0.47).

The faculty members were of the opinion that hindrances were moderately prominent upon the training and participation as the means scores were moderate to the highest level, i.e. 5.00.

Table 5. Gender-Wise Significant Difference Among Hindrances of Quality Assurance Practices

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	P
Administrative Practices	M	86	4.06	0.26	154	0.88	.34
	F	70	4.03	0.25			
Options for Staff	M	86	3.75	0.35	154	0.24	.62
	F	70	3.74	0.36			
Trainings and Participation	M	86	4.03	0.20	154	0.15	.70
	F	70	4.02	0.20			
Facilitation for Research Trainings	M	86	3.81	0.14	154	0.35	.55
	F	70	3.80	0.15			

The above table indicates that male was more agreed (M= 4.06, S. D= 0.26) about administrative practices than female respondents (M= 4.03, S. D= 0.25). Yet there was found no statistically significant difference in the opinion of male and female respondents regarding administrative practices (p= 0.34, df= 154).

Male respondents were more agreed (M= 3.75, 0.35) regarding options for staff than females (M=3.75, S. D= 0.35), while there was found no statistically significant difference (p= 0.62, df= 154) in opinions of male and female respondents regarding options for staff practices.

Male were more agreed (M= 4.03, S. D= 0.20) about training and participation than female respondents (M= 4.02, S. D= 0.20). Yet there was found no statistically significant difference in the opinion of male and female respondents regarding trainings and participation (p= 0.70, df= 154).

Male were more agreed (M= 3.81, S. D= 0.14) about facilitation for research trainings than female respondents (M= 3.80, S. D= 0.55). Yet there was found no statistically significant difference in the opinion of male and female respondents regarding quality process-based practices (p= 0.55, df= 154).

Table 6. Institution-Wise Significant Difference in Hindrances of Quality Assurance Practices

Variables	Institution	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Administrative Practices	Public	84	4.04	0.26	154	0.64	0.43
	Private	72	4.04	0.25			
Options for Staff	Public	84	3.82	0.30	154	8.49	0.00
	Private	72	3.66	0.40			
Trainings and Participation	Public	84	4.05	0.17	154	1.21	0.28
	Private	72	3.99	0.22			
Facilitation for Research Trainings	Public	84	3.80	0.14	154	0.00	0.99
	Private	72	3.80	0.14			

The above table indicates that public and private sector members were equally agreed (M= 4.04, S. D= 0.26) about administrative practices (M= 4.04, S. D= 0.25). Yet there was found no statistically significant difference in the opinion of public and private sector respondents regarding administrative practices (p= 0.64, df= 154).

Public sector respondents were more agreed (M= 3.82, 0.30) regarding options for staff than private ones (M=3.66, S. D= 0.40), while there was found a statistically significant difference (p= 0.004, df= 154) in opinions of public and private sector respondents regarding options for staff practices.

Public sector respondents were more agreed (M= 4.05, S. D= 0.17) about quality control practices than private respondents (M= 3.99, S. D= 0.22). Yet there found no statistically significant difference in the opinion respondents regarding trainings and participation (p= 0.45, df= 154).

Public sector and private sector participants were almost equally agreed (M= 3.80, S. D= 0.14) about administrative practices. Yet there was found no statistically significant difference in the opinion respondents regarding quality process-based practices (p= 0.99, df= 154).

Table 7. University-Wise Significant Difference Among Hindrance of Quality Assurance Practices

Variables	Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	P
Administrative Practices	Between Groups	0.09	5	0.01	0.28	0.92
	Within Groups	6.55	150	0.06		
	Total	6.63	155			
Options for Staff	Between Groups	0.94	5	0.19	1.58	0.17
	Within Groups	11.7	150	0.11		
	Total	12.6	155			
Trainings and Participation	Between Groups	0.12	5	0.02	0.61	0.69
	Within Groups	3.93	150	0.04		
	Total	4.05	155			
Facilitation for Research Trainings	Between Groups	0.02	5	0.00	0.23	0.94
	Within Groups	2.07	150	0.02		
	Total	2.09	155			

The above table indicates that there was found no difference in opinions of faculty members related to different universities regarding any hindrances in practices of quality assurance at the higher education level.

Table 8. Qualification-Wise Significant Difference Among Hindrances of Quality Assurance Practices

Variables	Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	P
Administrative Practices	Between Groups	0.02	2	0.01	0.14	0.87
	Within Groups	6.62	153	0.07		
	Total	6.64	155			
Options for Staff	Between Groups	0.20	2	0.10	0.83	0.43
	Within Groups	12.4	153	0.12		
	Total	12.6	155			
Trainings and Participation	Between Groups	0.01	2	0.00	0.07	0.93
	Within Groups	4.05	153	0.04		
	Total	4.05	155			
Facilitation for Research Trainings	Between Groups	0.08	2	0.04	2.13	0.12
	Within Groups	2.01	153	0.02		
	Total	2.10	155			

The above table indicates that there was found no difference in opinions of faculty members related to different universities regarding any hindrances in practices of quality assurance at the higher education level.

Table 9. Total Working Experience-Wise Significant Difference in Among Hindrances of Quality Assurance Practices

Variables	Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	p
Administrative Practices	Between Groups	0.41	2	0.02	0.32	0.72
	Within Groups	6.60	153	0.06		
	Total	6.63	155			
Options for Staff	Between Groups	0.19	2	0.09	0.78	0.46
	Within Groups	12.4	153	1.12		
	Total	12.6	155			
Trainings and Participation	Between Groups	0.01	2	0.00	0.16	0.85
	Within Groups	4.04	153	0.04		
	Total	4.05	155			
Facilitation for Research Trainings	Between Groups	0.00	2	0.00	0.11	0.89
	Within Groups	2.09	153	0.02		
	Total	2.09	155			

The above table indicated that there was found no difference in opinions of faculty members related to different universities regarding any hindrances in practices of quality assurance at the higher education level.

Table 10. Administrative Position-Wise Significant Difference Among Hindrances of Quality Assurance Practices

Variables	Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	p
Administrative Practices	Between Groups	0.13	3	0.04	0.69	0.55
	Within Groups	6.50	152	0.06		
	Total	6.63	155			
Options for Staff	Between Groups	0.18	3	0.06	0.49	0.68
	Within Groups	12.4	152	0.12		
	Total	12.6	155			
Trainings and Participation	Between Groups	0.00	3	0.00	0.06	0.98
	Within Groups	4.04	152	0.04		
	Total	4.05	155			
Facilitation for Research Trainings	Between Groups	1.51	3	0.05	3.60	0.05
	Within Groups	1.94	152	0.01		
	Total	2.09	155			

The above table indicates that there was found no difference in opinions of faculty members related to different universities regarding any hindrances in practices of quality assurance at higher education level, except for facilitation and research trainings, there was a significant difference in opinions of faculty members, i.e. $df=155$, $p=0.05$.

Discussions and Conclusions

The biggest obstacle to quality assurance identified in this study is the lack of data for quality assurance. In order to regulate HEI more effectively, it is necessary to make more systematic use of information. In particular, more complete and regular information about the quality of HEI and its internal and external efficiency will increase consumer awareness and make public and private HEI more sensitive to market needs (USAID, 2008). The study found that other obstacles in implementing HEI quality assurance are lack of training, inconsistent HEC policies, and lack of incentives based on quality assurance. These barriers have also been reported by other international universities (Walsh, 2002; Scott, 2001 and Temponi, 2005). In all universities, the selection criteria for professors are different. HEC did not give specific guidelines. This is one of the obstacles to the quality of higher education in Pakistan. Raza, Hashmi and Ullah (2006) and Ullah (2005) also found this gap in Pakistan's HEI quality assurance. Unlike other researchers who have pointed out a shortage of learning resources and professional development opportunities in the past (Iqbal, 2001; and Ullah, 2005), the findings show that the

two faculty members in this field, public and private universities, have installed the Internet satisfied with books and professional development opportunities. There are no qualified personnel related to quality assurance, and this gap is filled by different professionals (Hayword, 2008). There is a great need to train existing employees related to quality assurance and introduce new academic courses related to higher education quality assurance into universities. Another missing link pointed out by this study and accepted by the World Bank Research (2006) is that building stronger and stronger links between higher education institutions and employers is the core of a good public-private partnership. However, there are obstacles to putting it into practice. There is a need for greater industry participation and scope in curriculum development and student practical training.

Recommendation

The number of permanent faculty members of public sector universities serving as guest professors in different private universities should be limited. HEC should encourage private universities to provide more courses in order to bridge the gap between public and private universities. Finally, the HEC funding system should be revised to further fair competition. This can be achieved by expanding the need-based scholarship program for students attending private universities. This may be the first step towards the long-term goal of treating public and private HEIs in a neutral manner. ([2006 World Bank Report](#)).

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