

Impediments in the Quality Assurance of Higher Education Sector of Pakistan

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Abstract

Quality of higher education institutes determines the future of any nation. Higher education commission (HEC) has strived hard to elevate the standards of higher education in Pakistan but desired results have not been redeemed. This article endeavors to highlight barriers in the implementation of quality assurance mechanism devised by HEC and higher education institutes (HEIs) to improve quality of both teaching and research. Data were collected from 204 Government sector and 205 faculty members of private sector universities in the Punjab Province and the Capital Islamabad. T-test for independent sample was applied to find the dissimilarities in the views of government sector and faculty members of private universities about hurdles in the quality assurance procedure adopted by their respective universities. It was revealed that inconsistent policies, ambiguous targets and lack of training regarding quality assurance practices were main hurdles.

Key Words

Quality Assurance,
Higher Education,
Impediments, Pakistan

Introduction

Higher education institutes (HEIs) undertake an indispensable job in the social and fiscal progress of any country since all the eminent religious leaders, community activists, industrialist, experts like consultants, architects, legal counselors and business analysts get their motivation and learning from the Higher Education, who serve the general public by improving qualities of living standards and building up assets of the society (Strydom, and Lategan, 1998; UNESCO, 2004 ; Trow, 2005). The advancements of information technology-based global markets rely heavily upon further prominent innovation in tertiary education. It has been perceived by the Governments in the developing nations and they have tried to capitalize on this opportunity (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2005; UNESCO, 2004).

The extension, enhancement, commercialization, and competition of tertiary education sector internationally have led to expanded apprehension about the nature of tertiary education in both advanced and poor nations identically (Michaela and Antony, 2007). To react to lingering worldwide challenges and domestic teaching standards adequately and effectively, Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) should inevitably build up Quality Assurance (QA) framework. The necessity of building up these vigorous QA frameworks for tertiary education to cater to the present difficulties observed by this speedily developing segment has been perceived by the World Bank and numerous studies (World Bank, 2008).

Review of Related Literature

Conventional central models of administration are being replaced with a more flexible and distributed system of quality assurance. In the course of the previous twenty years QA models have transformed immensely. The long-standing traditional contract in which the scholastic acumen was generally allowed to control its own scholarly issues, while national guideline dealt with non-scholastic issues, has been seriously disturbed by an ascent in new administrative ways to deal with educational organization (Yarahmadi & Magd, 2016).

A declaration of HEFCE circulated in August 2012 records the progressively more significant part played by the UK's further education institutions in ancillary widespread enrolment in post-

secondary education. Of specific attention is the degree to which borders are increasingly obscuring between initial phase grade trails that start at HEIs and those which start through the advanced schooling (frequently through corporations with indigenous HEIs). Additional schooling is supposed to be a critical entree point equally for college leavers and for continuing pupils in “low- involvement ” zones. In some countries, growing enrollment or ambitious to take part in HE has been adjusted in diverse methods. some countries i.e. Poland, regulation nowadays permits private HEIs to function along the universities run by the government. The Netherlands and Portugal function dual structures, which keep polytechnics or technical HEIs beside universities contribution a wider syllabus (Owen, Eggins, Gordon, Land & Rattray, 2013).

In the developing nations, similar to Pakistan, most HEIs are not ready to tackle the pace of changes in rational and innovational circles and cannot assume their job of circulating and producing new knowledge appropriate to address these difficulties. This predicament of HEIs requires a prompt redesigning of the Quality Assurance (QA) in the tertiary education segment of Pakistan (Azam, 2007; Batool & Qureshi, 2010 and Hayward, 2008). Enormous studies have affirmed that greater part of the emerging nations of continent Africa and Asia have admitted to the fact that in this quickly altering domain extraordinary quality of advanced education is fundamental for each country to fulfill the dreams of any nation. It is evident by the foundation of huge number of quality enhancement offices for tertiary education sector in these nations (Hayward, 2008; Brennan and Shah, 2000).

Not just QA offices are being recognized nationwide but also numerous systems of quality enhancements have additionally been developed recently. One renowned system, The International Network for QA Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) was set up in 1991 by just 18 QA agencies which have risen to 150 distinct nations in fifteen years (the Woodhouse and Kristoffersen, 2006). This quick augmentation in the QAA around the globe reflected the need and essentialness of the QA in the tertiary education sector. Quality and QA of advanced education obviously have turned out to be significant complications for tertiary education equally in the Asia and Pacific area and everywhere throughout the globe (World Bank, 2007).

At the point when Higher Education Commission (HEC) supplanted University Grants Commission (UGC) in 2002 total number of HEIs functioning in Pakistan was just 26 which has expanded to 124 including sixty-seven Government and fifty-seven private HEIs working throughout the Country (Higher Education Commission [HEC], 2008). These newly established HEIs are not fitted out to face the challenges. With deficient systems to guarantee the nature of their instructive projects, their likelihood of survival is thin and could intensify in the event that they disregard or keep away from their opposition. To have the option to endure, be aggressive and guarantee their very own clients quality instruction, locally and universally, a QA model for their establishments must be created and executed (Bhatti and Tauqir, 2006; Rauf, 2006; and Hayward, 2008).

The issue featured from the above discourse is an earnest need of QA Paybacks of Quality Management and execution of Quality Management models for example TQM can assistance any learning organization to deliver added and better service to its principal stakeholders (Farooq, Akhtar, Ullah, & Memon, 2007). Noteworthy rewards of TQM implementation include improved self-confidence of staff members, uninterrupted progress, enhanced value as of the client s perspective, channel between teaching faculty and administrative functions and healthier collaboration (Ali & Shastri, 2010). Similarly, Todorut (2013) has identified that reimbursements of TQM execution too comprise: novelty, monetary perspective, prospects of modernization, restored mechanism of procedures, forecasting, dissemination, superior tractability, extraordinary value of services provided and improved image of the organization. TQM has been remarkably recognized and effectively applied in several administrations, giving them the lead in global and in indigenous field through the formation of superiority services or goods to meet or exceed expectations of the clientele (Zakuan et al., 2012; In'airat & Al-Kassem, 2014).

The execution of quality management system at organizational level is reliant on a number of interconnected dynamics each can server either an obstacle or impetus: attitude, management, ample funds , vibrant strategy , operational statement, past practice, development and administrative pledge, participant conflict or indifference, training and development of the employees, effective assessment and feedback channels . Strategy continually needs to be clarified while implementing at the organizational level, through organizational values and norms, through their relative levels of vitality and elasticity (Ali & Shastri, 2010). Culture annotates, effortlessly denotes to all and none. As a replacement for a functionalist and instrumentalist concept of directing culture in the right track, he proposes that Knowledge to “reason customarily” about managerial realism may influence and instigate progressive executive normal deeds instead of idealistic package for cultural modification or twisting configurations of connotation, thoughts, and ethics to administrative determination. The researcher highlights the prominence of the complication, deviation, and acceptance for confusion of social ethics, thoughts, and denotations and familiarizes the reader with the idea of cultural traffic. Whatever is observed by us in the backgrounds of the above exercise is an instance of what he rappsports manifold cultural conformations (Todorut, 2013). Where culture can assist carefully as latitude, or as communal adhesive likewise it may be awkwardly dealt as holy cow. Conceivably further enthusiastically it can be deduced that organizational cultures to work for as exchange-regulator, or a

regulatory instrument which can address intricate interchange (Alvesson, 2002). Stakeholders are delivered with the rational apparatuses and a long remembrance to permit them to appraise what is just rewards ultimately, and, imaginably in modern terms an added optimistic scenario of strategy enactment (Jung, Wang & Wu, 2009). A noteworthy hindrance in execution of QA activities is definition and perception of different stakeholders. Because of significance difference in insight of partners in characterizing and executing quality this issue of QA has become very perplexing (Quinn, Anita, Lemay, et al., 2009).

Obstacles to QM Implementation

Yarahmadi & Magd (2016) have identified the following main barriers or obstacles to successful implementation of QM such as TQM are:

1. The dearth of obligation by top management
2. Meager Visualization and Strategy
3. The Influence of governing authorities
4. Nonexistence of exceedingly competent specialists
5. Deficiency of information about the quality management system
6. Opposition of establishment
7. Pitiably synchronization among workers and subdivisions
8. Deficiency of curiosity about learning new things
9. The anticipation of instantaneous outcomes
10. The unpredictability of top management
11. Inflexible administrative configurations

Problem Statement

Higher education institutes are a knowledge hub and source of the national building process. All movements of social, political, scientific and economic movements originate from the universities. This can happen only if HEIs are capitalizing the potential of youth and keeping their pace at par with intentional standards. Standards of tertiary education required to be ensured by a governing body at national level, HEC has assumed this role in Pakistan. This study explores problems and hurdles in the QA of HEIs in Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

Following objectives were designed to conduct this study:

- 1- To find the hurdles in quality assurance practices of higher education institutes in Pakistan.
- 2- To explore the difference in problems faced by the government sector and private higher education institutes in implementing quality assurance mechanism.

Research Questions of the Study

Following research questions were designed to achieve the objectives of the study:

- 1- What are the major hurdles in the implementation of QA of HEIs in Pakistan?
- 2- What is the difference in perception of faculty members of the government sector and private HEIs about obstacles in the implementation of QA?

Methodology

This is quantitative, cross-sectional survey research.

Sample of the Study

Multistage proportional sampling technique was used to collect data from 12 Government sector and 12 private HEIs of Punjab and the Capital Islamabad. 204 faculty members of Government sector HEIs and 205 private sector HEIs filled the questionnaire.

The instrument of the Study

A self-constructed research instrument containing 12 items were validated with an expert opinion was used for this study. After validation this instrument was pilot tested to find reliability of the instrument which was .865.

Results

Parametric test independent sample t-test was applied to compare the opinion of the faculty members of the government sector and private sector HEIs.

Table 1. Independent Samples t-test Regarding Lack of Financial Resources

Category	n	M	SD	MD	t	p	95% CI		η ²
							LL	UL	
Public	204	3.45	1.023	.319	3.144	.002	.120	.519	.02
Private	205	3.13	1.031						

**p < .01, df = 407, η² = Eta squared

The independent-samples t-test recognized that there is a noteworthy dissimilarity between perceptions of Government sector faculty (M = 3.45, SD = 1.023) and private sector faculty (M = 3.13, SD = 1.031) faculty members' mean score regarding lack of financial resources at HEIs, t(407) = 3.144, p = .002. The magnitude of the differences in the means (MD = .319, 95% CI: .120 to .519) was small (η² = .02). Moreover, the mean value of both categories indicated that they were agreed that the lack of financial resources is an obstacle in attaining QA practices at HEIs.

Table 2. Independent samples t-test regarding lack of commitment from the university administration

Category	n	M	SD	MD	t	p	95% CI		η ²
							LL	UL	
Public	204	3.37	1.011	.343	3.285	.001	.138	.549	.03
Private	205	3.02	1.100						

**p < .01, df = 407, η² = Eta squared

The independent-samples t-test discovered a momentous variance in perceptions of Government sector faculty (M = 3.37, SD = 1.011) and private (M = 3.02, SD = 1.100) faculty members' mean score regarding lack of commitment from university administration, t(407) = 3.691, p = .001 (2-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (MD = .382, 95% CI: .179 to .586) was small (η² = .03). Moreover, the mean value of both categories indicated that dearth of obligation from management of HEIs is a hindrance for successful attainment of QA goals.

Table 3. Independent Samples t-test Regarding Inconsistent Policies of the Government

Category	n	M	SD	MD	t	p	95% CI		η ²
							LL	UL	
Public	204	3.70	.990	.223	2.333	.020	.035	.411	.01
Private	205	3.48	.942						

*p < .05, df = 407, η² = Eta squared

Significant difference was observed in the perceptions of Government sector (M = 3.70, SD = .990) and private (M = 3.48, SD = .942) faculty members' mean score regarding inconsistent policies of the government, t(407) = 2.333, p = .020 (2-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (MD = .223, 95% CI: .035 to .411) was small (η² = .01). Moreover, the mean value of both categories indicated that inconsistent policies of the government are an obstacle in the attainment of QA practices at HEIs.

Table 4. Independent Samples t-test Regarding QA staff Members have Inadequate time for the QA

Category	n	M	SD	MD	t	p	95% CI		η ²
							LL	UL	
Public	204	3.45	.999	.212	2.285	.023	.030	.394	.01
Private	205	3.24	.872						

*p < .05, df = 407, η² = Eta squared

Significant variance was observed in perceptions of Government sector ($M = 3.45, SD = .999$) and private ($M = 03.24, SD = 0.872$) faculty members' mean score regarding staff members have inadequate time to perform duties related to QA, $t(407) = 2.285, p = .023$ (2-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means ($MD = .212, 95\% CI: .030$ to $.394$) was small ($\eta^2 = .01$). Moreover, the mean value of both categories indicated that the QA personnel have an inadequate period of time allocated for the QA practices at higher educational institutions.

Table 5. Independent Samples t-test Regarding Lack of Training for Departmental Employees

Category	n	M	SD	MD	t	p	95% CI		η^2
							LL	UL	
Public	204	3.42	1.049	.197	1.980	.048	.001	.393	.01
Private	205	3.22	.963						

* $p < .05, df = 407, \eta^2 =$ Eta squared

The Independent-samples t-test exposed a noteworthy variance between perceptions of Government sector ($M = 03.42, SD = 01.049$) and private ($M = 03.22, SD = .963$) faculty members' mean score regarding lack of training for departmental employees, $t(407) = 1.980, p = .048$ (2-tailed). The amount of the differences in the means ($MD = .197, 95\% CI: .001$ to $.393$) was small ($\eta^2 = .01$). Moreover, the mean value of both categories indicated that they were agreed regarding lack of training for departmental employees.

Table 6. Independent Samples t-test Regarding Lack of Training for Administrators

Category	n	M	SD	MD	t	p	95% CI		η^2
							LL	UL	
Public	204	3.42	1.007	.178	1.818	.070	-.014	.370	.008
Private	205	3.24	.970						

$p > .05, df = 407, \eta^2 =$ Eta squared

The Independent-samples t-test exposed a minor variance in perceptions of Government sector ($M = 03.42, SD = 1.007$) and private ($M = 03.24, SD = .970$) faculty members' mean score regarding lack of training for administrators, $t(407) = 1.818, p = 070$ (2-tailed). The amount of the differences in the means ($MD = .178, 95\% CI: -.014$ to $.370$) was negligible ($\eta^2 = .008$). Moreover, the mean value of both categories indicated that dearth of training for administrators is an impediment in the attainment of QA practices at HEIs.

Table 7. Independent Samples t-test Regarding Deficient Support from Supporting Staff of the HEIs

Category	n	M	SD	MD	t	p	95% CI		η^2
							LL	UL	
Public	204	2.94	1.194	.317	2.914	.004	.103	.531	.02
Private	205	2.62	.995						

** $p < .01, df = 407, \eta^2 =$ Eta squared

The Independent-samples t-test revealed a significant difference between perceptions of Government sector ($M = 2.94, SD = 1.194$) and private ($M = 2.62, SD = .995$) faculty members' mean score regarding *deficient support from supporting staff of the HEIs*, $t(407) = 2.914, p = .004$ (2-tailed). The amount of the differences in the means ($MD = .317, 95\% CI: .103$ to $.531$) was small ($\eta^2 = .02$). Moreover, the mean value of both categories indicated that *deficient support from supporting staff of the HEIs* is not a barrier in QA practices at higher educational institutions.

Table 8. Independent Samples t-test Regarding Resistance from Faculty Members

Category	n	M	SD	MD	t	p	95% CI		η^2
							LL	UL	
Public	204	2.58	1.113	.183	1.801	.072	-.017	.383	.007
Private	205	2.40	.937						

$p > .05, df = 407, \eta^2 =$ Eta squared

The independent-samples t-test discovered trivial variance in the perceptions of Government sector ($M = 02.58$, $SD = 01.113$) and private ($M = 02.40$, $SD = .937$) faculty members' mean score regarding resistance from faculty members, $t(407) = 1.801$, $p = .072$ (2-tailed). The amount of the differences in the means ($MD = .183$, 95% CI: $-.017$ to $.383$) was negligible ($\eta^2 = .007$). Moreover, the mean value of both categories indicated that confrontation from faculty members is not a barrier in QA practices at higher educational institutions.

Table 9. Independent Samples t-test Regarding Resistance from Immediate Supervisor

Category	n	M	SD	MD	t	p	95% CI		η^2
							LL	UL	
Public	204	2.46	1.043	.007	.071	.943	-.190	.204	.000
Private	205	2.45	.987						

$p > .05$, $df = 407$, $\eta^2 =$ Eta squared

The results of independent-samples t-test in table 9 exposed a minor variance in the perceptions of Government sector ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.043$) and private ($M = 2.45$, $SD = .987$) faculty members' mean score regarding resistance from immediate supervisor, $t(407) = .071$, $p = .943$ (2-tailed). The amount of the differences in the means ($MD = .007$, 95% CI: $-.190$ to $.204$) was negligible ($\eta^2 = .000$). Moreover, the mean value of both categories indicated that conflict with direct boss is not a difficulty in QA practices at higher educational institutions.

Table 10. Independent Samples t-test Regarding Challenges from other areas of the HEIs

Category	n	M	SD	MD	t	p	95% CI		η^2
							LL	UL	
Public	204	2.81	1.063	.277	2.783	.006	.081	.473	.02
Private	205	2.53	.947						

$**p < .01$, $df = 407$, $\eta^2 =$ Eta squared

The independent-samples t-test proved that there is a significant variance in the perceptions of Government sector ($M = 02.81$, $SD = 01.063$) and private ($M = 02.53$, $SD = 0.947$) faculty members' mean score regarding resistance from other areas of the institution, $t(407) = 2.783$, $p = .006$ (2-tailed). The amount of the differences in the means ($MD = 0.277$, 95% CI: $.081$ to $.473$) was small ($\eta^2 = .02$). Furthermore, the mean value of both categories indicated that confrontation from other areas of the HEIs is not a hindrance in QA practices at higher educational institutions.

Table 11. Independent Samples t-test Regarding "Financial Incentives"

Category	n	M	SD	MD	t	p	95% CI		η^2
							LL	UL	
Public	204	3.45	1.111	.290	2.645	.008	.074	.506	.02
Private	205	3.16	1.106						

$**p < .01$, $df = 407$, $\eta^2 =$ Eta squared

The Independent samples t-test discovered a substantial variance amongst perceptions of the Government sector ($M = 03.45$, $SD = 01.111$) and private sector ($M = 03.16$, $SD = 01.106$) faculty members' mean score regarding lack of financial incentives for the department, $t(407) = 2.645$, $p = .008$ (2-tailed). The amount of the differences in the means ($MD = .290$, 95% CI: $.074$ to $.506$) was small ($\eta^2 = .02$). Furthermore, the mean value of both categories indicated that dearth of fiscal resources for the department is a barrier in the attainment of QA practices at HEIs.

Table 12. Independent Samples t-test Regarding Incompetence of Personals Nominated for QA at Institutional Level

Category	n	M	SD	MD	t	p	95% CI		η^2
							LL	UL	
Public	204	3.34	1.021	.265	2.556	.011	.061	.469	.02
Private	205	3.07	1.075						

$**p < .01$, $df = 407$, $\eta^2 =$ Eta squared

The Independent-samples t-test exposed a substantial variance amongst perceptions of Government sector ($M = 03.34$, $SD = 01.021$) and private sector ($M = 03.07$, $SD = 01.075$) faculty members' mean score regarding inability of the personals titled for QA at institutional level, $t(407) = 2.556$, $p = .011$ (2-tailed). The amount of the differences in the means ($MD = .265$, 95% CI: .061 to .469) was small ($\eta^2 = .02$). Furthermore, the mean value of both categories indicated that ineffectiveness of the individuals nominated for QA at university level is a barrier in the attainment of QA practices at HEIs.

Conclusion

Both the government sector and private sector faculty members disclose that sufficient resources are available in the HEIs but proper allocation and utilization of resources is a severe problem in HE sector of Pakistan. Processing of data is lacking for quality QA in both governments a private HEIs. There is no sharing of good practices within the universities and with other universities.

QA reports are not accessible to understudies, guardians and different partners in both public and private area HEIs.

The major limitations in the implementation of QA system in government HEIs are conflicting approaches of the administration, absence of budgetary assets assigned for QA, the commitment of the top administration, inadequate time and absence of motivators for the employees designated for QA. The foremost obstruction in the practice of QA in private HEIs is deficiency in remuneration and acknowledgment of efforts for the cause of QA.

The meager amount is spent on QA in both Government sector and private HEIs which is also a root cause in the ineffectiveness of QA system.

Recommendations

Training and refresher courses of the top, middle and lower level should be conducted about the implementation of Quality management should be imparted regularly by HEC. Incentives based on good practices of QA should be provided to the university, department and individual level. University authorities should directly be involved and responsible for QA practices.

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