

THE EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF FACTORS AFFECTING QUALITY STANDARDS IN TEACHING IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES: CASE STUDY OF SINDH UNIVERSITY JAMSHORO

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Abstract

Purpose: The main objective of this paper is to study the factors affecting quality standards in teaching in the higher education institutes. Higher Education Institutions play a pivotal role in disseminating knowledge and imparting quality education. In this regard it is essential for these institutions to know the ways and means to improve and upgrade learning environment. The purpose of this research study is to know the factors affecting the quality in teaching and to implement these in the universities.

Methodology/Sampling: Using Convenience Sampling Method, Sindh University Jamshoro and its campus at Badin have been selected as case study. Questionnaire was designed using five point Likert Scale. One hundred questionnaires were distributed among senior faculty members, academicians, scholars and administrators out of which eighty five were returned by the respondents. One Sample t test was used to analyze the data with the use of SPSS-22 software.

Findings: It is concluded that selected factors significantly affect quality standards in teaching in the higher education institutes. Results confirm highly significant relationship of initiatives taken with quality assurance system of the Higher education institutes. Research findings concluded that proper implementation of these initiatives in Higher Education Institutes may result in innovative and effective learning environment resulting in overall upgrade in ranking of the universities.

Practical Implications: The outcome of this research provides framework for enhancing quality standards in teaching in higher education institutes of Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Higher Education institutions are pragmatic organizations that deliver professional education to students in almost all countries of the world. These

institutions are primarily responsible for transmitting updated and revised knowledge, engage in practices of generating knowledge through research-based

environment, suggest applied research propositions and implications to organizations and society for the benefit of mankind. Rapidly increasing competition in academic institutions puts pressure on universities to improve performance and adopt innovative methods of producing and disseminating knowledge to students. Meanwhile objectives of imparting professional education and achieving individual excellence among competitive academic institutions will be achieved (Weber et al, 2007).

The British Standard Institution defines quality as totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs (BSI,1991). Quality dimension of service relates to educational institutes in which we study different characteristics linked as unified whole to constitute mechanism of quality assurance. To look into different aspects of quality we need to understand the system approach to education. The system notion denotes set of inter-related, inter-dependent and interacted sub systems that form a large unit or environment. The educational institutes refer open system that is highly dependent on the external sources, has environment which inputs some form of energy to the system that undergoes transformation and give output to the environment (Mishra, 2007).

Higher Education Commission (HEC) is a regulatory body of federal government of Pakistan for all the universities working under public and private sector in the country. The standards of quality education in Pakistan need to be improved for promoting knowledge based economy that is significant for economic development of a country. HEC is making concerted efforts to enhance the quality education of Pakistan at international standards by suggesting strict measures and monitoring educational practices in higher educational institutes. In this regard Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) was established in 2004 under the management of HEC which is responsible for promoting quality culture in universities. Among the HEC's initiatives for promoting quality education, Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs) have started its functioning in each public and private sector universities intended to achieve objectives in effective manner. Both Quality Assurance Agency and Quality Enhancement Cell

are working on capacity building program that includes awareness, design and development of policies, trainings for quality assurance programs and practices in universities. These initiatives are upgrading standards of education in public and private universities and uplifting goodwill and reputation of Higher education institutes (IIU, 2015).

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Quality education is prerequisite for achieving objectives in higher education institutes in an effective and holistic manner. There are different factors which affect quality in teaching in higher education institutes. Higher education commission plays pivotal role in disseminating knowledge and suggesting measures to improve higher education standards in public and private sector universities. It is obvious that public sector Higher education institutes are performing below the quality standards in imparting higher education. The problem in proposed research study is to know the factors affecting quality standards and to streamline and successfully implement these into higher education institutes.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the factors affecting the Quality Assurance of Higher Education Institutions.
2. To analyze the implementation of identified factors in the universities under investigation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many research studies have been conducted to know the initiatives taken for quality assurance in higher education of Pakistan. In this connection Khan (2010) studied that a variety of initiatives have been taken in Pakistan for improving the quality standards of higher education since 1947, but inconsistent behavior of political governments, discontinuity of policies and scarcity of resources were the major reasons for not producing desired results. However, with the establishment of Higher Education Commission in 2002, the inconsistent policies transformed into productive and effective plans with implementation strategies. Ultimately model of quality assurance was given which comprised of

measurable dimensions of quality that can help for continuous improvement.

In addition to similar research studies Akhter et al () explored current issues and practices of quality in higher education and found that allocating a large sum of funds is not sufficient but reinforcement of quality criteria is crucial for increasing the standards of education in universities. They further suggested that the role of HEC is pivotal in partnership with Higher Education institutes in achieving quality objectives. The universities should encourage research based environment and provide avenues of participation in national and international conferences, significant participation in internationally recognized research journals and work better for academic activities. This approach not only improves the performance of universities but also help in sustaining and developing economy of the country.

In connection with Quality Assurance, Kontio (2012) in his research studied the concept of educational initiatives and its subsequent impact on Quality Assurance of Higher Education Institutes. Highlighting the importance of educational initiatives, he discussed about Conceive-Design-Implement-Operate (CDIO), an initiative that helps students of Engineering universities to better obtain and understand their education which will result in development of innovative products and systems that have technical benefits to the society at large. Another initiative is IDEA League that refers to joint

education quality management in which principles are framed for specific programs while the EURO-ACE initiative gave general description of the graduates. This study concluded that by actively pursuing these initiatives, teaching quality may improve and credibility of Higher Education Institutions is likely to be enhanced.

Konting et al (2009) studied the Quality of academic programs offered by the University Putra Malaysia (UPM) and the level of students’ satisfaction from the teaching and learning environment and other facilities provided by the university. The research study identified four factors of UPM that include Human, System, Learning experience and Facilities. After collecting and analyzing the data it was concluded that final year students of UPM were moderately satisfied with the facilities and services and recommended the university to further improve their facilitated environment. The graduating student’s feedback gave insight to UPM for further improving the academic environment and university is focusing on student centered teaching approach and reviewing its curriculum by incorporating learning outputs and soft skills elements. The studies noted that continuous improvement and implication of these initiatives improved Human, System, and Learning experience and other Facilities.

On the basis of above literature, following initiatives (factors) were identified for possible implementation in higher education institutions in general and Sindh University Jamshoro in particular.

Table 1: Factors for possible implementation in HEIs

Initiatives		Literature cited
Leadership	L	Khan, 2010
Vision	V	Khan, 2010
Measurement & Evaluation	ME	Khan, 2010
Enhancement of Research Output	RO	Akhter et al, 0000
Student Satisfaction level towards services	SSL	Konting, 2009
No. of PhDs produced	PhD	Akhter et al
Top Management Commitment	TMC	Sila and Ebrahimpour, 2002
Employee Involvement & Empowerment	EIE	Sila and Ebrahimpour, 2002
Teamwork	TM	Sila and Ebrahimpour, 2002
Quality System Improvement	QSI	Khan, 2010

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The primary and secondary data sources are used to collect the data. The primary data is collected through close ended questionnaire which was developed using five point Likert Scale. Using convenience sampling method, Sindh University Jamshoro was selected as Case studies. One hundred questionnaires were distributed among senior faculty members, academicians, scholars and administrators out of which eighty five were returned by the respondents. The secondary data was collected through published literature and reports prepared by

quality enhancement cell of the universities. Literature review plus material available on different websites was taken as reference to support our research study. Data was analyzed using SPSS-22. One Sample t test was used to analyze the primary data. The Initiatives which were taken on the basis of careful literature review were properly analyzed in terms of their significance.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thesignificant results and explanation for identified factors are given below:

4.1 One Sample t-Test

Table 2: one sample t-Test

Variables:		t-Value	P
Leadership	L	41.816	.000
Vision	V	41.619	.000
Measurement & Evaluation	ME	50.331	.000
Enhancement of Research Output	RO	40.002	.000
Student Satisfaction level towards Services	SSL	27.984	.000
No of PhDs produced	PhD	42.767	.000
Top Management Commitment	TMC	36.742	.000
Employee Involvement and Empowerment	EIE	25.97	.000
Teamwork	TM	45.114	.000
Quality System Improvement	QSI	44.93	.000

The Sig. P value less than 0.05 means significant, t-value should be greater than 2.75 means result is significant.

which is less than 0.05 shows that it is strongly related with quality assurance of the higher education institutes.

3.2 Leadership

The factors are selected after careful study of literature which may improve the quality of education in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). In this connection, Khan (2010) stated leadership as major factor for achieving notable changes in HEIs. Khan (2010) highlighted that various other research studies related to quality assurance opt leadership as primary factor for improving the quality of HEIs. The filled questionnaires of our research study narrated leadership as significant factor for quality assurance of Sindh University Jamshoro. The data analysis showed leadership t test value is 41.81 which is greater than 2.5 and its significant p value is .000

3.3 Vision

Another factor highlighted by khan (2010) is ‘vision’ as futuristic approach for HEIs in achievement of formulated goals. Vision is reflected by the organizational practices, beliefs and values. It is clearly defined vision that suggests future course of action to HEIs. Majority of respondents in our research study also confirmed that well defined vision is necessary for quality improvement of Sindh University Jamshoro. The data analysis of responses collected through questionnaire show vision t test value is 41.61 which is greater than 2.5 and its significant p value is .000 which is less than 0.05

shows that it is strongly related with quality assurance of the higher education institutes.

3.3 Measurement and Evaluation

Among the factors affecting quality of HEIs, Khan (2010) discussed that to know the quality of performance, measurement and evaluation is necessary component. This factor helps to know the weaknesses and shortcomings in performance which ultimately highlight the efforts taken for achieving total quality management. It is imperative to define clearly the performance measures without which it is nearly impossible to conduct effective measurement and evaluation. Respondents of our research study also showed their consent to introduce effective measurement and evaluation in Sindh University. Results of data analysis shown measurement and evaluation t test value is 50.33 which is greater than 2.5 and its significant p value is .000 which is less than 0.05 shows that it is strongly related with quality assurance of the higher education institutes.

3.4. Enhancement of Research Output

To study the quality in higher education Khan et al emphasized the need to increase research output in the HEIs. They studied data showing research output of five years i.e 2006-2010 in public and private sector universities of Pakistan. HEC is sanctioning millions of rupees to faculty members of universities for increasing research output but still a lot of work is needed to motivate the teachers in working more for research activities. Our research study also analyzed the need of research output in Sindh University Jamshoro. Faculty members of the university agreed that initiative like enhancement of research output must be given proper attention and more research journals are needed to achieve desired research output. Results indicated research output t test value is 40.00 which is greater than 2.5 and its significant p value is .000 which is less than 0.05 shows that it is strongly related with quality assurance of the higher education institutes.

3.5 Student satisfaction level towards services

Konting et al ;(2009) conducted survey on the satisfaction level of graduating students of university of putra Malaysia. Data collection and analysis narrate moderate satisfaction of students and it was

suggested that adequate services and facilities may be provided to the students to increase their satisfaction level. The HEIs should effectively plan and monitor the resource allocation and they must analyze the strengths and weaknesses in transition of delivering the services. The inadequate provision of resources to students of Sindh University Jamshoro is also a problem of grave concern and indeed a barrier in quality enhancement of education. Respondents of this research study agreed with existence of this problem and insisted to take bold steps in this regard. Results of data analysis show student satisfaction level t test value is 27.98 which is greater than 2.5 and its significant p value is .000 which is less than 0.05 indicates that it is strongly related with quality assurance of the higher education institutes.

3.6 Number of PhDs produced

Among the initiatives taken for quality assurance in HEIs, Akhter et al also highlighted the number of PhDs as impact factor in quality assurance. Number of PhDs, among faculty members in universities of Pakistan is very low. More than 75% faculty members not highly qualified and to tackle this situation HEC is increasing the grant of foreign scholarships to the faculty members of universities. The same problem also existed in Sindh university Jamshoro. Respondents of our research study emphasized the need for increasing the number of PhDs and they considered it as contributing factor in the quality enhancement of the university. Results of data analysis show number of PhDs t test value is 42.76 which is greater than 2.5 and its significant p value is .000 which is less than 0.05 indicates that it is strongly related with quality assurance of the higher education institutes.

3.7 Top Management Commitment

Sila and Ebrahimpour (2002), studied different articles related to total quality management and identified different factors affecting the quality of organizations. They overviewed seventy six articles and extracted different factors of total quality management. Top management commitment is one of those factors which was carefully studied and its role in uplifting quality of organizations was confirmed. Respondents of our research study also acknowledged the importance of top management

commitment. Results of data analysis show top management commitment t test value is 36.74 which is greater than 2.5 and its significant p value is .000 which is less than 0.05 indicates that it is strongly related with quality assurance of the higher education institutes.

3.8 Employee Involvement and Empowerment

To study the factors affecting quality of organizations, Sila and Ebrahimpour (2002), also noted the integrated role of employee involvement and empowerment and considered it as key factor in achieving total quality management. Our research study also analyzed the level of employee involvement in their respective jobs of Sindh University. It was noted from the respondents that employee's level of involvement in jobs also affect the quality and employees should also be empowered to play their role in decision making activities. Results of data analysis show employee involvement and empowerment t test value is 25.97 which is greater than 2.5 and its significant p value is .000 which is less than 0.05 indicates that it is strongly related with quality assurance of the higher education institutes.

3.9. Teamwork

To study the factors affecting total quality management Sila and Ebrahimpour (2002), also highlighted the significant role of teamwork in different organizations. Respondents of our research study also acknowledged that teamwork play pivotal role in achieving academic and administrative objectives of the university. Results of data analysis show teamwork t test value is 45.11 which is greater than 2.5 and its significant p value is .000 which is less than 0.05 indicates that it is strongly related with quality assurance of the higher education institutes.

3.10 Quality System Improvement

Khan (2010) studied quality system improvement as factor for quality assurance in higher education institutes. This system works on the basis of parameters set in process control procedures and these procedures are described in quality manual for quality system of an organization. Respondents of our research study also acknowledged the dire need of developing quality system improvement in the sindh university jamshoro. Results of data analysis

show quality system Improvement t test value is 44.93 which is greater than 2.5 and its significant p value is .000 which is less than 0.05 indicates that it is strongly related with quality assurance of the higher education institutes.

4. CONCLUSION

This research concluded significant reinforcement of quality assurance initiatives for improvement of education in universities of Pakistan. Research findings further suggest that proper implementation of these initiatives in Higher Education Institutions may result in innovative and effective learning environment that may also positively relates to ranking of universities. Higher Education Commission, as funding and controlling authority, monitors and assesses the universities' performance and suggests all HEC recognized institutes in the country to improve quality of disseminating knowledge and produce effective human capital. Furthermore initiatives studied like Leadership, vision, Measurement and Evaluation, Enhancement of Research output, Student's satisfaction level, increasing number of PhDs, Top Management Commitment, Employee involvement and Empowerment, Teamwork and Quality System Improvement are crucial factors for ensuring the quality education in HEIs in general and in Sindh University Jamshoro in particular.

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