

Higher Education Quality Management: A Study Of Public And Private Sector Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Quality management has been a very important factor in higher education institutions for all stakeholders because the economic success of any country is determined by the quality of its educational system. This research work has been carried out mainly to assess the factors responsible for higher education quality management in public and private sector of Pakistan's higher education institutions and also highlights the differences in the implementation of quality management approaches in public and private sector universities.

This study emphasized that the quality management of higher education can be measured with the initiatives that have been taken at the institutional and governmental level. For this, a mixed-method approach was used. Firstly, a comprehensive questionnaire consisting of several items was used comprising of institutional level higher education quality management initiatives, government level higher education quality management initiatives and the differences in the quality management approaches. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with employees from both public and private sector universities in Lahore, Pakistan. Initially, the scope of factors contributing to higher education quality management at the institutional and government level was discovered and then the differences (if any) in the implementation of higher education quality management approaches were analysed in public and private sector higher education institutions to determine the quality of their education system.

Key Words: Quality Management, Higher Education Institutions, Public/Private Sector.

INTRODUCTION

Quality management in higher education is a long-standing debate that has given rise to a flux of approaches and methods (Tsiligiris & Hill, 2021). Quality is a basic criterion that determines the social meaning of education. The notion of quality encompasses the economic, social,

cognitive and cultural facets of education. It covers all vital areas of activity, including the quality of staff, educational programs, training of students, and structure of HIEs (Jamoliddinovich, 2022). Quality in higher education is very important for the development of human

resources and social empowerment, and is a key factor in global competition.

Education is considered as an urgent and intimate need for the social and economic development of a country. The connection between education and economic growth is abrupt and direct (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2010). The global expansion, privatization, localization and diversification of higher education have generated a high level of concern about quality in the configuration of education, both in developing and developed countries (Mok & Marginson, 2021). The quality of lifestyle, the availability of employment opportunities in the domestic or international market, the forms of conflict management and the relationship with the global market will eventually be determined by the content level and quality of education of any country.

The development of knowledge-based economies depends to a large extent on the participation of higher education institutions in research and innovation. For the social and economic growth of developing countries, public and private sector higher education institutions play a crucial role because all social mentors, religious scholars, entrepreneurs and other professionals such as engineers, doctors, lawyers and industrialists get their knowledge from the universities, who are at the service of the nation (Trow, 2005). The concern of quality assurance of higher education institutions has gained considerable attention and importance among academies of higher education institutions (HEIs) and accreditation agencies (Gulden, Saltanat, Raigul, Dauren, & Assel, 2020). Pakistan is in the phase of economic development; along with other sectors, the education sector is also striving for growth and sustainability. The higher education system in Pakistan has many shortcomings that need to be corrected, such as the lack of quality management, the structure of institutions, and the knowledge gaps between intercultural education systems to increase the effectiveness of the existing higher education system (Murtaza &

Hui, 2021). The higher education system is still unstable in terms of reliability, assurance, quality management, relevance in educational policies, reforms and their implementation (Jahangir, 2008). The Pakistani government has recognized the importance of higher education and has sought to increase the participation rates of universities. In Pakistan, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) has initiated several steps to improve higher education institutions. HEC has carried out many reforms, improvements in terms and conditions and revision of rules and regulations. These rules and regulations are imposed on all universities in Pakistan, whether the public or private. For coordination, monitoring and evaluation activities in universities, HEC also introduced the ranking matrix criteria in 2012. This ranking criterion evaluated universities based on the quality of their higher education systems. This classification criterion monitored and evaluated the quality of higher education based on the different standards.

This study covers all mandatory issues related to quality management in higher education institutions. The outstanding characteristics of higher education institutions were based on the eleven performance evaluation standards (five year HEC framework). With these eleven standards, two new features (QEC and NAC) of the universities are also included in the research work. Thus, a total of thirteen characteristics are analysed for the quality management framework of higher education. The main objective of this research work is to answer the following:

- To what extent the higher education quality initiatives at institutional and government level are affecting higher education quality management in public and private sector universities of Pakistan.

- To identify the differences in implementation of higher education quality management practices in public and private sector universities as directed by HEC.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marmolejo and Puukka (2006) stated that public and private higher education institutions have a notable contribution to the cultural, social and economic development of a country. To succeed in high economic development, additional educated human capital is mandatory in the prevailing globalization era (Islam, Ghani, Kusuma, & Theseira, 2016), moreover, education and economic development are two sides of a coin (Alwi, Zaman, Rauf, Farrukh, & Parveen, 2021).

In Pakistan, the HEIs are growing with the passage of time and the private institutions are also increasing rapidly (Rizwan, Azad, Ali, & Mahmood, 2016). According to the World declaration article of United Nation on Higher Education (2001) states, "Quality in higher education is a multidimensional concept, which should embrace all its functions, and activities: teaching and academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, services to the community and the academic environment". Watty (2006) argued that quality can also be defined in various dimensions, such as maintaining and improving the quality of undergraduate education, postgraduate education, human resources, and knowledge generation. In the views of Lomas (2004), quality assurance and quality enhancement are the two major approaches used as preventive measures to improve overall quality. The issues of quality in education need to be considered from pedagogical, economic, sociological, customer and management perspectives (Garira, 2020). Public and private

sector higher education institutions are facing strong pressure from both stakeholders and education regulatory body to compliance with the quality standards.

HEC is a monitoring body, therefore it is mandatory for all public and private higher education institutions to comply with its reforms and policies. HEC exhibits an indigenous yet multinational accepted quality assurance program. "Quality" has been high on HEC's agenda since its establishment. For this purpose, the Medium Term Development Framework (MTDF) was the first effort based on Vision 2030, which is the strategic framework approved by the Government of Pakistan to meet the current and forthcoming challenges through accumulation of knowledge and collective competency. Quality is considered to be the "core" of all activities at MTDF. Quality assurance is a continuous process that never ends and allows a high level of confidence in the process, the system and the elements. As in other sectors, the quality of higher education is a key issue for stakeholders such as students, teachers, industry, parents, and government (Kim & Lee, 2006). The quality of higher education matters because all public and private higher education institutions are accountable to students, HEC, society, and each other (Warn & Tranter, 2001). Bayraktar, Tatoglu, and Zaim (2008) emphasized that administrative and academic processes for HEIs should be measured, evaluated, controlled and improved regularly for quality compliance.

Governing bodies use various indicators to monitor the results of universities, as well as to impose checks and balances. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report on indicators (2008), it was stated that performance indicators provide the necessary data on the quality of performance of universities through public and external communication to stakeholders. HEC took initiatives such as formulation of

accreditation councils, development of quality curricula, and ranking of institutions based on performance to encourage HEIs to adopt an effective and quality-assured system (HEC 2008). Additionally, the HEC reports (2002-2008) emphasized the following well-integrated goals for quality issues:

- Quality assurance and enhancement in the universities.
- Internationally comparable threshold quality criteria, parameters and standards.
- Plan and processes to ensure quality assurance.
- Proper mechanism of self- assessment and accreditation of institutions to maintain basic quality criteria.
- Revision of curricula and Awareness program for public to join new quality discipline.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For development of theoretical framework and hypotheses, Higher Education Quality Management (HEQM) initiatives at institutional level will be addressed through:

1. Neo-Institutional Theory
2. Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award

In second section Higher Education Quality Management (HEQM) initiatives at government level will be addressed through:

1. ISO: 9000 for education
2. Performance Evaluation Standards for HEI's

Higher Education Quality Management (HEQM) initiatives at Institutional Level

Neo- Institutional Theory:

For public and private higher education institutions, maintenance of quality in higher

education is critically important. Neo-institutional theory focuses on universities beliefs, norms, organizational structures, globalization and decentralization (Li & Du, 2016).

Institutional Perspective:

Institutional theory elaborates that “change in educational organizations was seen almost exclusively as a process of ever growing ‘isomorphism’ of educational forms brought into conformity with the norms, values, and technical lore institutionalized by the state and the professions”(Meyer & Rowan, 2006, p. 3). Different approaches have been used to access student learning and engagement in higher education. The transformation of a student depends on several factors such as prior knowledge, intellect, learning methods, pedagogy and institutional structure (Ashwin, Abbas, & McLean, 2014). The evaluation covers the effective maintenance of quality and academic level at the institutional level (Harvey, 2005). There is a need for due legitimacy for the higher institutions to respond in accordance with the legal standards set by HEC. HEC proposed 11 standards for conformity of excellence in education (Bilal, Shah, Qureshi, & Khan, 2014). Organizational structures (public and private higher education institutions) must be in accordance with HEC standards. To provide quality in higher education, public and private higher education institutions efficiently responded to the standards provided by HEC. The institutional response to government reforms is a basic concept of neo-institutional theory.

Malcolm Baldrige (Asseburg & Homberg) National Quality Award:

Dimensions of quality initiatives at institutional level are further supported by Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for education sector. MB and related scoring guidelines are powerful

assessment instruments that will help leaders of educational organization identify strengths and key areas for improvement.

In 1999, Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award was modified for education sector (Ruben, Lehr, & DeAngelis, 2000). According to Seymour (1995), Malcolm Baldrige is the best for higher education to bring continuous excellence in higher education institutions. Seven total categories of Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award that is supporting theoretical framework of the current study:

1. Leadership:

This category includes key features of leaders and their responsibilities to create sustainable environment. In all public and private higher education institutions, academic and administrative leaders are committed to create quality culture.

2. Strategic planning:

This category is defining vision & mission statement that explain how university can develop strategic and quality related objectives. It also examines that academic and administrative procedures are well aligned with quality.

3. Students, stakeholders & market focus:

It addresses how universities seek to understand the demands of current and future students, alumni and stakeholders. This category examines how higher education institutions focused on quality of students, preferences of stakeholders, knowing their opportunities and threats by competitors.

4. Measurement, analysis & knowledge management:

This category examines how public and private higher education institutions collect, organize, manage, deploy, and enhance their data assets. Knowledge management and

information technology are directly linked to each other.

5. Faculty and staff focus:

This category elaborates on how public and private higher education institutions can motivate their faculty to bring a culture of quality to the university. It also examines how the faculty aligns its goals with the mission and vision of the university.

6. Process Management:

This category examines the processes and procedures of university that includes facilities in university, resources, design of curriculum. This category enrich in all work units and departments of higher education institutions.

7. Organizational Performance:

This category examines university performance. Evaluation must be done according to performance standards. Proper evaluation procedure is very essential. Performance measurement of faculty, administrative and top management is done under this category. After proper evaluation next step is acknowledgement and giving reward. Well performer employees should be awarded with bonuses and financial rewards.

All the categories of MB are same as “performance evaluation standards for public and private higher education institutions” that is proposed by HEC.

Higher Education Quality Management (HEQM) initiatives at Government Level ISO-9000:

It is another dimension of this study that might be supported with ISO in higher education. ISO 9000 in higher education was established to bring quality in higher education by maintaining effective management system. This management system was means to develop a series of standards of performance. According to Hoyle (2005), the revised version of ISO standards

focused on continuous improvement and excellence in higher education.

Main purpose of these ISO standards are to bring confidence in professions, and efficiency in public and private higher education institutions (Singh & Sareen, 2006). ISO 9000 is currently being implemented in public and private higher education institutions around the world for quality management, accountability, and various other purposes. Proper documentation, accreditation of work units and quality cell management are three basic focuses of ISO 9000.

Performance Evaluation Standards for HEI's

The purpose of HEC establishment was to facilitate the public and private sector higher education institutions to become high level of excellence in education sector. HEC has defined a systematic process through Medium Term Development Framework (MTDF). Public and private sector higher education institutions are trying to put efforts to obtain higher education quality edge and to get recognition. HEC set standards of performance for academic activities. These standards are according to international standards. HEC tries to focus on quality and continuous improvements.

For external quality development the Quality Enhancement Cell and National Accreditation Councils were established. All these efforts help to bring continuous improvement in Public/private sector higher education institutions. In continuation of the effort, HEC prepare "Ranking Matrix Criteria" for top ten

public/private higher education universities. Now all the efforts of Public/private sector higher education institutions are to get position in top ten universities by achieving all critical components of "Ranking Matrix Criteria".

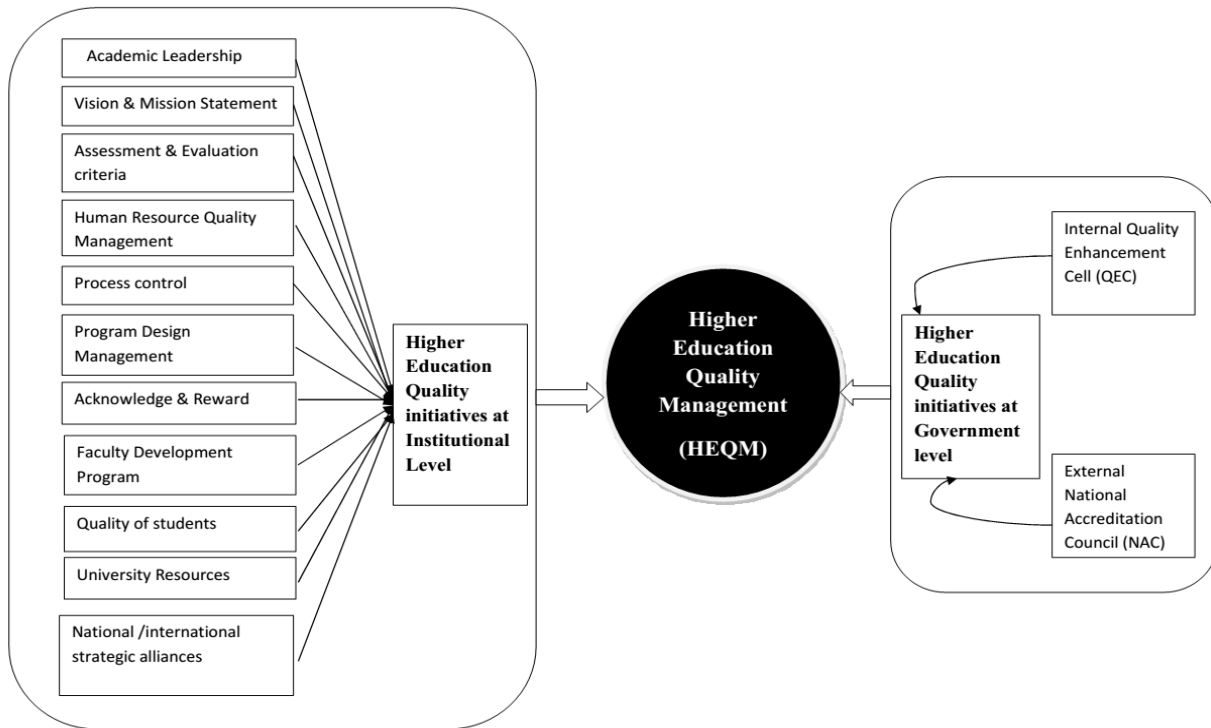
HEC has developed quality assurance agency (QAA) to bring quality in national context with the help of international best practices. For external quality assurance HEC develop National Accreditation Councils (NAC) & Quality Enhancement Cells (QEC) for internal quality assurance. These two factors are considered as a government initiatives taken for higher education quality management in public/private higher education institutions of Pakistan. Performance Evaluation Standards for public/private higher education institutions" and "Ranking Matrix Criteria" are two efforts by HEC to bring assure quality in public/private higher education institutions. All public/private higher education institutions, of Pakistan are now trying to get position in top ten universities of Pakistan. Their focus is on implementing performance evaluation standards and criteria of ranking matrix to assure higher education quality in this competitive environment.

Hypothesis Formulation: The aforementioned discussion leads to the formulation of following hypothesis:

H1: Higher Education Quality Management is dependent upon higher education quality initiatives at institutional and government level.

H2: Public and Private higher education institutions differ in their higher education quality management implementations.

Conceptual Framework:



METHODOLOGY

Mixed method research design was used in this study. The target population includes employees of selected public and private sector higher education institutions in Lahore, Pakistan. The original and primary data from public and private higher education institutions with good response rate was collected through questionnaires. Then, interviews were conducted and the target population of the interviews included Deans of faculties, Directors of institutions, Heads of departments and Directors of QEC. In this study, two universities from the public sector and two from the private sector were selected for data collection. From these universities, a sample of 320 employees was selected for the collection of quantitative data and a total of eight interviews were conducted from universities in the public and private sectors for the collection of qualitative data. Convenience sampling was used for quantitative data collection to apply statistical tools for analysis. Two public sector and two private sector universities in Lahore were selected for the purpose of the study. Purposive

sampling was used for qualitative data collection. According to this sampling technique, data is collected from respondents according to their designation and specialized knowledge.

The Likert scale was used in the questionnaire to collect data on the quality management of higher education. The questionnaire had closed- ended questions. For this, a total of 460 questionnaires were distributed to universities in the public and private sectors. After multiple follow-ups, only 330 questionnaires were duly completed and returned showing a response rate of almost 71% and among them 320 questionnaires were suitable for analysis. For the qualitative study, an interview guide was finalized prior to data collection and rapport was established with the respondents. A total of eight semi-structured interviews were conducted, four from the public sector and four from private sector universities. Qualitative interviews were recorded and transcribed cautiously before analysis. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS software, while qualitative data was calculated

using an interpretive approach and themes were extracted.

Demographic information includes gender, sector, department, designation, work experience, qualification of respondents as shown in table 1.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS:

Table 1: Characteristics of Sample

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	145	47.0
Female	175	53.0
Sector		
Public	170	52.8
Private	150	47.2
Departments		
Business Studies	45	14.1
Arts And Humanities	90	28.0
Social Sciences	137	42.9
Natural Sciences	48	15.0
Designations		
Dean/Directors	10	3.10
Professors	21	6.60
Associate Professors	22	6.90
Assistant Professors	92	28.80
Lecturer	126	39.40
Administrative Staff	49	15.30
Working Experience		
1-5 years	170	53.1
6-10 years	82	25.6
11-15 years	55	17.2
16 years or more	13	4.1
Qualification		
PhD	19	5.90
M-Phil/MS	131	40.9

Masters	46	45.6
Others	24	7.6

Person Correlations Coefficient:

Pearson Correlation Coefficient was measured to determine strength of relationship between all variables. All the variables including higher education quality management initiatives level at institutional level (Academic Leadership, Mission & Vision Statement, Assessment & Evaluation Criteria, Human Resource Quality Management, Process Control, Program Design Management, Acknowledgement & Reward,

Faculty Development Program, Quality of Students, University Resources, National and International Strategic Alliances) and higher education quality management initiatives at the government level(QEC, NACs) are positively correlated to higher education quality management. Table 2 shows correlations among all variables.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Higher Education Quality Management	1													
Academic Leadership	.12	1												
Mission & Vision Statement	.14	.89	1											
Assessment & Evaluation Criteria	.24	.34	.4	1										
Human Resource Quality Management	.29	.26	.20	.03	1									
Process Control	.61	.36	.10	.01	.08	1								
Program Design Management	.28	.06	.10	.36	.59	.16	1							
Acknowledgement & Reward	.46	.48	.30	.33	.90	.11	.68	1						
Faculty Development Program	.18	.44	.20	.22	.11	.92	.15	.13	1					
Quality of Students	.24	.01	.20	.03	.04	.53	.05	.03	.84	1				
University Resources	.32	.16	.60	.00	.00	.06	.64	.14	.09	.48	1			
Strategic Alliances	.52	.07	.10	.04	.12	.48	.54	.01	.09	.01	.79	1		
Quality Enhancement Cell	.35	.43	.20	.56	.23	.02	.04	.42	.06	.09	.08	.02	1	

National Accreditation Councils (NACs)	.82	.12	.15	.07	.16	.40	.00	.08	.13	.06	.42	.65	.18	1
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Correlations are significant at $p < 0.01$ level.

Table 3: ANOVA^b

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig.
1 Regression	2040.201	13	156.939	54.873	.000 ^a
Residual	875.749	306	2.862		
Total	2915.950	319			

a Predictors: 11 variables (institutional level) 2 variables (governmental level)

b Dependent variable: H-E-Q_MGT

All 11 independent variables of higher education quality initiatives at institutional level and 2 independent variables of higher education quality initiatives at government level have the

significant impact on dependent variable (higher education quality management) as demonstrated by p value that is 0.000 (e. $F = 54.837$, ($p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$)).

Table 4: Beta Coefficients

Variable	Beta Coefficient (β)	P-Value
Academic Leadership	1.021	$P < 0.05$
Mission & Vision Statement	2.556	$P < 0.05$
Assessment & Evaluation Criteria	3.454	$P < 0.05$
Human Resource Quality Management	2.067	$P < 0.05$
Process Control	4.684	$P < 0.05$
Program Design Management	2.878	$P < 0.05$
Acknowledgement & Reward	1.715	$P < 0.05$
Faculty Development Program	4.330	$P < 0.05$
Quality of Students	1.841	$P < 0.05$
University Resources	2.112	$P < 0.05$
Strategic Alliances	2.415	$P < 0.05$
QEC	3.002	$P < 0.05$

NACs	1.202	P<0.05
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The β values for higher education quality initiatives at institutional level (Academic Leadership, Mission & Vision Statement, Assessment & Evaluation Criteria, Human Resource Quality Management, Process Control, Program Design Management, Acknowledgement & Reward, Faculty Development Program, Quality of Students,

University Resources, National and International Strategic Alliances) and higher education quality initiatives at government level(QEC & NACs) are positive and significantly associated with dependent variable (Higher Education Quality Management).

Regression Equation

$$Y = b_0 + b_1 (X_1) + b_2 (X_2) + b_3 (X_3) + b_4 (X_4) + b_5 (X_5) + b_6 (X_6) + b_7 (X_7) + b_8 (X_8) + b_9 (X_9) + b_{10} (X_{10}) + b_{11} (X_{11}) + b_{12} (X_{12}) + b_{13} (X_{13})$$

$$Y = 5.339 + 1.021 (X_1) + 2.556 (X_2) + 3.454 (X_3) + 2.067 (X_4) + 4.684 (X_5) + 2.878(X_6) + 1.715 (X_7) + 4.330(X_8) + 1.841 (X_9) + 2.112 (X_{10}) + 2.415 (X_{11}) + 3.002 (X_{12}) + 1.202 (X_{13})$$

Higher education quality initiatives at institutional level and higher education quality initiatives at government level have positive beta values indicating that increase in any one unit of

higher education quality initiatives both at institutional and government levels will significantly increase higher education quality management on average.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.836(a)	.700	.687	1.69172	1.618

a. Predictors: (Constant), NATNL_A_C, PR_DESGN_MGT, QUALTY_E_CELL, ASSE_EVLUTN, ACK_REWRD, UNIVRSTY_RESOURCES, PROC_CONTROL, AC_LD, QLTY_STDNT, NATNL_INTR_STRTGC_ALLANCES, VI_MISSION, HRQM, FCLTY_DVLP_PROGRAM

b. Dependent Variable: H_E_Q_MGT

The value of R depicts the strength of relationship between two variables and value of R in the current research is 0.836 which means that there is strong positive relationship between predictors and dependent variables. The coefficient of determination R^2 represents the explanatory power of the model and its value is 0.700 describing that 70% variance in dependent variable is due to independent variables.

Comparison between Public and Private Sector Quality Implementation Initiatives

The second objective of this research is the comparison between public and private HEI’s for higher education quality management. For this purpose independent t-test is used for examining the differences between the means of two independent groups (public and private sector universities). Levene’s test for equality of variances tests the hypothesis that two sector

variances are equal. In this research Levene statistics is $F=0.494$ and the level of significance is large $p > 0.05$. The result from the analysis ($df = 318$, $t = 0.116$, $p < 0.01$) indicates that there is low significant difference between public and private sector universities for higher education quality management. The mean value indicates

Table 6: Group Statistics

Sector	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.Error mean
H_E_Q_MGT	170	17.9059	3.10611	.23823
PUBLIC	150	17.867	2.93707	.23981
PRIVATE				

that public sector university response significantly high for HEQM ($M = 17.9059$) then private sector ($M = 17.8667$). HEC of Pakistan is now playing a watchdog role for all type of public and private sector higher education institutions (Naveed & Suleri, 2022).

Table 7: Independent Sample t-test

H_E_Q_Mgt	Levene's test Equality of variance		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Differenti ation	Std.Error Differentiatio n	95%confidence interval of the difference	
Equal variances assumed	.494	.483	.116	318	.009	.0392	.3392	Lower	Upper
Equal variances not assumed			.116	316.4 6	.009	.0392	.3380	-.6258	.7042

The public and private sector universities have different features and characteristics, facing different challenges in adopting quality management practices and following HEC policies for quality in higher education. Private sector higher education institutions claim to meet HEC requirements and provide higher education with the highest quality and efficiency. Therefore, it seems clear to carry out a comparative study.

Qualitative Data Analysis:

In order to capture the complete description of quality management initiatives that can be responsible for promoting and improving quality in higher education institutions, 8 interviews were conducted with university's employees from the public and private sectors. Interviews were conducted with Deans of Faculties, Directors of Institutions, Heads of Departments and Director of QEC. Respondents were contacted through written and telephone requests for interviews.

All interviews were audio recorded and digitally transcribed.

In response to interview questions about the extent to which higher education quality initiatives at the institutional and government level is affecting higher education quality management in public and private sector universities in Pakistan, the following themes were emerged.

Leadership

Findings from the responses of the interviews revealed that the roles and responsibilities of public and private sector universities' leaders matter in several ways. Vision of leadership should establish clear perception, principles, policies and approaches to continually improve process of teaching and learning. It is achieved through process control on all financial, physical and human resources. Such quality control on processes can improve HEIs towards excellence.

A Head of the department said:

“The role of Leader is inevitable in the quality management of higher education because leadership today is based on applied methods, delegation of responsibilities, decentralization in decision-making and, above all, compliance with quality initiatives in universities.”

Again a Director endorses the role of leadership in curriculum development and evaluation as:

“Educational leadership in general and the teacher as an educational leader in particular, must develop learning materials, curricula, change programs and effectiveness in class activities.”

All the respondents are of the view that, a leader must communicate the benefits of higher education quality management to all other members of the organization. It is the leader's responsibility to assign resources for total quality management, allocate time for various training programs and appreciate employees who come up with various improvement ideas and strategies

which would help the HEIs. Top management/leaders of the university carry out the review of the Quality Management System in the aim of its continuous usefulness, adequacy and effectiveness. This review includes the estimation of the possibility of the improvement and the need of changes in the quality management system, quality policy and realization of the objectives contained in it.

Performance Management

Performance of all processes should be measured and evaluated regularly for continuous improvement and to optimize program design effectiveness in HEIs. Faculty is a fuel of any institution, so maintenance of quality in faculty is very significant for all public/private higher education institutions. One of the respondents, the Director of QEC in a public university, expressed his views in this regard:

“Performance management enables institutions to improve their overall performance by managing the performance of their human resources to achieve goals and results. Performance management strategies must be aligned with the overall strategy of the institution to achieve the purported quality both in the institution and in the employee.”

A Director of an institution serving in a private sector university stated that:

“The evaluation of the performance of the faculty as educators will also focus on their informed contributions to improve the quality of their institutions' educational processes, curricula, courses, and assessment programs.”

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) put a lot of efforts to get recognition from the Higher Education Commission by meeting performance standards to align academic activities in accordance with the policies of the Commission. The Higher Education Commission have developed and improve policies in order to

further enhance the standards according to international practices and development. Performance evaluation standards, ranking matrix criteria, QEC and national accreditation councils are few attempts of HEC to improve quality in both public and private sector universities.

Institutional Performance Evaluation (Stipek)

Institutional Performance Evaluation (Stipek) is a quality review process conducted by Higher Education Commission (HEC) to improve performance of universities. In IPE, the performance of universities is evaluated against eleven standards of institutional quality as defined in IPE Manual. Most of the respondents revealed that HEC has monitoring role due to the main funding source to the public university in particular. HEC has developed different methods for evaluating the quality of academic and administrative staff, processes and procedures. One of the Head of Department elaborates it:

“...through compliance of standards in IPE by HEC serve as a watchdog to quality management compliance. We found no other way but to follow the standards for survival.”

Rewards and Faculty Development

Acknowledgement, reward and faculty development have shown positive relation with the quality of higher education. It is important to reward and recognize people. A Dean of a Faculty stated that:

“The purpose of employee development is to encourage and reward existing faculty for developing their teaching skills in key areas of their expertise. The faculty’s reward system must be fit appropriately to the demand of the moment and this will help employees to give back in terms of quality in their profession.”

Rethinking the Curriculum

Transformation of the curriculum into dynamic one will bring quality in higher education institutions. A Director of a well-known higher education institution said:

“The quality of higher education institutions can be improved by improving the quality of a study program. It must be internationally recognized, up-to-date, progressive and innovative”.

One of the Head of department endorses the view as:

“The program must be designed in such a way that it can promote a competency-based curriculum and have differentiation.”

Some Immediate Improvements

There is a need of major changes and modifications in higher education structure owing to the globalization (Ota, 2018). Due to globalization of education, competition among institutions has increased and need for creating quality as more and more critical element for higher education has emerged (Elken & Stensaker, 2018). A Director ponders her view in this regard as:

“Globalization breakdowns hurdles and connects institutions, making institutions around the world visible to each other. It helps enable knowledge flows, enhances international learning and creates new opportunities for graduates at all levels and incomes. This will add value to the quality management in educational institutions”

The second research question is to identify the differences in the implementation of higher education quality management practices in public and private sector universities as indicated by HEC. The participants tried to compare the implementation practices in public and private

universities. The comparison is also based on the availability of written rules and policies, the distribution of tasks, faculty workload, the promotion procedure and the evaluation system/appraisal system.

Almost all the participants acknowledge that quality has to be maintained irrespective of the sector. HEC is providing funding and support to enhance the quality of higher education institutions to make them fully functional. However, in addition to other factors, achieving efficiency and effectiveness in higher education depends on creating the appropriate framework the functioning of higher education institutions could only be possible through adequate funding.

Availability of Funds and Grants

The university's resources include human, physical, infrastructural, technical, and financial resources. Interview responses emerged that university resources are like fuel for the system to run smoothly. Private sector universities generate their own funds, they do not impose a burden on the budget of government agencies, but at the same time public sector universities are more likely to implement modifications to their system as directed by HEC because they depend on government funds.

One of the participants said:

“The challenges faced by enhancing quality in higher education require more flexible governance and robust funding systems. Financing is recognized as the most essential in the educational sector to achieve its goals. The private sector generates its own funds; however, the public sector seeks grants and funds for policy implementation.”

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Quantitative findings of the results show that higher education quality initiatives at government and institutional level have a significant impact on higher education quality management

(HEQM). Difference in quality culture in both public and private HEI's investigated by hypothesis-II (difference between public/private HEI's for implementing HEQM) reveal that public sector universities are more liable to take initiatives and respond according to HEC requirements due to reliance on funds. So there is little difference in implementation of HEQM between public/ private sector universities of Lahore, Pakistan. Qualitative data from interviews has found the role of leadership, performance management, institutional performance evaluation, rewards and faculty development, rethinking the curriculum, adequate funding and some immediate improvements can be more helpful in implementing quality compliance.

The continuous enhancement of quality in higher education is contingent to the construction of the content of the educational programs, the creation of favourable working conditions for the teaching staff, as well as the construction of a joint and effective association between the university administration and the faculty members. The leadership role is very important to the success of academic programs and administrative performance. Universities in the public/private sector have a clear perception, principles and approaches for the continuous improvement of academic and administrative staff. Performance at all levels is regularly measured and evaluated to optimize program design management in all public/private HEIs. Strategic alliances and university resource management system make the role of HEIs more diversified and constructive for the environment in which they operate.

HEC's quality assurance framework requires the establishment of QECs and NACs in public and private higher education institutions in Pakistan. The accreditation system is an important part of the quality assurance program (Aburizaizah, 2022). But, it is very weak in Pakistan and needs to be improved. The deficiency of quality culture can be eradicated by providing access to

international conferences, training and workshops and also following the foreign universities' higher education quality standards. Performance standards should be helpful in creating a culture of quality research and learning. These must be modified according to international educational standards. The higher education quality management framework needs to be properly established in a tangible time frame so that HEC can measure universities objectively and a transparent report made available to all stakeholders in a quantifiable way.

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