



Factors influencing Quality Assurance through Semester System at University Level

Hafeez Ullah,

Lecturer, Department of Educational Training, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan
ahmadbinhafeez@gmail.com

Saba Arshad

Ph.D Scholar, Department of Education, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan
drsba22@gmail.com

Muzammila Akram

Assoc. Prof, Department of Educational Training, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan
muzammila.akram@iub.edu.pk

Waqas Mahmood

Assistant. Prof, Department of Educational Training, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan
waqas.mahmood@iub.edu.pk

Abstract

This study aims to determine factors affecting quality assurance through the semester system at the university level in Pakistan. The study is descriptive in nature and survey method for data collection was used. The sample of 120 teachers was compressed of 120 (males 60, females 60) teachers of Ghazi University, University of Education Lahore D.G Khan campus and Post Graduate College. The researcher adapted the questionnaire of different researchers consisting of 15 statements for the participants and used SPSS 24 to compute means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions after collecting data. In semester system courses remained incomplete due to non-regularity of the classes by the teachers as perceived by the majority of the students of university level. This study expands on a variety of established factors influencing quality assurance through semester system at university level.

Keywords: *Quality assurance, Semester system, Higher Education, Pakistani Universities.*



Introduction

Over the past several decades, the significance of the quality assurance of higher education on a global basis has increased. Numerous nations have adopted quality assurance methods, top management commitment, continuous improvement, involvement of staff, training & education, customer focus and communication, to ensure transparency and continuing service delivery enhancement (Mahmood, Ismail, & Omar Fauzee, 2020). Numerous groups have utilized quality assurance for a variety of goals. Quality assurance assists students in selecting universities and moving around. In higher education, it is a major issue to enhance quality assurance through semester system (Calingo, 2017). According to the literature, quality assurance is extensively utilized in higher education to achieve systemic change and development. Annual and semester system are running parallel in Pakistan. Both have some unique characteristics. According to the (Bashir et al., n.d.) annual and semester system are two types of exams prevailing and monitored by Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan; annual expands over one year and semester system over six months. Mahmood et al., (2020) narrate that semester system of examination is accepted by the students and teachers in terms of marks obtained, personality development and flexible environment for learning. In the semester system, the academic year is divided into two terms in Pakistan. All of this is possible with appropriate planning and administration throughout the educational year (Ministry of Education, 2017). There are many factors that effect on quality assurance through semester system like Stress of submitting assignments, presentations, hectic activities of mid term and final exams, insufficient facilities, inadequate budget, poor feedback mechanism, poor administration system and teacher biasness. Around the turn of the century, Pakistan established a formal system for ensuring the quality of higher education institutions and degree programs. The national quality assurance organization, meso-level accrediting bodies, and micro-level institutions make up Pakistan's three-tiered higher education quality assurance system, which has been in operation for more than 15 years (Riaz & Qureshi, n.d.). Accreditation is the foundation of Pakistan's quality assurance system; hence all educational institutions and degree programs must be recognized (Yusuf, 2018). As a result, Pakistan has established institutional and programs qualification, which consists of four steps: self-evaluation by educational institutions, external assessment, and recognition of accreditation outcomes by the accrediting board of the agency (Anh & Hayden, 2017).



After learning about the efficiency of the Quality Assurance system in the business world, educators have begun to pay more attention to it. In education, quality assurance refers to the degree to which an institution continually improves to the satisfaction of its students, parents, and community (Mahmood, Ismail, & Omar Fauzee, 2019). Plato and Aristotle may have been the first to use the term quality to express what makes something exceptional, despite the fact that the concept may have existed in antiquity (Britannica, n.d.). Over time and through discussion, Professor Edward Deming and other quality specialists may have been recognized as pioneers in the field of quality assurance (Deming, 2000). The United States, the United Kingdom, and Europe are also familiar with Deming's quality assurance theory, which is believed to have originated in Japan and was backed by him. Future leaders can be fostered, a healthy work environment can be established, and the academic and intellectual landscape can be broadened through a high-quality development program with a long-term focus. Therefore, it is crucial to the national, regional, and worldwide growth of the economic and social system. Ahmad, Altaf, Mahmood, & Muzammal (2022) assert that quality was introduced by Deming, who popularized quality assurance. Evidently, quality assurance existed in numerous societies throughout the world at various times. But it did not garner international attention, especially in the communication industry, until the advent of new technologies which increased global awareness of civilizational challenges.

Today's universities have a quality culture, which increases the employability of graduates (Brown, 2004). In Pakistan's emerging quality assurance system, (Nguyen, Marshall, & Evers (2021) observed that international accreditation benefits institutions, the government, instructors, students, and educational administrators. Studies discovered that after accreditation, the institution's academic programs, training activities, teaching and support staff, students and student aid, and facilities improved significantly. They attended higher education.

Insufficient study has been conducted on the responsibilities of various stakeholders in the implementation procedures for quality assurance, including those of institutional leaders, faculty members, and quality assurance professionals. This study sheds light on quality control and accreditation issues in Pakistani higher education. This research looks into the practices of academic, administrative, and student quality assurance in higher education through semester system.



Statement of the Problems:

Quality assurance seems a remarkable issue not only in the world but also in Pakistan especially at a higher level. The examination system, in general, has a significant influence on quality assurance. Both teacher and students' performance are judged and improved by quality assurance (Mahmood & Ismail, 2022). This research is designed with the necessity to explore the challenges and issues of semester system in Pakistan's Punjab region. As a result, the primary goal of this research was to identify the factors affecting the quality assurance through semester system at university level. The study will be a great asset for future research about quality assurance issues with its measures.

Significance of the Study

This pragmatists' endeavor unquestionably enables institutions of higher education to recognize evaluation and advance their manageable quality assurance through semester system. This study project would aid in establishing and implementing a baseline for quality assurance in Pakistan's public educational institutions. Quality assurance activities encourage accountability and development while establishing confidence in higher education institutions' performance

Objectives of the study:

- To analyze the current quality assurance level regarding semester System Education at university level.
- To explore various factors affecting the quality assurance through Semester System at university level.
- To find out the potential steps that may be taken to improve quality assurance at University Level.

Literature Review

Numerous definitions and conceptualizations of quality assurance have been provided in the relevant literature. The goal of quality assurance is to maintain and improve the quality, accessibility, and efficiency of educational programmed and procedures. Quality assurance in higher education is defined by Mahmood & Ismail (2022) as a continuous assessment strategy that includes measuring, assessing, assuring, controlling, and improving the efficacy of higher education institutions and programmed. Quality control can also be used to promote



accountability and growth. Other methods of ensuring quality include self-evaluation, public and unbiased peer review, audits, reviews, and inspections. The procedures used by any educational institution should ensure that it meets its own objectives as well as the requirements of its field which are referred to as government quality assurance (Mahmood, Ismail, Hafiz, et al., 2021). A third-party organization examines an educational institution or its programs to see if they meet certain criteria or requirements. Quality assurance methods, according to the European Commission (2015) can include both external and internal activities of an educational institution. National or regional rankings, as well as statewide or international standardized examinations, are examples of external systems. Such internal methods may be used by educational institutions to evaluate themselves, their employees, and their students.

The Purposes of Quality Assurance

Quality assurance objectives differ from one institution to the next. Higher education institutions may priorities equitable resource distribution, societal and government accountability, external quality standards compliance and institutional performance evaluations or institutional learning, the progress of their academic and managerial operations. Quality assurance activities encourage accountability and development while establishing confidence in higher education institutions' performance. When quality assurance is properly implemented, it gives information to ensure higher education institutions and the general public of the quality of the institution's operations as well as guidance and ideas on how the institution might improve what it does. Quality assurance, in a nutshell, attempts to enhance teaching and learning in order to achieve the greatest possible student results (Mahmood, Ismail, & Mdzalli, 2022).

Quality Assurance Mechanism

There are different techniques to classify quality assurance systems, according to Harvey and Newton (2004) these are accreditation, evaluation, internal and external moderation.

Accreditation is the most widespread and most important for higher education systems.

Accreditation is the procedure through which an impartial organization analyses an institution's overall quality or the quality of a specific academic course to publicly acknowledge that the institution has satisfied certain preset minimum requirements or criteria. This procedure normally culminates in the issuance of a status (a yes/no determination), recognition, and sometimes a time-limited operating license. Prior research has shown the benefits of quality



assurance. Universities have often enhanced computer lab equipment and software or implemented new instruments to manage scientific and technological tasks.

Factors Affecting Quality Assurance at University Level

The followings are the greatest visible factors which impact on the quality assurance.

Leadership

Mahmood et al., (2022) concluded that bad management of institutions by administrators harms the quality of education. This issue also impacts on every educational institution in Pakistan. It is the first and foremost responsibility of the authority to provide good governance and management in educational institutions to meet the international standards of higher education. According to Mahmood & Ismail (2022) Pakistan's local and national education regulating agencies are weak and ineffective due to their political system and lack of democracy. The oversight of management will compromise quality assurance in the nation's institutions. The education system in Pakistan is antagonistic to both students and instructors. Management team is responsible for coordinating all related divisional activities. Teacher quality-assurance training, educational conference, research seminars and co-manages the workflow of the department with others and performs a comprehensive evaluation, sanctions and terminations which are governed by established regulations.

Implications for Policy

The sector's ability to execute policies that promote excellent education is plainly limited by the sector's seeming low allocation (Dangara & Chinyere, 2021). The university received assistance from QA in sustaining and increasing its educational quality. The students choose colleges and institutions based on their rating, recognition, and reputation. It standardizes education and guarantees a certain degree of quality. In addition to accreditation, students anticipated a good degree program to justify their financial commitment. This lends credence to discovery that students appreciate better education. Policy changes often with almost every change in a nation's leadership, resulting in inconsistency in education policies (Mahmood, Ismail, & Omar Fauzee, 2021)



Insufficient facilities and Training

An effective teaching and learning strategy at university level necessitates the use of qualified teachers. There is presently no standard for instructors at this level in Pakistan, and many lecturers lack instructional pedagogy knowledge. Teachers must possess not just the required credentials, but also experience and a genuine willingness to teach English. According to McLean and Ashwin (2016), effective curriculum training for teachers, students, university administrators, and charter is essential. Before graduating, students must demonstrate the learning objectives, criteria, and essential skills outlined in the curriculum. Second, quality assurance programs must find a balance between accountability and improvement. Quality assurance enhances responsibility. It is obvious that untrained teachers have poor teaching methodology which impacts negatively on quality education.

Inadequate Budget

Regardless of the status of the nation's education system, funding has been a critical concern throughout Pakistan's history. The dramatic reduction in recurring funds for the higher education budget for fiscal year 2022-2023 has put the fate of Pakistan's public institutions in jeopardy. In Pakistan, the money allocated to higher education is insufficient. Many university scholars' research projects are not finished due to insufficient funding. According to Khan and Bhatti (2016), the federal ministry of education received a small sum for higher education, which does not cover the expenditures of Pakistan's public institutions.

Poor Feedback Mechanism

Feedback mechanism and other quality assurance activities simply revealed dissatisfaction with the curriculum or learning experience (Becket & Brookes, 2008). Even though they understood that the institution needed time to implement some of the suggestions, the participants felt that providing feedback was a waste of time if their expectations were not met. It is observed that students like criticizing professors because they realise that not everything can be fixed right away. It is impolite to criticise them when the students know they are making an effort. They may believe that disrespecting teachers will ruin their lives. They are told to be quiet and to follow the rules.



Inadequate Institutions

As a consequence of the country's inadequate institutions and social structure, chronic instability and conflicts continue to pose a threat (Le, Bui, & Uddin, 2022). Bandits' criminal operations, which include kidnappings, murders, etc., have increasingly targeted educational institutions over the years (Yusaf, n.d.). Notable incidents that have interrupted school and university activity have been documented. It is remarkable that inadequate educational institutions cause poor quality in education.

Methodology

The data from the respondents was analyzed by using SPSS 24. The questionnaire was developed and adapted by the researcher and sent to the target participants. The researcher collected primary data on factors affect quality assurance through the semester system at the university level. The simple means of the questionnaire as well as their standard deviations and frequencies which indicated the factors under investigation were examined. The whole sample included university teachers from Pakistan's three main public institutions.



Table 1

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied
1	Semester system only contribute to pass the examination with least interest the quality.	3.16	2.93	60%	22%	18%
2	In semester system students ignore textbooks and relay on notes and invalid data from online sources.	3.10	2.78	54%	22%	24%
3	There is chance of biasness from teacher side through semester.	3.05	2.90	56%	25%	18%
4	Mid and final term exam assessment have unjustified time frame in semester system which impact on quality assurance.	3.08	2.58	48%	20%	32%
5	Semester system is highly expensive which cannot be afforded by intelligent poor class individuals.	3.13	2.71	53%	20%	27%

To explore the factors, affect quality assurance through the semester system at the university level in practical life, approximately 60 % of the participants agreed with the statements “Semester system only contribute to pass the examination with least interest the quality 18% disagreed with mean 3.16, “In semester system students ignore textbooks and relay on notes and invalid data from online sources” 54% agreed and 24 % disagreed with mean 3.10. “There is chance of biasness from teacher side through semester” 56% agreed and 18% disagreed with mean 3.05. “Mid and final exam term assessment have unjustified time frame in semester system which impact on quality assurance.” 48% agreed and 32 % disagreed with mean 3.08. “Semester system is highly expensive which cannot be afforded by intelligent poor class individuals. 53% agreed and 27% disagreed with mean 3.13.



Table2

No.	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied
1	It is difficult to complete the recommended course on time in semester system.	3.10	2.92	58%	24%	18%
2	Students' grievances are increased through semester system.	2.98	2.76	50%	26%	24%
3	In semester system, awarding grades is unreliable.	2.86	2.77	47%	31%	22%
4	Semester system promotes rote learning.	3.09	2.78	54%	22%	24%
5	Hectic examination system creates anxiety and stress.	3.04	2.70	50%	23%	27%

To explore the factors, affect quality assurance through the semester system at the university level in practical life in above table statements. "It is difficult to complete the recommended course on time in semester system". 58% agreed and 18% disagreed with mean 3.10. "Students' grievances are increased through semester system." 50% agreed and 24% disagreed with mean 2.98. "In semester system, awarding grades is unreliable" 47% agreed and 22% disagreed with mean 3.76, "Semester system promotes rote learning". 54% agreed and 24% disagreed with mean 3.295. "Hectic examination system creates anxiety and stress." 50% agreed and 27% disagreed with mean 3.69



Table 3

No	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied
1	Inadequate classroom impacts on quality assurance.	3.21	2.61	52%	15%	33%
2	Curriculum is infeasible to achieve professional success.	3.08	2.73	52%	22%	26%
3	Capacity gaps through semester system ignore quality standard	2.95	2.96	55%	30%	14%
4	Poor feed mechanism impacts on the quality standard.	3.17	2.78	56%	19%	25%
5	Insufficient budget of public universities create hurdle to ensure the quality of education.	2.87	2.82	49%	31%	20%

To explore the factors, affect quality assurance through the semester system at the university level in practical life in above table statements, “Inadequate classroom impacts on quality assurance. 52% agreed and 33% disagreed 3.21. “Curriculum is feasible to achieve professional success after finishing a curriculum at this university” 52% agreed and 26% disagreed with mean 3.08. “Capacity gaps through semester system ignore quality standard .55% agreed and14% disagreed with mean 2.95” “Poor feed mechanism impacts on the quality standard. 56% agreed and 25%disagreed with mean 3.17 Insufficient budget of public universities create hurdle to ensure the quality of education” 49% agreed and 20%disagreed with mean 2.87 disagreed with mean 2.87.



Conclusion

This research article investigated the significance and factors affecting quality assurance through the semester system at the university level. It was found that co-curricular activities are neglected, rote learning is encouraged, feedback mechanism is unjustified, and semester system is gender biased. Factor affecting quality assurance at university level include policy, untrained staff, insufficient facilities, inadequate budget, poor feedback mechanism, and inadequate institution.

Recommendations

- This study recommended to increase education funding, staff training and national learning environment security.
- Enhancing the fundamental infrastructure of universities and colleges.
- The measures should be taken to minimize favoritism and biasness in semester system in Pakistan.
- Teachers should ensure quality while awarding sessional marks in semester system.
- Co-curricular activities are crucial to a student's personality development and it is responsibility of teachers to encourage learners to actively participate in such activities.
- The university teachers should adopt interactive methods to ensure the quality education.
- Advanced and reliable assessment and evaluation techniques should be introduced to make semester system more effective and reliable.

References

- Ahmad, M., Altaf, S., Mahmood, W., & Muzammal, S. (2022). An Analysis of Quality Education in Public and Private Colleges of District Bahawalpur: Teachers' Perspective, 56–65.
- Anh, L. T. K., & Hayden, M. (2017). The Road Ahead for the Higher Education Sector in Vietnam. *Journal of International and Comparative Education*, 6(2), 77–89.
<https://doi.org/10.14425/JICE.2017.6.2.77>
- Bashir, A., Asif, U., Nawaz, F., Shams, F., Gul, S., Ali, F., & Kp Pakistan, C. (n.d.). A study of student's perception about semester system practices in public sector universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. *Journal of Xi'an Shiyou University, Natural Science Edition*, 18(11). Retrieved from <http://xisdxjxsu.asia>
- Becket, N., & Brookes, M. (2008). Quality management practice in higher education - What



- quality are we actually enhancing? *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, 7(1), 40–54. <https://doi.org/10.3794/JOHLSTE.71.174>
- Brown, R. (2004). Quality assurance in higher education: The UK experience since 1992. *Quality Assurance in Higher Education: The UK Experience Since 1992*, 1–201. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203416327>
- Calingo, L. M. R. (2017). Strengthening quality assurance and performance excellence in Thailand's higher education. Retrieved 15 March 2023, from <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/301211505458389418/strengthening-quality-assurance-and-performance-excellence-in-thailand-s-higher-education>
- Commission, E. (2015). Comparative study on quality assurance in EU school education systems - Publications Office of the EU. Retrieved 18 March 2023, from <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1428f97f-b048-4465-8f5b-36e920875ce4>
- Dangara, U., & Chinyere, M. G. (2021). Quality Assurance in Nigeria's Education System: Prospect and Challenges. *EduLine: Journal of Education and Learning Innovation*, 1(2), 76–83. <https://doi.org/10.35877/454ri.eduline422>
- Deming, W. E. (William E. (2000). *The new economics : for industry, government, education*. MIT Press. Retrieved from <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/new-economics-industry-government-education>
- Harvey, L., & Newton, J. (2004). Transforming quality evaluation', Quality in Higher Education. *Quality in Higher Education*, 10(2), 149–165. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1353832042000230635>
- Khan, G., & Bhatti, R. (2016). The impact of higher education commission of pakistan's funding on the collection development budgets of university libraries. *Bottom Line*, 29(1), 12–24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BL-06-2015-0008>
- Le, T. H., Bui, M. T., & Uddin, G. S. (2022). Economic and social impacts of conflict: A cross-country analysis. *Economic Modelling*, 115, 105980. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ECONMOD.2022.105980>
- Mahmood, W., & Ismail, S. N. (2022). Total Quality Management Practices in Malaysian and Pakistani Public Universities using SWOT Analysis. *Journal of Social Sciences Review*, 2(4), 220–226. <https://doi.org/10.54183/JSSR.V2I4.80>
- Mahmood, W., Ismail, S. N., Hafiz, D., Khan, M. A., Muslim, M., & Zalli, M. (2021). Implementation of Total Quality Management Practices in preschool education during the Pandemic situation of COVID-19 in Pakistan. *Jahan-E-Tahqeeq*, 4(3), 55–62. Retrieved from <https://jahan-e-tahqeeq.com/index.php/jahan-e-tahqeeq/article/view/295>
- Mahmood, W., Ismail, S. N., & Mdzalli, M. M. (2022). Leadership In Quality Management (TQM) Based On Principles Of Common And Islamic Perspective On The Concept Model Of Continuing Development. *Harf-O-Sukhan*, 6(1), 208–217. Retrieved from <https://harf-o-sukhan.com/index.php/Harf-o-sukhan/article/view/314>



- Mahmood, W., Ismail, S. N., & Omar Fauzee, M. S. (2019). *The Mediating Effect of School Climate with Total Quality Management on School Performance in Pakistan*. *International Journal of Management Sciences and Business Research* (Vol. 8). Retrieved from <http://www.ijmsbr.com>
- Mahmood, W., Ismail, S. N., & Omar Fauzee, M. S. (2020). The influence of total quality management, school climate and job satisfaction on school performance in government schools in Pakistan. Retrieved from <https://etd.uum.edu.my/id/eprint/8900>
- Mahmood, W., Ismail, S. N., & Omar Fauzee, M. S. (2021). Impact Of Leadership Style and School Climate On Staff Performance In The School. *Harf-O-Sukhan*, 5(3), 30–45. Retrieved from <https://harf-o-sukhan.com/index.php/Harf-o-sukhan/article/view/79>
- McLean, M., & Ashwin, P. (2016). The Quality of Learning, Teaching, and Curriculum. *New Languages and Landscapes of Higher Education*, 84–102. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ACPROF:OSO/9780198787082.003.0004>
- Ministry, E. (2017). Education in Pakistan. Retrieved 15 March 2023, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Pakistan
- Nguyen, C. H., Marshall, S. J., & Evers, C. W. (2021). Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation Implementation in Several Countries across the World and Lessons Learned for Vietnam. *Vietnam Journal of Education*, 5(1), 11–17. <https://doi.org/10.52296/VJE.2021.27>
- Plato and Aristotle: How Do They Differ? | Britannica. (n.d.). Retrieved 18 March 2023, from <https://www.britannica.com/story/plato-and-aristotle-how-do-they-differ>
- Riaz, Z. B., & Qureshi, H. (n.d.). QUALITY ASSURANCE MANUAL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN.
- Yusaf, K. (n.d.). TIMELINE: Seven years after Chibok, mass kidnapping of students becoming norm in Nigeria | Premium Times Nigeria. Retrieved 19 March 2023, from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/469110-timeline-seven-years-after-chibok-mass-kidnapping-of-students-becoming-norm-in-nigeria.html?tztc=1>
- Yusuf, Y. A. (2018). National Assembly and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria Fourth Republic: Functions and Operations (1999-2015). *EUROPEAN ACADEMIC RESEARCH*. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/35765020/National_Assembly_and_Democratic_Consolidation_in_Nigerias_Fourth_Republic_Functions_and_Operations_1999_2015_