

Quality Education in Pakistan: A case study of Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan and its affiliated colleges

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Abstract: The present research was a case study that compared a public sector university and its affiliated postgraduate colleges in sense of quality education. The population of the study comprised of BS students of the university who had completed four semesters, their teachers and other concerned authorities. The sample of the study was taken by purposive sampling technique and comprised of 19 participants including BS students, their teachers, department heads, director admission, principal and controller of examinations. The primary data was collected through unstructured interviews conducted face to face using android mobile for recording and secondary from official records. The data was transcribed and analyzed using NIVIVO-II program, the data was coded and grouped as per themes, conclusions were drawn and recommendations made. **Finding** of the study were: un-conducive learning environment, infrastructure, missing orientation programs, unsatisfied students, less developed faculty, use of traditional pedagogy, lack of training, equipped laboratories, libraries, funds and resources at the college. The study found unsatisfied students, lack of monitoring of academic activities and funds, and nepotism as the issues at the university. **Recommendations:** the study recommends proper monitoring of colleges, development and extension of general and academic facilities, training of teachers, use of modern pedagogy and provision of proper funds and extended role of QECs for colleges. The study also recommends counseling, monitoring of students, extended latest academic facilities, enhancement of grants and strong complaint cells.

Key words; Quality Education, BS Program, Abdul Wali Khan University

1.1 Introduction

The basic and main sector of society revolves around education. A meaningful and quality education (QE) is essential for a society's development, since it leads to true success and progressive growth. Progress and prosperity are built on a foundation of creativity and quantitative easing. Learners are taught skills and become beneficial to society as a result of QE. Quality learners, learning environments, teachers, material, educational delivery processes, and outcomes are all required by the QE system (UNICEF, 2000). These aspects are interconnected and work together to generate a skilled worker. Quality educational institutions are those that have the highest levels of excellence. The QE need quality learners who want to learn from the source. Quality is built into the manufacturing process

to ensure that the products meet the predetermined specifications (Khan, 2010). Institutions must choose a curriculum that is of high quality and can give the most up-to-date information. It was a feature of the process or product that ensured that it was suitable for its intended use (Crosby, 1980). For optimal motivation and knowledge intake, the teaching process necessitates a favorable environment. It will be meaningless without good professors. Teachers who are well-educated and committed to their mission are required for QE. Teaching is an art, according to Fizza, Ahmed, and Arain (2020), and great teaching is dependent on teachers' passion, dedication, and devotion to their students. Finally, the outcomes or the obtained-product may be of superior quality. The outcomes in QE depend upon the above all elements; weakness in any part or element may reduce the quality.

Provision of QE is the ultimate goal of universities (Shaheen, 2020) and QE, training and service are major guiding values of HEIs (Regassa, 2013). The standards of QE can be led by the curriculum, the institution policy, or, any combination of these. In Pakistan every University tries its best to provide world class QE. The universities are equipped with modern laboratories, libraries and linked with e-libraries of the world, as well as the infrastructure and faculty development areas have done a lot of work. The higher education commission (HEC) has been supervising and assisting the teaching, and quality of research activities. All the universities affiliated with HEC have established quality enhancement cells (QECs) to maintain internal assessment of quality and quality assurance agency (QAA) works at head office of HEC Islamabad; which collectively make efforts to enhance the quality of education and research as well as faculty development of HEIs. The world ranking of universities includes only a few public sector universities of Pakistan. Pakistan has been doing their best to enhance the quality of education and equalize the education standards with the international world. The 4 years degree program is fully implemented from 2020 and 2 years degree is declared as associate degree. There is a great relationship between BS program and QE. BS programs aim to develop high quality of education to promote skills, competencies and knowledge (Verccio, 2014). QE brings out the opportunities for BS learners and emerging techniques of research and material development in the field of education. The Government of Pakistan has been funding to universities through HEC and directly in the form of grants to improve infrastructure as well as research activities. The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhawa (KPK) has been making efforts and the 4 years degree program is also implemented at public as well as private sector colleges. Despite the fact that Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan (AWKUM) has the highest ranking in Pakistan and is ranked 510th in the world, there are still holes to be filled. It must improve its quality in order to give pupils with world-class education. As a result, it was important to examine the system and identify problems that needed to be addressed in order to improve the quality of education at the BS level at AWKUM and its affiliated colleges.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The inquiry is focused on the analysis of education quality at the BS level at Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan and its affiliated colleges. The study looks on the many aspects of QE at AWKU Mardan and GPGC Nowshera in relation to the quality of education metrics. Because this is a case study of both schools, the research looks into the institutions, their educational quality, and potential areas for improvement.

1.3 Research Questions:

1. How does the University's and its associated colleges' various learning environments effect students' learning?

2. How do instructors' pedagogical approaches differ, and how do these practices affect educational quality?
3. What percentage of the curriculum is covered, and how does that content contribute to students' learning?
4. What role does the availability of resources play in the quality of education at the university and its affiliated colleges?
5. What are the many types of assessment and how do they affect the quality of students' learning?

1.4 Research Design & Methodology

This is the descriptive, qualitative research based on case study approach. It is a qualitative research hence grounded theory (GT) was followed in methodology (Given, 2008). The researcher collected data in depth to answer the research question "What" and conducted interviews to answer the "how". The researcher examined and compared the onsite situation of the two situations in sense of provision of QE. The population of the study comprised of all the students of BS program of both institutions who had completed their 4 semester studies up to 2021; their teachers, head of departments of AWKUM and GPGCN, director admissions AWKUM, principal GPGCN and the controller of examinations. The researcher used purposive sampling technique which according to Gay, L.R (2008) was the most suitable for case studies. The sample was taken from 2 departments of each AWKUM and GPGCN. It consisted of 4 students of each institution, 4 heads of departments, 4 teachers, director admission AWKUM, principal of GPGCN and the controller of examinations. Hence, the total sample size included 19 participants. The researcher developed open ended interview schedules separately for each group of respondents to collect primary data: which was gathered by conducting face to face interviews using android mobile. The secondary data was obtained from annual reports, brochures, and official records etc. The validity and reliability of the research tool was checked accordingly. The data was processed using NVIVO-11 software program, where interpretive paradigm was used and the results were drawn according to themes i-e research questions.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

Grounded theory (GT) gets its name from the fact that the final outcome, or theory, is based on data (Given, 2008). It is a social psychology analysis of a social situation. In the development of GT, it compares relevant settings on a regular basis by recording and coding data, comparing it to existing data, and sorting out the element. In addition, GT provides a specific mechanism for content analysis. The eleven steps in the process, according to Cohn, Manion, and Morrison (2007), are: defining research questions, defining the population, sampling, context of document generation, defining units of analysis, conducting coding and categorizing data, data analysis, summarizing, and making speculative inferences. Because the current study was a case study based on interviews, the researcher adhered to the positivist GT.

1.6 Quality Education

GoP (2016) defines QE as "education that is significant, relevant, and mindful of the needs of individuals and society as a whole." As a result, a definition of great education must encompass all elements that contribute to making education meaningful, relevant, and empowering. Healthy and intended learners, a safe, healthy, and inclusive institutional environment, a relevant and student-centered curriculum; textbooks and learning materials, processes through trained teachers, using student-centered teaching approaches and learning outcomes, and skills and attitudes that foster positive participation in society are all included in these components. QE is a complicated system with political, cultural, and economic implications. The landscape of QE is defined by a balanced interaction

of the many elements. Stakeholders evaluate education quality in terms of outcomes, but input and process should also be evaluated for efficiency, effectiveness, excellence, and social justice. As a result, simply the product may be used to assess quality; other elements such as input and process can also be assessed. Education could be delivered by qualified teachers who are well-versed in their subjects and have received training in how to deliver good instruction. With all of the market values and required standards, the input, including the content and teaching process, might be outstanding. Another key factor is social fairness; high-quality education benefits all communities and avoids injustice. Every group of people, without exception, has the right to develop and progress in the world of competitive education. These aspects may combine to create a high-quality product known as excellent education. According to Thareja (2017), education has primarily focused on three definitions of quality: fitness for use or purpose, conformance to requirements-customer requirements (employability, outputs), and the totality of characteristics of an entity that bear on its ability to satisfy stated and implied needs (ISO, 8402). Without quality learners, learning environments, study materials, teaching learning processes, and outcomes, education cannot be of high quality (GoP, 2016). Quality indicators, on the other hand, can help us understand quality as a holistic process.

1.7 Quality Indicators

There is no comprehensive and final definition of quality education; hence it may be measured by quality indicators.

1.7.1 Learning Environment

According to UNESCO (2014), the learning environment is generated by teaching and learning materials, infrastructure, general and academic facilities, and human resources and is an input dimension of quality education. The conducive learning environment provides sufficient resources and facilities to meet the students' physical and psychological needs. A good learning environment is one that is healthy, safe, and protective, as well as gender sensitive (GoP, 2016). It treats everyone equally, regardless of gender or religious affiliation; everyone has the right to an education regardless of where they live.

1.7.2 Quality Content

Quality content is sufficient learning content that includes the most up-to-date knowledge and appropriate learning material that outlines how to learn such abilities. Flexibility, balance, relevance, scope, and social and religious values may all be characteristics of well-developed educational content. It must be relevant to societal requirements and appealing to students. It could be designed in such a way that learners can learn the information in a simple and straightforward manner. QC is the epicenter of current, up-to-date knowledge on the subject at hand. It is chock-full of useful information and steers clear of superfluous details. The material is presented in a comprehensible manner, and the activities or practical parts may be repeated. It must be unique and provide more information in addition to meeting market needs. The curriculum articulates both lifelong learning and holistic development competencies; it serves as a link between education and development (Stabback, 2016). To have a QC, high-quality materials must adhere to strict guidelines, be academically rigorous and knowledge-rich, and promote research-based, effective instruction (Hopkins, 2019)

1.7.3 Quality Learners

Good health and nutrition, early childhood psychological experiences, regular attendance for learning, and family support are all characteristics of great learners (UNICEF, 2000). Nutrition was discovered to have an indirect impact on academic achievement (Popkin, Adair & Ng, 2012). Physical fitness is defined as a learner's good health and sufficient diet that meets his needs. Nutrition is the

process of providing energy to the body in order for it to complete numerous tasks in daily living (Khan, A., et.al. 2018). A learner's physical condition is responsible for a fresh mind eager to study. Learners with educated parents and a positive learning environment are better prepared to learn. Furthermore, children that participate in good learning activities during their early years develop mentally. It has been noticed that pupils who are prompt and consistent in their studies receive higher grades than those who are interrupted. Exposure to curriculum, or the opportunity to study, has a considerable impact on a child's achievement, and exposure to curriculum comes through attending school (Fuller, et.al 1999). Similarly, a learner's familial support has a direct impact on his performance. The learner's parents may not be able to support him academically, but they can financially support him, supervise his conduct, and provide study facilities and an environment at home. According to Khursheed (2014), kids with superior schooling and family support receive higher grades and have more up-to-date knowledge in their field of study.

1.7.4 Quality Process

Implementations of conventional course providing methods, as well as teaching procedures that met quality criteria, were included in the quality process (QP). It is also determined whether tasks, such as courses and activities, are finished on time. According to GoP (2014), the QP can be measured in terms of classroom activities, pedagogical techniques, disciplinary and classroom management strategies, institution-stakeholder interactions, teacher development, and ICT use. Modern pedagogy, a welcoming classroom climate, discipline, and teacher behavior all contribute to a high-quality teaching-learning process. However, it was contingent on the teacher's competence, feedback systems, professional development, and support for student-centered learning, as well as the teachers' belief in their pupils' ability to learn. (Madani, 2019).

1.7.5 Quality Outcomes

The results or product acquired following quality education, method for QL in a quality setting are known as quality outcomes (QOs). People assess quality by looking at the production or the product on the market. The product is compared to other similar products available on the market for the same price. Biggs and Tang (2011) define QOs as students' expected demonstrated learning outcomes that are aligned and related to the program's learning objectives and specific learning experiences. As a result, quality learning outcomes are the learned abilities that society expects of a student following graduation from any HEI. These outputs are expected and assessed based on the learner's input, which is provided through a defined and high-quality method. The picture of QOs is vividly stated by Scheerens, Luyten, and Van Ravens (2011). The outputs or outcomes assess the program in terms of its objectives, system performance in terms of topic knowledge, competency repetition, progression, completion rates, and employer satisfaction. International assessments, surveys, competitive tests, and systematic field observations are used to develop indicators for QOs. These evaluations assist institutions and policymakers in determining the system's level of quality. LOs are something that a learner obtains from their studies, their environment, and their experiences in an educational institution. It is widely assumed that LOs are linked to the institution's educational excellence. Choy says that the number of LOs is directly proportional to the quality of learning (2017). When quality teaching is offered in the presence of associated resources, the skills that are learned to be taught in a conducive atmosphere, on the lines of quality curriculum, quality learning occurs. As a result, LOs are the product of a learning process that takes place in the presence of the essential circumstances and resources in a controlled environment.

1.8 Review of related studies

The scholars are working worldwide on quality and related problems, some of the related international and national studies are reviewed as under:-

Library use, AV aids, additional study material, co-curricular activities, traditional teaching methods, and overcrowded classes were identified by Arain, Khatoon, and Samson (2021) as factors that hampered the quality of English instruction at the secondary school level in Sindh province.

In Pakistan, Shaheen, N., et al. (2020) undertook a study to examine the quality of schooling in a supportive atmosphere. They discovered that a pleasant classroom environment is essential for effective learning. Furthermore, great education necessitated collaborative and authentic ways. They came to the conclusion that the classroom setting was beneficial to the teacher and the learning process.

Allam (2020) did a study on the quality of higher education in Saudi Arabia and discovered factors affecting six areas: teaching and learning, institutional resources, entrance standards, curriculum content, outcomes assessment, and pedagogy.

According to Al-Amri (2020) standards relating to teaching and learning quality were shown to be preferred by students. Employers were more concerned with graduates' research skills, as well as their involvement in industry and the community. Staff members demonstrated an understanding of the accrediting process and offered some suggestions for improvement.

Al-Amril, Mathew, and Zu (2020) conducted a study on the best quality standards in higher education and solicited feedback from stakeholders. Students believe that the most significant benchmark for measuring quality in HEIs is teaching and learning quality, employers believe it is graduate research skills, and staff believe it is the accreditation process that demonstrates higher education quality.

According to Budiharso & Tarman (2020), academic workplace conditions have a significant impact on educational quality. Teachers and academic administrators feel concerned if working conditions are not kept positive, resulting in a reduction in educational quality. Employee retention is raised and employability levels are improved in the presence of healthy working conditions. These factors affect educational quality in totality

In their study, Yaghoubi, Salimi, and Zaranadi (2018) discovered the following factors affecting educational quality: teaching skills, knowledge of educational principles and rules, skill evaluation, ethical concern, scientific knowledge, professional characteristics, education and teaching, and adherence to educational regulations. The educational quality is also influenced by the pupils' attitudes and personal traits. For educational quality in higher education, physical aspects, time presentation, class room management, and control systems were critical.

In Malaysia, Choy, Yim, and Tan (2017) focused on quality assurance in terms of student prospects. LS, curriculum, instructional DS, LE, and QL all had strong favorable connections, according to the researchers. They also discovered a negative correlation between LSs and QL, believing that pupils were more reliant on their professors and required more input. Equal treatment, respect, and freedom were the most crucial teaching techniques. They fought for the students' freedom and dignity. All teaching environments were built on the foundation of equity. A HEI's demand for high-quality, experienced teachers was critical. Furthermore, academic instruction may be complemented with actual application (Sagnak M, Ada, Kazancoglu, & Tayaksi, 2017)

1.9 Conclusion

The Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan and its affiliated colleges are extending quality education; AWKUM stands on 510th position in world universities ranking and first among public sector universities of Pakistan. However, there are some gaps in quality education system which decline the education quality. The conclusion as per research questions and themes are given below.

1.9.1 Impact of different learning environment

The researcher found that both the institutions lack satisfaction of students, check and balance over teachers' performance and monitoring. There was no concept of feedback in both institutions. QEC checks the work of university but there was no mechanism for colleges. The university had modern, well planned infrastructure; hence has better impact on students learning. There were no orientation programs for new comer students at college. The university environment was found more feasible, favorable and conducive. The University was an autonomous body and in some cases there nepotism was reported and no proper mechanism of accountability was found.

1.9.2 Difference of pedagogical practices and their impact

There is highly and foreign qualified faculty in university. Most of the staff was PhD in there relevant subjects and some having post doctorate degree holders. Hence, they used modern methods using projector techniques, group teaching and quizzes. Teaching methodology has great impact on students' performance. The work of teachers is checked through questionnaire given by QEC to the students. The college staff was found less qualified and used regular teaching methods. There is no strict check and balance on teachers' performance on college side. The respondents opined that professional and well trained teachers can teach effectively and instructional strategies are crucial for updated knowledge. Learning experiences also impact students' progress. Hence, continuous training was needed to improve professional skills. . There is no concept of feedback.

1.9.3 Coverage of curriculum and contribution

Course content coverage impacts on students' knowledge and skills. The curriculum is designed by university for affiliated colleges on HEC guidelines. The curriculum was well completed by AWKUM as well as GPGCN equally; however the college side mostly focused on theoretical approach. The university course coverage accompanied with practical work and activities. It was found that coverage of curriculum impacts on students' skills.

1.9.4 Contribution of resources availability

The University has its own source of income from fees collection as well as gets grants from HEC and provincial government. The colleges get only limited funds from provincial government which may likely be used as operating charges. Hence, university spends money according to the needs of the students than colleges. The colleges need more financial aids for up gradation. University has well equipped laboratories, libraries, hostel facilities; it has its own purchasing capability while the facilities present in university do not exist in colleges or they are of minor level. for quality learning human and physical resources are crucial but they are insufficient to fulfill all the requirements of the students. The facilities of university in infrastructure and learning material are much better than colleges; but still there are gaps for university resources too. The presence of resources at university has positive impacts over students.

1.9.5 Difference of assessment modes and their impact

The university and college both conduct summative evaluation through assignments and midterm examinations however formative evaluation i.e final examinations are conducted by university for both

colleges and university. The university has rewards students by giving 5 percent marks on writing assignments. The teachers' evaluation is done by QEC after each semester by giving questionnaire to the students while there is no mechanism at colleges for teachers' evaluation. The students and teachers evaluation has impact on quality of education.

1.10 Discussion on Results

The research found strength as well as gaps in both the institutions' operational system. The Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan and Government post graduate college Nowshera are working with their energies, zeal and zest to provide QE. However, there are some gaps that may be filled to achieve higher quality of education at these institutions.

The study found that orientation program for new students was seldom arranged at college. In the absence of orientation, the students remained puzzled and undirected. They needed guidelines to survive in the system and prepare for the upcoming events and ways to make the most of the facilities. The shortage of physical facilities damaged the learning environment. It is a fact that the environment created by HEIs influences the students' perception about QE (Akareem, 2016). The university arranged orientation program for the new comers that explained their role and informed them about the proceedings of academic calendars and directions. The student timely prepared and such practice affected the LE and contributed in enhancement quality. LE is made by providing teaching and learning materials, facilities, physical infrastructure and learning material. The university infrastructure was well planned and organized with required facilities which motivated and facilitated the students to study with more interest without any hurdle and hesitation. The college infrastructure was mostly consisted of classroom facilities and students felt themselves unsatisfied. The university infrastructure cares the students' academic, psychological needs that made the university learning environment more feasible, favorable and conducive. The LE can boost or hinder students' learning which covers physical and psychological dimensions and have significant effects on LE (Shaheen, 2020). That's why the university students were found more satisfied, confident, intelligent and leading. The college side lacked authority in appointment, evaluation and provision of funds. The management had to make arrangements within the available resources. The university was an autonomous body; having authority of appointment, final evaluation and excess of funds. In the absence of accountability nepotism was found at some extent; which affected the learning environment and quality of education.

The college faculty used old, timed out pedagogical practices in their teaching. There was a lack of facilities in college and faculty had hardly a few kept doctorate degree. They used the teaching methods on their own style and knowledge. In the absence of facilities, they lacked the study and research environment which affected their knowledge and pedagogy. Pedagogy was an art and science of teaching and consisted of teaching methodology, style and sense or knowledge of knowing individual differences (Allam, 2020). The pedagogical practices utilized by university teachers were better; modern and practical oriented. Most of the faculty of the university was foreign qualified with doctorate and post doctorate degree. They had been in highly developed universities with latest laboratories, academic and physical facilities. Teachers' qualifications in terms of educational level, efficiency and training have positive effect on quality of education (Madani, 2019). Thus, the quality of education seemed better at university as compared with college. Course content coverage impacts on students' knowledge and skills. The curriculum is designed by university for affiliated colleges on HEC guidelines. The curriculum was well completed by AWKUM as well as GPGCN equally; however the college side mostly focused on theoretical approach. The teaching is transfer of learning but such practice could not have required results. The coursed coverage with practical work made the university teaching quality, interesting. The practical worked enhanced the skills of students. The resources availability creates conducive, feasible learning environment and motivates students to perform better. The resources

availability depended upon sources of income. The college was totally depended upon provincial government for any development work or physical facilities however; there better resources of university were due to availability of funds and support from HEC, federal and provincial governments. The evaluation of both types summative and formative was done for students of university and college. However, University valued the formative evaluation more than college, there were assignment marks and quiz competitions motivated the students towards learning. According to Theraja (2017) a good teaching and assessment gave the students a chance to show their professional performance. The college has no check and balance over teacher's performance, however QEC gathered data every after each semester. It was seen that better assessment led to better outcomes in the institutions.

1.11 Recommendations

For Authorities:

1. College budgets may be boosted as well, as the results of the study reveal that institutions require additional financial assistance from the government.
2. New technologies may be introduced at the college level as well, as the current study's findings show that colleges lack new technologies that might pique students' attention.
3. University instructors are reviewed by QEC, but there is no such check and balance in place for college teachers' academic evaluations, so it is strongly suggested that a Quality Enhancement Cell-style department be established at the college level for better teacher evaluation.
4. The study's findings revealed that universities have well-equipped and well-furnished labs, but colleges lack such facilities. Both the federal and provincial governments may attempt to provide modern labs to colleges.

For Teachers and Students

5. College teachers may attempt to produce a viable environment for students, since the study's findings reveal that universities provide a feasible environment for students, which is why university outcomes are superior to college results.
6. College faculty members may strive to increase their skills, since more qualified university faculty members deliver higher-quality instruction.
7. College students and teachers may be obliged to give presentations, as the current study reveals that quality education is primarily concerned with improved presentation and communication abilities.

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