

EVALUATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SCHEME FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OF KARACHI (PAKISTAN) BY THE HEC

Aamir AYZAZ*, Muhammad Yousuf SHARJEEL**

Abstract

Beginning of the twenty-first century has seen the Quality Assurance in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) turn into a frequent topic of discourse on an international scale as well as on a national level. With the oversight of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) the HEIs of Pakistan have strived to concentrate their endeavours towards the assurance of quality in the universities of Pakistan. Keeping in view the guidelines of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) the HEC began setting up Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs) in the public universities nationwide. These steps, among others, taken by the Commission explicitly suggest that they have resolved to develop a good system of quality assurance in the higher education institutions across Pakistan. The wider scope of the study is to examine and analyse the outcomes of Quality Assurance Scheme (QAS) while taking into account the development of QECs to increase the standard of higher education in the country's HEIs. The more definite focus of the research, however, is to assess the practices of assuring quality in the HEIs of the public and private sector and to see if there are any appreciable differences in the two sectors concerning quality assurance. The study through the Survey Research has covered three HEIs from the private sector and three HEIs from the government sector. Moreover, Feedback Forms have been used as the research instrument. Finally, the accumulated data has been assessed quantitatively.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, Higher education, Accountability.

JEL Classification: C53, I23.

I. Introduction

The assurance of quality and standard education in the HEIs occupied a central position among all the stakeholders of the Bologna reforms. They started the changes at national as well as European level European Union Association (EUA) (Jensen, 2008, p.8). The European Quality Agency was the initiator in this regard that introduced

* Research Scholar, ** Professor, Hamdard Institute of Education and Social Sciences, Hamdard University, Karachi, Pakistan.

the Quality Culture in the European higher education institutes. Subsequently, developing countries also started moving in the same direction in order to promote quality in their universities [Lemaitre, et al. (2007)]. Establishment of a quality based higher education system in accordance with the global parameters is regarded as the ultimate goal of the direct and indirect stakeholders affiliated with the university studies in the country. Usmani, et al. (2012) points out that developed countries in spite of having a well-established education system for providing quality education at the higher level are still working very hard to raise their quality standards of higher education even further so that it would be more fruitful for their societies.

Research substantiates the claim of the existence of a strong positive correlation between economic development and higher education. Bilal and Khan (2012) refer to League of European Research Universities that emphasises on the fact that in the process of laying a strong ground in order to achieve the goal of the economic growth of any society, the higher education performs a crucial part. Batool and Qureshi (2006) argue that the Higher Education Commission is entirely conscious of the ever-changing needs of the university education and new developments in the system, both nationally and internationally. Thus, it is desirable to concentrate on the matters of quality at an adequate scale. Lim (2001) writes that HEC since its establishment has been ardently paying attention to the quality of education.

Moreover, it has initiated several essential measures to elevate the standards of education in the HEIs of Pakistan. In this respect, one of the most effective steps has been the formulation of the Medium Term Development Framework (MTDF). This structured plan includes Access, Quality and Relevance as the foremost principles to work on for improvement of quality of higher education. Further, in order to the accomplishment of these goals, a comprehensive strategy has also been devised that concentrates on the principle facets of the reforms in higher education in the country (QA Division of the HEC). Furthermore, the HEC in 2003 instituted a Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) comprising of distinguished scholars and educationists. Later on, in accordance with the proposal of the QAC, HEC established a Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) whose chief purpose was to promote excellence in higher education and subsequently to stimulate institutions of higher education of Pakistan to follow a quality culture.

Usmani, et al. (2012) points out that QAA since its formation has been setting up the Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs) in the public sector institutions of higher education. In an environment where the mainstream population does not recognise the importance of quality assurance and its subsequent impact for building a better society, the QAA assumed the responsibility and initiated its journey to achieve this goal under the supervision of QAC.

The HEC formulated a procedure to assess the quality standards in the universities. Raouf (2006) highlights that for making studying process of the learners better and for evaluating whether academic standards are being met a well-designed and comprehensible system capable of reflecting a real image of the situation is a crucial need of the

HEIs in Pakistan. Analysis alone is not enough until it is adequately responded to so that reasonable improvements could be made to the learning process of the students. Thus, feedbacks in the form of a Self-Assessment Report from various groups of stakeholders can prove to be a substantial help in the formulation of a robust strategy to raise quality standards of learning in HEIs. The process of Self-Assessment can be defined as an organised procedure designed to assess the level of assurance of quality in HEIs. It subsequently assists in the improvement of the system by incorporating the philosophy of Total Quality Management (TQM).

II. Review of Related Literature

1. *Higher Education (HE)*

The HEIs supposedly bear the responsibility for providing individuals to the society who have been adequately trained to confront the social issues and actively work towards finding their solutions. Amin, et al. (2013) points out that the NEMIS (2011-12) annual report defines the function of an HEI as a means of assistance to people in the world of research and higher education aimed at providing expertise in various disciplines. Bilal and Khan (2012) write that among the major objectives of higher education is to shape true leaders that are well equipped to deal with the problems of the society proficiently. Batool and Qureshi (2006) emphasise on the fact that higher education is essential for the societies that seek to establish a meritocracy, which increases the rate of economic development. Education is not merely a social process; it is among key variables of economic growth along with being a vital element for the advancement of humanity at large. Barnett (1992) lays out four basic concepts of higher education.

1. Procurement of Capable Human Resources
2. Preparation for a Research Career
3. The Proficient Organisation of Teaching Provision
4. Matter of Expending Life Expectancies

Hoodbhoy (1998) remarks that the HEIs are very much akin to the gardens that supply fresh fruits full of nutrients to help sustain a healthy human life. Universities, in a similar way, provide necessary human capital in the form of skilled professionals as well as intellectuals to help the society function properly.

2. *Concept of Quality Assurance in HE*

Forker (1991) states that different disciplines including, but not limited to, economics, philosophy, operations management and marketing have tried explaining what quality means. Each of these fields views quality from their peculiar academic angles. Mishra (2007) says that the word quality originated from quails, a Latin word

that translates to "what kind of." He argues that Quality essentially is a question of what someone mainly looks for in something. On the other hand, according to Biggs (2003), quality from a perspective of accountability is the importance of wealth.

3. *Concept of Quality Assurance in HE*

Largosen, et al. (2004) remarks that expression "quality" was first introduced in the field of industry and production. When this term entered in the domain of higher education, it initially used to refer to academic autonomy and freedom. Haris (2013) points out that in the subsequent years, every stakeholder would eventually need to contribute in ensuring quality and their evaluation would be quite critical for the HEIs. Lim (2001) writes that the essential constituents in higher education for assurance of quality include a precise and comprehensible idea, a viable plan of action and finally the execution in order to fetch the required outcomes. The field of higher education frequently brings up the topic of assurance of quality and its related ideas and concepts for discussion [Reichert (2008)]. The institutions of higher education thus need to work in this regard actively. In the field of advanced education, quality is considered to be systems and controls employed to satisfy the stakeholders in general and the students in particular about the standard of the education. This mainly involves assuring them that education being offered by a certain institution is based on a certain criterion (QEC, HEC Processes, King Edward Medical College, Lahore). Mckimm (2003) points out that in education domain quality is a measure of how high the standards are. Iqbal (2010) while referring to Bornmann, Mittag and Daniel (2006) point out that aim of all endeavours is enhancing standards of higher education is to design a comprehensive system for quality assurance, which is able to develop and harmonise the HEIs globally. In this regard, the financers, the alumni and the society as a whole are also important variables and are therefore just as crucial as the active drivers in this process [Srikanth and Dalrymple (2003)].

The External Quality Assurance System (EQAS) is based upon extra-institutional frameworks and standards i.e., it is designed by a governmental regulatory body and subsequently implemented across the board. Generally, its regulations apply equally to all the higher education institutions nationwide. Conversely, the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) pertains to the internal controls and policies that an institution designs itself for ensuring the quality internally. These systems are created after taking the internal needs and the environmental requirements of an institution into account.

Colling and Harvey (1995) point out that the status quo in terms of implementation of policies predominantly leans towards institutional freedom that has significant support of the stakeholders too. Consequently, the implementation of a standard system of quality assurance across the board becomes a rather complicated matter. Additionally, the functioning of the IQAS to a reasonable extent in spheres of administration, research, and support services takes considerable time [Reichert and Touch (2005)].

4. *Approaches to Quality Assurance in HE*

Quality assurance in the academic field, similar to the industrial field, has been regarded as a tool to provide reasonable assurance to the stakeholders as to what they are enrolling into is a well established educational system, competent enough to assist them in enhancing their abilities that they require in professional life (Quality Assurance Agency the UK). It, therefore, makes educational institutions responsible to continuously refine and upgrade the process of education, keeping it aligned with the requirements of the present day. Broadly, quality can be defined in seven dimensions; Fitness for Purpose, Excellence, Transformation, Zero Errors, Value for Money, Threshold and Improvement or Enhancement.

Batool and Qureshi (2006) point out that there may be two layouts for assurance of quality in the institutes of higher education, viz., Top-Down and Bottom-Up. The former of the two deals with the External Quality Assurance Scheme (EQAS), which is employed by the concerned local regulatory bodies for higher education. The second one refers to the Internal Quality Assurance Scheme (IQAS) of an HEI that is formulated and implemented by the institution itself. In addition to this, they highlight that both of these layouts are intertwined and are equally important for the quality assurance. EQAS functions as a driving factor for IQAS to keep evolving and refining itself. A number of countries have correlated the assessment of their HEIs with the outcomes of their respective IQASs. As highlighted by Rozsnyai (2001), Hungary has initiated a nationwide drive to develop internal quality assurance systems in its HEIs.

From the foregoing citations and the discussions, the systems of assurance of quality can be broadly divided as external and internal. Gorden (1988) as argued by Harvey (1997) highlights that the IQAS is closely associated with the EQAS or that the internal system directly results from external regulations. Kis (2005) draws attention to a recurring appearance of the argument in the relevant literature that tends to weigh one system against the other to evaluate which one is more viable and works well. Kettunen (2012) asserts that the two systems are equally important for ensuring a high level of quality in an HEI.

5. *External or Extrinsic Approach to Quality Assurance in HE*

The QA in higher education, as Gorden (1988) points out, was frequently brought up for discussions in the 1990s in numerous parts of the developed world. However, the theme of all this discussion consisted of Council for National Academic Awards in 1964, Reynolds Reports-1986 and Sutherland Reports-1989 for CVCP; both the reports were entitled as Academic Standards in Universities in the UK. Dill and Beerkens (2012) suggest that the EQAS is established to help universities transform into genuine "learning organisations" that clearly develop a "culture of evidence" by exercising efficient accountability so that the quality of academic programs can be well maintained and the unit level decision can be validated.

6. *Internal or Intrinsic Approach to Quality Assurance in HE*

Gorden (1988) argues that the stakeholders by large seem to agree upon the idea that a properly functioning internal quality assurance scheme is an essential factor for enhancing the level of quality in the universities. Nonetheless, industrious engagement of the stakeholders in general and the academia, in particular, is yet to be achieved for better functioning of an IQAS. Reichert (2008) points out that according to the recommendations of European Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines (ESG), the obligation to assure quality lies on the HEIs instead of some external regulatory bodies. The criteria for quality may vary from one institute to another as Lueger and Vettori (2008) have reasoned. Nonetheless, these variations and differences do not attenuate the necessity of these standards at any level.

7. *European Standards and Guidelines for IQAS in HEIs*

Following is a restatement of guiding principles and standards set out by the European University Association (EUA) to help HEIs in formulating their internal quality assurance scheme.

- a) Policy and Procedures for Quality Assurance: Institutions of higher education may be responsible for establishing a scheme for QA for various programmes they offer. They should aim at designing and enforcing a quality culture at campuses to assure the quality internally. To ensure the continued practice of quality culture, the universities should focus on the participation of learners and other counterparts too.
- b) Approval and Subsequent Reviews of Programmes and Awards: The institutes may design an official and comprehensive system for the initial endorsement and periodical checks and scrutiny of the courses they offer.
- c) Evaluation of Students: The students should be evaluated through a documented mechanism that should be applied consistently throughout.
- d) QA of the Faculty: The institutes should ensure that their faculty is qualified for the programme they teach or oversee. Further, HEIs should also give due consideration to the satisfaction of the students with respect to the faculty. The mechanism employed for quality assessment of teaching staff should be reviewed externally as well.
- e) Learning Resources and Student Support Facilities: Availability of adequate resources for learning and the appropriate means for student support to meet the specific needs of the different programmes should be ensured by the institutes of higher education.
- f) Information Systems: The universities should have a proper system for the exchange of information, including its proper collection, safe storage, and right dispatch for the programmes and other relevant uses as well.
- g) Publication of Information: The institutes should try to publish the available in-

formation in an objective manner and ensure a fair presentation of the facts related to every programmes/award that they offer.

The study of the academic literature relevant to this research points out to the positive outcomes of an effective Quality Assurance Scheme and its subsequent impacts on the students and the role they play after their graduation generally in the world in and particularly in the economy. It stands to reason as researches prove that quality based higher education and economic growth has a positive correlation. The related literature also stresses upon the essentiality of both, internal as well as external QAS for institutions of higher education. It also merits mentioning that although the EQAS and the IQAS are both meant to guarantee quality in higher education, nonetheless, neither of the two schemes is a substitute of each other. Further, this paper draws attention to the usefulness of an effective QAS with the help of the following hypothesis.

H0 – There is a significant difference in the opinions of public and private sectors university students in the context of improvement of quality through a QAS in Higher Education.

H1 – There is no significant difference in the opinions of public and private sectors university students in the context of improvement of quality through a QAS in Higher Education.

H2 – There is a significant difference in the opinions of public and private sectors university students that the QECs are the part of an external system that do not immediately serve the purpose of Internal Quality Assurance of Higher Education Institution.

HO – There is no a significant difference in the opinions of public and private sectors university students that the QECs are the part of an external system that do not immediately serve the purpose of Internal Quality Assurance of Higher Education Institution.

III. Research Methodology

1. Research Design

Quantitative analysis has been used in the survey research for the examination of QAS for HEIs in Karachi. The research has included students' feedback from universities of both the government sector and the private sector. The primary data thus collected has been utilised to formulate the questionnaire for the subject study that was answered by respondents on a voluntary basis.

2. Validity of the Instruments for the Present Study

The questionnaire was validated for two groups, i.e. students of the private sector and those of the public sector. The validation process consisted of Self-Validation,

Expert Validation and Pilot Validation. The reliability of the feedback form was measured using Pearson Correlation Coefficient that gave a value of 0.74.

3. *Sample*

The survey research method was employed to carry out the study. In this regard, public and private universities being the area of the population were visited by the researcher in order to get the responses to the questionnaires. The institutes visited to include Karachi's six HEIs in aggregate, three each from both the above-mentioned sectors.

4. *Instrument*

The feedback for the research was collected through the feedback form, which was formulated using the Likert scale in the light of the literature review. The experts were also consulted for their assessment of the feedback form. Moreover, the feedback form and its contents were briefly explained to the respondents to make sure that any potential confusion does not affect the reliability of the results.

5. *Variables*

The study makes use of two variables: the independent variable being Quality Assurance Scheme while the dependent variable being the Higher Education Institutes.

6. *Procedure*

The pressure or the risk level was reduced to a minimum. Throughout the research, the respondents were briefed wherever needed to ensure their maximum involvement in the research work. Further, the permission of the respondents was also obtained on occasions where it was necessary.

7. *Results*

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the opinions of public and private sectors university students in the context of improvement of quality through a QAS in Higher Education.

TABLE 1
QAS and Quality of Education

| Group Statistics | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------|----|------|----------|-----------------|
| | Sector | N | Mean | Std. Dev | Std. Error Mean |
| QAS has improved quality of education | Public | 75 | 1.77 | 0.86 | 0.09 |
| | Private | 75 | 2.05 | 0.73 | 0.08 |

Source: Authors' estimation.

Table 1 shows that at N=75 in the public universities, the mean score (M_1) is 1.77 while the standard deviation (SD_1) is 0.86, and standard error mean (STM_1) is 0.09. In contrast, when N=75 in the private universities, the mean score (M_2) is 2.05 while standard deviation (SD_2) is 0.73 and standard error mean (STM_2) being 0.08.

TABLE 2
QAS has Improved Quality of Education (Hypothesis 1)

| | | Independent Samples Test | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|--------|------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|---|-------|
| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
| | | F | Sig. | t | Df | Sig. (2- tailed) | Mean Diff | Std. Error Diff | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Low Up | |
| QAS has im- proved quality of education | Equal variances assumed | 1.45 | 0.22 | -2.14 | 148 | 0.03 | -0.28 | 0.13 | -0.53 | -0.02 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -2.14 | 144.22 | 0.03 | -0.28 | 0.13 | -0.53 | -0.02 |

Source: Autors' estimation.

Table 2 shows that at N=150, a two-tailed Independent Sample t-test calculated the difference in the opinions of the two groups of students, i.e. those of public universities and those of private universities, regarding the enhancement of quality by a QAS in the universities. With a significance level of 0.05, the p-value is 0.03 that is greater than 0.05. The non-zero negative values of the lower and upper limits of the confidence interval indicate the significance of the test for measuring the difference between the students of the private sector and the public sector. Hence, the H_0 is rejected that the difference of opinion of the students of private universities and those of public universities is insignificant about the quality enhancement through a Quality Assurance Scheme in HEIs.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant difference in the opinions of public and private sectors university students that the QECs are the part of an external system that do not immediately serve the purpose of Internal Quality Assurance of Higher Education Institution.

TABLE 3
QEC for QAS is an External System

| | | Group Statistics | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------|------------------|----|------|----------|--------------------|
| | | Sector | N | Mean | Std. Dev | Std. Error Mean |
| QEC for QAS is an external system | Public | | 75 | 1.85 | 0.74 | 0.08 |
| | Private | | 75 | 2.04 | 0.95 | 0.10 |

Source: Autors' estimation.

Table 3 demonstrates that at N=75 in the public universities, the mean score (M_1) is 1.85 while the standard deviation (SD_1) is 0.74 with standard error mean (STM_1) being 0.08. On the other hand, with N=75 in private universities, the mean score (M_2) is 2.04 while standard deviation (SD_2) is 0.95 and standard error mean (STM_2) being 0.10.

TABLE 4
QEC is an External System (Hypothesis 2)

| | | Independent Samples Test | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|------|-------|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|---|------|
| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | |
| | | F | Sig. | t | Df | Sig. (2- tailed) | Mean Diff | Std. Error Diff | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | | Low | Up |
| QEC is an external system | Equal variances assumed | 3.43 | 0.06 | -1.33 | 148 | 0.18 | -0.18 | 0.13 | -0.46 | 0.08 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -1.33 | 140.22 | 0.18 | -0.18 | 0.13 | -0.46 | 0.08 |

Source: Autors' estimation.

The Table 4 shows that at N=150, a two-tailed Independent Sample t-test calculated the diversity in views of the two groups of students, i.e. those of private universities and those of public universities, regarding the Quality Assurance Scheme in institutions of higher education. With the significance level of 0.05, the p-value is 0.18 that is greater than 0.05. The non-zero negative values of the lower and upper limits of the confidence interval indicate that the test is considerable for measuring the variation between the students of the private sector and the public sector. Hence, H_0 is rejected that the diversity of opinion of the students of private universities and the students of public universities is insignificant about the Quality Enhancement Cells being an external system and not directly contributing to the Internal Quality Scheme in the HEIs.

IV. Discussions

While the topic of research was being finalised, there was a loose presumption that there is no considerable variation in the government and the private sectors with respect to the views of students regarding the progression of quality standards in the HEIs by employing a QAS. Another assumption was that there are substantial differences in the views of the public sector and private sector HEIs about the QECs being alien to the environment of the university and not complementing the internal quality assurance system.

Moreover, the research aimed at two things. First, a more general objective was to highlight the significance of a QAS for the institutions of higher education in Karachi, Pakistan. Second, the specific purpose was to facilitate the Pakistani HEIs in general and the HEIs of Karachi in particular in realising that the actual focus of the Quality Assurance Scheme is necessary to elevate quality of education in the HEIs. For the former objective, the general approach was to analyse the outcomes of the QAS to see if this scheme is serving its major intended purpose, i.e. helping the HEIs in promoting a quality culture in education. Additionally, considering the fact that QAS was applicable on the HEIs of public as well as the private sector, the study included an equal number of universities from both these sectors into its sample base so that a more accurate picture of the situation could be drawn and analysed.

In addition, the study used two variables. QAS was set as the independent variable while the HEIs as the dependent one.

Extensive literature review relevant to the subject matter and study of contemporary exercises in the sphere of QAS worldwide helped improve the quality of the research. The review of literature facilitated the research scholar to ascertain that a QAS is fundamental for raising quality standards of higher education.

Moreover, a questionnaire was drafted after having discussions with the professionals who are directly or indirectly connected with the domain of assurance of quality in the HEIs. The feedbacks subsequently collected with the help of the questionnaires were analysed quantitatively.

The target population of the research covered the students of all the universities of Pakistan. Survey research was used as a method for sampling for the study. Eight universities in total, four from the government sector and four from the private sector were sampled out of the population. The students of these universities were interviewed and were then asked to fill the questionnaire.

The Independent Sample t-test by the Statistical Package for Social Science V.22 was employed for performing quantitative investigation of the data so collected. During the final analysis, feedbacks to the questionnaire that was either not complete in all respects or were ambiguous or vague in some respect were not taken into account. The feedbacks that were integrated into the final analysis were the ones that fulfilled the approved criterion. An incremental sample equal to the five per cent of the original one was included in the analysis to make up for the samples that did not fit the criterion.

V. Conclusion

In summary, the external quality assurance scheme, as well as the internal quality assurance scheme, maybe both be undertaken simultaneously to generate positive outcomes. According to Lenland Conley Barrows, 2002, possible variations between the requisites put forward by EQAS and the internal perspective of an institute to the quality (i.e., IQAS) could, nonetheless, result in a conflicted and frictional interrela-

tion. Yet it can be concluded that IQAS is crucial to keep the entire structure of the HEIs functional in terms of its environmental and organisational needs. Whilst, on the other hand, the EQAS too is equally significant for the satisfaction of the societal demands and for keeping the institutes of higher education in line with the national as well as public interests. It can be drawn after considering various explanations and interpretation of IQAS that it is about the management of the HEIs as a whole; it functions to execute the institutions' policies regarding quality and to meet their internal requirements and to make them abide by the framework designed by the external regulatory authorities. In addition, it seems quite complicated and to some extent rather ineffective to try consolidating the various parts of the IQAS of various institutions into a single comprehensive approach since every institute exists with a certain peculiarity with respect to its environment and its organisational culture.

Thus, an institution of higher education should itself decide as to what practices and policies suit its environment and structure the most for enhancement of the quality of its education [EUA Publications (2005)]. Moreover, as further highlighted by the Trend IV of EUA Publications, there appears to be a general agreement among the institutions of higher education that a strong internal quality culture of the institutions might be brought in line with a somewhat less strict external quality framework. Furthermore, observations suggest that the institutions that have a higher level of freedom in terms of the application of an external framework for assuring quality do comparatively well on the fronts of internal structure and practices for the quality assurance. On the other hand, the institutes that are bound by strict external policies and regulations for quality assurance lack a well structured internal control system for quality assurance. Considering this all, endeavours for having a certain level of freedom to the institutes while having an adequate yet limited involvement of the external bodies may assist the HEIs in developing a culture of quality that suits the institute and its environment. What is required to bring the Pakistani institutes of higher education to a certain international standard is a regulatory framework comprising of a variety of policies and incorporating a wide spectrum of the educational activities that actively involve the external entities as well as internal controls of the institutions.

VI. Future Implications

Preceding paragraphs present a brief account of the measures that the higher education institutes could consider while formulating an effective and efficient IQAS. Nonetheless, as has been supposed that some universities have already employed the guidelines above, they can opt to incorporate some other procedures that previously were not part of their IQAS. Additionally, some universities may also adjust these steps to suit their specific needs and institutional environment better. Moreover, some of the higher education institutes can choose to initiate the procedure and subsequently work their way up by making necessary inclusions or exclusions to the steps.

The conclusions derived from this research strongly suggest that an IQAS is of crucial importance for the HEIs of Pakistan and therefore, they should start working on developing a productive and well-structured internal quality assurance scheme. The conclusion of the Trend IV of the European Universities Implementing Bologna reveals that the European Higher Education Area focuses on quality; therefore, it is considered prestigious not only by its members but also across the world. However, the positive results of the Trend IV can only be expected if the matters of quality are addressed properly, by not relying on external quality assurance practices alone but adopting all the practices for the internal improvement of the institutions as well.

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