CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE: INSIGHTS FROM ISLAMABAD'S UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

In Pakistan, every university has a quality assurance directorate that works with quality enhancement cells (QECs) to ensure that the institution is meeting its quality goals and following its internal quality assurance rules. When opposed to quality assurance that is driven from the outside, systems that are established at the institutional level and are based on a strong quality culture are more likely to improve the quality of learning experiences and academic results. The purpose of this study was to examine the present state of institutional quality assurance practices in both public and private universities in Islamabad, Pakistan, taking into account the significance of these activities. This research set out to do two things:(1) examine the state of institutional quality assurance at public and private universities, and(2) compare the two sets of practices. The study's sample included 356 students chosen at random from a stratified random sample and 58 faculty members chosen using the universal sampling approach. The purpose of this study was to compare public and private universities' institutional quality assurance processes by utilising descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) and inferential statistics (independent sample t-test). Students and teachers in both groups had similar opinions on the quality assurance methods used by the Higher Education Commission's quality assurance organisation, according to the study's results. Based on the study's findings, both public and private universities continue to prioritise academic quality, programme evaluations for quality improvement, research development activities, and service quality as part of their institutional quality assurance practices. However, they face similar challenges when it comes to institutional facilities, including a lack of adequate classrooms, transportation options, and scholarship opportunities. According to the study's findings, the Higher Education Commission and the Quality Assurance Agency should consider enhancing both academic quality and institutional infrastructure. In order to improve the quality of institutions, the Further Quality Assurance Agency might create a systematic and efficient institutional quality assurance plan.

Keywords: Quality assurance, institutional quality assurance, public and private universities

INTRODUCTION

Quality is a notion that has developed through time; it has long been utilised in business and industry; and it was first introduced to the market for higher education in the early 1980s (Elassy, 2015). Since universities and colleges generate the human capital that drives economic and social indicators, their quality has been a major topic of concern around the world in recent decades. Most countries' university systems have thus implemented quality assurance measures (UNESCO, 2021). As a tool for both internal and external evaluation, quality assurance has long

been an essential component of higher education for preserving and enhancing its greatest achievements while also preparing it for what lies ahead (Eaton, 2021). There appears to be consensus regarding the goal of quality assurance and self-assessment: to raise the bar for higher education in both wealthy and developing nations (Nguyen, 2016). Rebuilding and improving a civilization relies heavily on its higher education (HE) system. Historically, HEIs have played a pivotal role in shaping the next generation of leaders who will elevate society's values and advance its resources. It is impossible to ignore HE's significance as a driving force behind improved socioeconomic indicators. There is an immediate and critical need for high-quality education in order to foster a knowledge-based economy in the nation. Improving access to higher education is also important for raising living standards and gaining societal benefits (Ma, 2020). Similarly, with the expanding, privatising, and diversifying programmes in the arena of higher education system, quality assurance techniques in institutions have become crucial in both first- and third-world countries to meet the difficulties of the globalised world (Ahmed, 2016). Higher education institutions need to put in significant effort to ensure that their quality assurance procedures are effective if they want to respond promptly and effectively to national educational changes and the increased worldwide competitiveness. To promote, improve, and guarantee the international standards of education, quality assurance techniques are vital in both public and private colleges (Andaleep, 2020). Higher education presents particular difficulties for developing nations like Pakistan, whose educational systems are otherwise working tirelessly to raise their educational levels to par with those of developed nations. Since education is the bedrock of social and economic progress, removing obstacles in the educational system should be a top priority. Similarly, Pakistan is currently confronting economic values that might be influenced by inadequate education. Pakistan and other developing nations face enormous issues that must be addressed by strong economic and education policies (Noreen, 2019). The government's first and most important move to guarantee high-quality education was to establish

HEC. It received funding and became operational in 2002 as part of a political effort to overhaul the school system. In order to fulfil the requirements of international standards, the HEC has established a Quality Assurance Agency, a Quality Assurance Committee, and Quality Enhancement Cells (Khan & Kamran, 2017). Higher education institutions in Pakistan, both public and private, are evaluated for their effectiveness by the quality assurance agency. Accreditation councils and quality enhancement cells are the means by which it operates. The Accreditation Council is responsible for implementing external quality assurance. Institutions also use Internal Quality Assurance, which is a method of self-evaluation, to achieve their goals. Internal Quality Assurance policies are put into action by QECs (Haider, 2016). A robust and efficient quality assurance system will incorporate both internal and external reviews. As a means of ensuring quality on the inside, institutions engage in internal quality assurance processes such as self-evaluation, monitoring, good practices, quality management, and governance on a regular basis (Ayaz & Sharjeel, 2020). Institutional quality assurance is a method of self-evaluation that pertains to the efficacy of the institution's internal operations, such as its infrastructure, learning environment, teaching and learning processes, and other related areas (Noreen, 2019).

The main problem, as stated by Martin (2018), is that external quality assurance systems that are focused on accountability tend to focus on improving the management procedures of the institutions, rather than changing the institution's culture and improving teaching and learning practices to make students' educational experiences better. The majority of students' achievement, teachers' efficiency, and students' overall learning experiences are all negatively impacted by EQA. Higher education institutions' (HEIs') internal quality systems impact students' learning and academic performance. For this reason, HEC and the internal quality assurance mechanism have collaborated to establish the Directorate of Quality Enhancement, whose job it is to guarantee and sustain high-quality education. At its meetings, the IQA discusses the HEC's directives and reviews progress. Every year, we check how well IQA is

doing. Through QEC, the IQA enforces its policies in Pakistani universities (www.hec.gov.pk-2022). Educational institutions should prioritise developing a robust internal quality assurance system in order to provide a long-term foundation for maintaining quality. In contrast to external or extrinsic evaluations, which mainly deal with questions of accountability, the necessity for an effective operational internal quality assurance necessitates the establishment of a continuous and long-term quality improvement scheme within the institutional level and across various academic disciplines. To that end, the Self-Assessment Process, a quality assessment tool, is under the purview of QECs for management. In order to determine the quality of any programme that adheres to the Self- Assessment model, it is the obligation of QECs to guarantee programme evaluations. As such, it is governed by the policy on Internal Quality Assurance. There are classrooms, computer labs, and other educational resources included, as well as the results of the teaching and learning process. According to Usmani and Khatoon (2018), a Self-Assessment Report is the end product of this procedure.

Student admissions, staff recruitment, faculty development programmes, research methodology, and the improvement of physical infrastructure (classrooms, labs, libraries, etc.) are just a few areas where many studies have shown the significance of merit. Ghulam (2017) states that...

In order to raise the bar for education in Pakistan, it is crucial to assess the efficacy of quality assurance strategies adopted by universities. Focusing on programme type, pricing arrangements, and institutional locations, external and internal stakeholders have distinct perceptions of higher education. Educators and other interested parties are paying close attention to school curricula and programmes right now, which means that things like faculty hiring, research and development, and campus resources like labs, scholarships, and counselling services are under the microscope (Batool & Quraishi, 2006). The relatively new idea of quality assurance in Pakistan's higher education sector is hugely important but has received very little attention so far. In order to raise the bar for higher education,

research into quality assurance techniques at universities is urgently required.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The University of the Punjab was the only functional university in the area when Pakistan gained its independence, reflecting the dire situation of higher education in the early years of the nation. Pakistan had a population of over 100 million. The education system is vested in the provinces by law. It was the respective province governments that established and funded the majority of the HEIs. Just four higher education institutions existed prior to 1957, and another 10 were established in the subsequent decade. Over the next two decades, a total of sixteen HEIs were established, with two of them established in each of those years. From 1988 to 1997, there was a rather rapid expansion in the number of higher education institutions, rising from 28 to 43. Equally impressive was the 128 percent growth in the number of universities between 1998 and 2008 (Osama, Najam, Kassim, Gilani, & King, 2009). Nevertheless, between 2013 and 2023, the number of public and private universities increased to 247, with 147 being in the public sector and 100 in the private sector. Two million students are currently enrolled in some form of higher education (economic survey, 2023). An important step in this direction was recently acknowledged by HEC's senior management: the substantial growth of higher education, which makes institutions eligible for public funding of research, faculty development, and the enhancement of academic and research infrastructure and facilities (HEC, 2022). But in this light, the administration of HEC has started to focus on quality standards by expanding the number of quality metrics in the institutions in an effort to make Pakistan's educational system sustainable and competitive with global standards. The quality of education in Pakistan has been rising as a result. (As stated by Urooj et.al., 2020). In order to start making HEIs better, HEC has defined the criteria that will be used to evaluate their success.

Public and private institutions of higher education employed 57,204 thousand faculty members in 2020–21 across 247 campuses around the country. There will be an increase from 2.41 million

students in all HEIs in 2021–2022-2 to 2.60 million in 2022–2023. From 2.60 million in 2022–2023, enrollment is expected to climb to 2.80 million (or 0.7 percent) in 2023–2024. Higher education is now available to 10% of the population, up from 2.6% in the beginning (Economic Survey, 2022–2023). The quality of institutions and their programmes is being more and more questioned in Pakistan's public and private higher education sectors as a result of the constant change and transformation brought about by expansion, privatisation, and diversification throughout time. Maintaining the quality of Pakistan's higher education system through QAA-QECs is a major challenge for the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. As it has a direct influence on changing the culture of the institution and improving teaching and learning practices to increase the quality of students' educational experiences and academic achievement, establishing an effective and ongoing institutional quality assurance system is necessary to ensure and maintain sustainable quality in Pakistan's higher education institutions. Examining how public and private colleges and universities ensure institutional quality is, thus, relevant. In Pakistan, private institutions are making great strides in higher education, whereas public universities struggle to meet society needs owing to a number of problems. Additionally, the business sector states that it is dedicated to providing high-quality education. This situation calls for research comparing public and private universities, taking into account their divergent histories and current practices.

Higher Education Commission, Quality Assurance Agency, and Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs) can use the study's findings as a starting point to revise and enhance their present quality assurance practice standards in line with stakeholder expectations. In order to carry out their quality-related responsibilities more effectively and efficiently, QECs can benefit from the study's findings. In addition to policymakers and QEC directors, students stand to gain from the study since it will help them tailor quality plans to meet the needs and requirements of learners, ultimately leading to higher levels of learner satisfaction. Further, the study's findings will be useful for academics who want to investigate other facets of quality assurance procedures at higher education institutions.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
1. Find out what public and private colleges are doing to ensure their institutions' excellence.
2. Evaluate the public and private universities' approaches to institutional quality assurance.

RESEARCH QUESTION
First, what methods do public and private colleges use to guarantee their institutions' quality?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS
1. The institutional quality assurance techniques utilised by public and private colleges do not differ significantly.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
This study employed a quantitative methodology. Using a survey as its research method, this study was descriptive in character. The study included 64 staff members and 377 BS students from the Department of Sociology, Psychology, and Education at the staff of Social Sciences at two universities in Islamabad: one public and one private. They were all part of the last year of the 2023 class. Due to their prevalence in the sampled institutions' academic offerings, the aforementioned three departments were the only ones considered for the research. The population table from Gay (2005) was used to choose a sample of 356 pupils from the target population. To find the students who will participate in the study, researchers employed a stratified random selection technique. From among the faculty members, 58 were chosen using a universal sampling technique. Before data collecting began, the researcher made sure to get approval from the heads of department at the relevant universities. There were 30 statements in two self-administered closed-ended questionnaires; one pertained to academic quality, the other to institutional facilities, programme evaluation for quality improvement, research development activities, and service quality; and the second to institutional quality assurance practices. Pilot testing confirmed that the second set of questions—24 statements measuring academic quality and institutional facilities—on a five-point

Likert scale were appropriate for students to use in their investigation of the efficacy of institutional quality assurance measures. Pilot tests often use a 10% sample, as stated by Treece & Treece (1982). So, to make sure the instruments are suitable for administration, a pilot test was carried out with 21 pupils and 6 teachers. In addition, statistical software SPSS was used to analyse the pilot test data using Cronbach Alpha, a reliability analysis tool. All of the survey claims were deemed trustworthy as the alpha value of the student instrument was.841 and the faculty instrument was.862. Additionally, we made sure that the sub-scales were reliable.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A comparison was made between public and private universities in Islamabad with respect to institutional quality assurance practices using quantitative data collected from students and faculty members. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) and inferential statistics (independent sample t-test).

DATA ANALYSIS OF FACULTY MEMBERS
Table 1 Program Evaluation for Quality Improvement

S.No	Statements	Public	Private
1	Academic programs are evaluated periodically	74% agreed	76% agreed
2	Courses are evaluated periodically	81% agreed	82% agreed
3	Faculty members' involvement in course review	77% agreed	76% agreed
4	Graduating students' involvement in program review	75% agreed	70% agreed
5	Alumni involvement in program review	43% agreed	36% agreed
6	Experts are involved in course development/review	84% agreed	82% agreed
7	QEC visits department semester wise to monitor quality	61% agreed	73% agreed

Institutional quality assurance techniques as they pertain to programme evaluation for quality improvement are shown in Table no. 1 by faculty members of both public and private sector universities. Alumni are not frequently involved in programme assessment at either public or private universities, according to the statistics. Nevertheless, academic programmes and courses undergo regular evaluations, with specialists contributing to course development and review and graduating students reviewing programmes, according to faculty members from both sectors. In addition, compared to public universities, private ones seem to visit departments more frequently to check on quality, according to the respondents. Also, in comparison to public universities, private universities' QECs visit departments more frequently to assess quality, according to the responses.

Table 2 Institutional Facilities

S.No	Statements	Public	Private
1	Enough computer labs to conduct research study for students.	52% agreed	76% agreed
2	Internet facilities are available in the campus.	82% agreed	88% agreed
3	There are wide range of opportunities for recreational activities.	40% agreed	72% agreed
4	Scholarship opportunities are available for students.	54% agreed	54% agreed
5	Counselling and advising services are available for students.	62% agreed	61% agreed
6	Electronic admission procedures are available for students i.e. fees, online application forms, registration, etc.	81% agreed	82% agreed

Students can complete all aspects of the admissions process electronically, including payment, application, registration, etc.

Table 2 displays the results of a survey asking university professors from both public and private institutions how their respective institutions ensure the quality of their student facilities. According to the findings, students at private universities have more access to computer laboratories where they may do research and more options for extracurricular activities. On the other hand, students in both public and private institutions have access to the internet on campus and electronic admission procedures, such as online registration, online application forms, online fee vouchers, etc. According to the results, university counselling services are ineffective at both public and private institutions.

Table 3 Service Quality

S.No	Statements	Public	Private
1	Recruitment criteria for faculty members is welldefined	79% agreed	81% agreed
2	Merit is observed in the appointment of employees.	82% agreed	84% agreed
3	Experienced and highly skilled professionals are hired for educational programs.	81%agreed	82%agreed
4	Faculty members have opportunities for professional development	76% agreed	77% agreed
5	Workload is equally distributed among all faculty member members	64% agreed	64% agreed
6	Assignment of academic activities according torelevant qualification of the individuals.	79% agreed	60% agreed

Faculty members' opinions on institutional quality assurance practices as they pertain to faculty service quality are displayed in Table no. 3 for both public and private universities. The findings show that universities in both the public and commercial sectors use clear hiring standards and promote from within; they also hire only the most qualified candidates for teaching positions and provide many opportunity for faculty members to advance their careers. Faculty members at public universities are more than happy to have their workloads distributed evenly and to have assignments made according to each student's academic strengths, while faculty members at private universities express dissatisfaction with these practices.

Table 4 Research Development Activities

S.No	Statement	Public	Private
1	Faculty members have enough time for research activities	62% agreed	67% agreed
2	Department organizes seminars on research activities.	77% agreed	80% agreed
3	Research journals is published by the departments.	78% agreed	71% agreed
4	Quality papers published in Scientific/ Academic journals.	78% agreed	72% agreed
5	Workshops are organized for students to enhance theirresearch skills.	84% agreed	88% agreed

Institutional quality assurance techniques in relation to research and development activities are examined in Table no. 4 by faculty members from both public and private universities. Public and private university professors alike are unhappy with the amount of time they have to devote to research, according to the findings. Public and private university professors reached a consensus: students may benefit from lectures and workshops that focused on improving their research abilities. Public and private colleges and universities around

the world produce high-quality research in peer-reviewed academic publications.

Table 5 Academic Quality (Faculty Members)

S.No	Statements	Public	Private
1	University atmosphere is conducive for qualityeducation	75% agreed	74% agreed
2	Instructional facilities are available in classrooms for teaching learning process of students	84% agreed	86% agreed
3	Grading system is well defined.	81% agreed	82% agreed
4	Assessment procedures are fair and transparent.	79% agreed	83% agreed
5	Feedback from students is used to improve teaching.	73% agreed	72% agreed
6	Department has collaboration with international universities /organizations.	75% agreed	74% agreed

In terms of academic quality, Table 5 displays the responses of faculty members from both public and private universities about institutional quality assurance measures. Compared to public institutions, private ones have better classroom facilities for teaching and learning, according to the data. Moreover, academics from both public and private universities agreed on all claims about academic quality, which shows that universities provide an environment that is good for learning, that grading is clear, that evaluations are open and honest, and that, most importantly, that universities follow the quality standards of HEC.

DATA ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS
Table 6 Academic Quality (Students)

S.No	Statements	Public	Private
1	Departmental learning environment is conducive for quality learning.	74% agreed	77% agreed
2	Classrooms are well equipped with instructional facilities.	67% agreed	83% Agreed
3	Teaching and learning at the classroom is interactive.	76% agreed	76% agreed
4	Teachers provide equal opportunities for learning to every student.	78%agreed	79%Agreed
5	Students are given opportunities to practice their learning through practical work/ projects.	64% agreed	78% agreed
6	Assessment procedures are fair and transparent.	81% agreed	78% Agreed
7	Assignments are aligned to meet the objectives.	77% agreed	77% agreed
8	Time allocation for assignments submission.	82% agreed	84%Agreed
9	Competence of the teachers at university.	85% agreed	84% agreed
10	Teachers are student-friendly and focus on their individual needs.	76% agreed	79% Agreed
11	Students have access to teachers in consultancy hours to discuss their educational problems.	77% agreed	85% agreed
12	University conducts students' evaluations for its quality improvement of teaching.	72% agreed	76% Agreed

Table 6 displays the results of a survey asking students at both public and private institutions how they feel their school ensures high academic standards. According to the results, students at public and private colleges alike are pleased with the level of instruction they receive. Students at public and private institutions both felt that a conducive classroom setting was essential to their

academic success. In a classroom setting, students actively participate in their own education while teachers ensure that each student has access to high-quality educational opportunities. The proficiency of the instructors has been met with satisfaction by the students in both fields. There is openness and fairness in the evaluation process, and assignments are structured to help students achieve their goals. The results show that students at private colleges have more possibilities to put what they learn into practice through internships and other forms of practical experience than those at public institutions, which is at odds with the claims made by students at public universities about the relevance of their education. Based on the comments, it appears that private institutions have better classroom facilities than public universities. Nonetheless, participants from both groups acknowledged that educators are approachable and devoted to meeting the needs of their students; after all, educators are available to students during consultation hours to talk about any issues they're having in the classroom. Both groups of respondents agreed that universities should use student feedback to enhance the quality of their curricula.

Table 7 Institutional Facilities (Students)

S.No	Statements	Public	Private
1	Building of the university fulfils the instructional requirement of Students.	71% agreed	82% agreed
2	There are a wide range of opportunities for recreational activities.	51% agreed	73% Agreed
3	Number of class rooms are adequate.	52% agreed	54% agreed
4	Library facility is provided to the students with wide range of resources relevant to their studies	77% agreed	78% Agreed
5	Well-equipped IT labs to meet students' needs.	64% agreed	77% agreed
6	Students are satisfied with the transportation facilities provided to the them.	53% agreed	62% Agreed
7	Counselling services are available for problematic students at university.	54% agreed	56% agreed
8	Internet facility are available in the university.	77% agreed	87% Agreed
9	Students' accessibility to administration department for inquiry.	58% agreed	52% agreed
10	Scholarship opportunities for students.	58% agreed	50% agreed
11	Students are advised to maintain code of conduct in the university.	82% agreed	86% agreed
12	Students are updated of all the university relevant news through the university portal.	87% agreed	82% agreed

In Table 7, we can see how students at both public and private universities felt about the facilities-related quality assurance measures used by their respective institutions. Universities are facing a severe lack of classroom space, according to comments from both the public and commercial sectors. Both industries also lack competent counselling services. Scholarship opportunities are similarly limited at universities in both sectors. The transport options are also something they are unhappy with. Students at public universities are less likely to be satisfied with the availability of recreational possibilities and well-equipped IT labs than students at private institutions, which is at odds with their answers to other assertions. According to the comments, it is also difficult for students at both public and private colleges to get in touch with the administration department when they have questions. Students have access to a wealth of academically useful materials through the campus library, and respondents from both the public and commercial sectors express satisfaction with other campus amenities. Students can also stay informed about any news that pertains to the

university by using the portal. The fact that the university upholds a code of conduct was also acknowledged by respondents from both industries.

Hypotheses Testing

H01: There is no significant difference in institutional quality assurance practicesadopted by the public and private universities.

Table 8 Effectiveness of Institutional Quality Assurance Practices

Sector	N	Mean	t-value	Df	P
Public	180	86.7722	3.573	354	.321
Private	176	90.5682			

The effectiveness of institutional quality assurance practices at public and private universities is shown in Table no.8, as mentioned earlier. While there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups' mean values, favouring private universities, the t-value of 3.573 and p-value of.321 indicate that there are no significant variations in the institutional quality assurance processes of public and private universities. When comparing public and private universities, the mean value of institutional quality assurance practices at private institutions is 90.56, whereas at public universities it is 86.77.

DISCUSSION

Higher education has been rapidly expanding, as seen by the large increases in university enrollments, government funding, and the overall number of institutions in the sector. To address the growing demand for higher education, the Pakistani government is pushing for private universities to grow at the same rate as state ones. Investors from the business sector have poured money into Pakistan's universities at an alarming rate during the last decade. As a result of the private sector's active participation, private institutions have arisen. A thorough analysis of the quality and quality assurance procedures used by these HEIs is critically necessary in light of their tremendous growth. Numerous scholars have acknowledged the efforts made by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to foster a culture of excellence and improve quality assurance in the higher education sector. Examining and contrasting institutional quality assurance procedures in public and private institutions was the primary goal of the current study.

Learners are more prepared for the workforce and more likely to come up with novel solutions to problems when they have experience applying what they have learned in the real world, as opposed to only studying theoretical concepts. The survey found that compared to private institutions, public universities offer fewer opportunities for students to put their knowledge into practice through practical work or projects. This confirms what Saleem (2016) found: that public institutions place a greater emphasis on theoretical knowledge than on the real-world applications that may be gained from hands-on experience in a variety of initiatives. The findings of Andaleep (2020), who found that the majority of Pakistani universities prioritised teaching theoretical concepts over their practical applications, corroborate this finding. The results show that there is a deficiency in the provision of effective counselling services by both the public and commercial sectors. Ali and Ashraf (2014) corroborate the findings, and he also notes in his research that universities have a serious issue with the absence of counselling and guiding centres. In addition, Rasool (2009) found that there has to be a system in place to monitor instructors' behaviour while they are teaching and that there needs to be an operational student counselling process. University administrations should think about creating a counselling and guiding office to address this need. The results show that public universities are struggling to keep up with quality standards, such as having enough funding for IT labs and scholarship chances. Khan (2010) finds that the government of Pakistan spends more money on defence than education, which is consistent with the current findings. Pakistan has the lowest percentage of GDP allocated to

education (1.7%) compared to other emerging nations.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) rely heavily on programme assessment as part of their quality assurance methods to guarantee that their academic programmes are successful, efficient, and in line with their stated objectives. Public and private colleges alike do not frequently include alums and former students in programme evaluation, according to the study's results. Rasool (2009) found that only a small percentage of graduating students participate in programme evaluation and review. He argues that universities should increase student participation in programme review so that they can better adapt their curricula to meet the needs of their students. Public sector university quality enhancement cells (QECs) do not make frequent departmental visits, according to the results. The results corroborate those of Sobia (2019), who also found that QECs seldom stop by public university departments. The results show that professors at both public and private colleges are too busy with their workloads to perform enough research. They feel that the workload is not being distributed fairly among the faculty members, taking into account their particular abilities. In support of the study's conclusions, Shaikh, Memon, and Shah (2017) contended that professionals in Pakistan work uneven hours, with some clocking in late and others clocking out early. A large proportion of Pakistani schools, according to Aslam (2016), have serious problems with teacher disengagement, inappropriate meddling, and uneven job distribution.

Public and private universities do not differ significantly in their institutional quality assurance processes, according to the study's results. In a study comparing public and private universities in Karachi, Ayaz and Muhammad (2020) found no significant difference between the two sectors when it came to student opinions on how HEIs can improve their quality standards through quality assurance schemes. This finding is in line with the current study's findings.

CONCLUSION

This study has given a detailed description and examinations on the current state of implementational intervention on institutional quality assurance in the context of selected public and private universities in Islamabad, Pakistan. The findings therefore reveal that although both types of institutions are keen on maintaining academic integrity, there is a variation especially on the aspects of availability/ quality of institutional facilities, service quality, as well as research development programs.

On the comparison of private and public universities, it was observed that the later lacks in infrastructure and practical area for students as compared with the former. This partially shows that the government needs to up its spending on facilities in the public sector and spread the workloads of the faculty members in an equitable manner in order to improve the general learning environment. Additionally, there are some failures with regard to counselling services and alumni engagement and involvement in program reviews for constant improvement and the highest satisfaction among students: all these shortcomings can be observed in both public and private universities.

The study also emphasizes the fact that internal quality assurance should be effectively maintained together with external assessments to guarantee the educational quality in the long run. There is therefore a need to review and enhance the existing practices in both sector and close such gaps in Institutional quality assurance. To be specific, the study suggests an increased provision of scholarships, quality classroom and Information Technology laboratory, and functional students' counselling services. Moreover, increasing the focus on faculty development programs and managing the workload among faculties are crucial to the improvement of the services.

Altogether, this study enlightens the essential areas demanding attention and offers a set of policy suggestions to the policymakers, university executives, and QAAs to improve the standard of HE in Pakistan. Therefore, overcoming these challenges can enhance the Pakistani universities to foster the international standards and plays an important role in the nation's socio-economic development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings show that compared to private colleges, public universities offer fewer chances for students to put what they learn into reality through practical work or projects. Departments should not only depend on theories when establishing courses, but also think about the course's practical implications by creating relevant projects. There is a severe lack of classroom space on college campuses, impacting both public and private institutions. When accepting additional students, administration should think about their current accommodation level and the number of available classes. If there is adequate place on campus, they could even build new classrooms. Both public and private universities have fewer scholarship opportunities. To promote and entice talented students, the university should consider increasing the number of scholarship options it offers.

Public and private colleges and universities alike do not provide adequate counselling services, according to the respondents. It is suggested that troublesome students have access to a practical counselling approach that might help them sort out their academic problems. When compared to private colleges, state universities' information technology laboratories are woefully inadequate. The management should upgrade the technology in their computer labs so that all professors and students have free access to the most recent tools. According to the findings, private institutions offer superior classroom facilities for the teaching-learning process than public universities. It is suggested that public universities upgrade their classroom technology to better facilitate the teaching and learning process. It is difficult for students at both public and private colleges to get in touch with the administration department when they have questions. It may be more convenient for students to visit the administration department for inquiries if workers there updated procedures and cooperated with them.

It is unusual for alumni to be involved in evaluations of academic programmes at either public or private institutions. Departments can consider incorporating alumni into programme reviews to assist identify programme weaknesses and make necessary updates. Faculty members at public universities were more satisfied with the equitable distribution of workload and the assignment of academic work based on individual qualifications, while faculty members at private universities were dissatisfied with both aspects of their work schedules. Departments should consider letting professors choose their own scholarly responsibilities based on their interests, strengths, and experience. In contrast to private universities, state institutions do not have QECs who visit departments on a regular basis to check on their quality development. The quality of education may be enhanced if QEC made frequent visits to monitor and maintain checks and balances.

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