Quality of Higher Education at Post Graduate Colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhawa, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The current paper presents the case study of Government Post Graduate College Nowshera in terms of quality parameters. The population of the study comprised of BS students, their teachers and heads of departments. The sample of the study comprised of 13 participants taken by purposive sampling technique. The primary data was collected by face to face interviews and secondary through official records. Inferential statistics were used following grounded theory and interpretative paradigm. The results obtained were grouped and regrouped according to themes and recommendations were given accordingly. Findings: - the study found under-developed infrastructure, inadequate general and academic facilities, less qualified faculty, traditional teaching style, unconducive environment and limited resources at the college. Recommendations: - the study recommends development of college infrastructure of university standards, training of teachers, high qualified faculty, modern pedagogical skills, and provision of extra funds.

INTRODUCTION

Quality is basic requirement of an educational system. There is no comprehensive definition of quality education; however, it is measured by various parameters. The parents look at facilities, stake holders want quality outcomes and the learners find the quality process. The education without quality cannot produce skilled persons nor be beneficent to society. It is the main point of intension in every educational setting. The QE is recognized only when skilled, competent and competing individuals are produced

(Arain, 2019). Thus, HEIs need to target the teaching of skills to make the individuals competent and beneficent. The global world has been making efforts to enhance the quality of education. Education for all (EFA) was adopted by Pakistan in 1990 with 150 other countries, under this commitment every country has to provide QE at all levels. In the year 2000, following EFA world education forum at Dakar supported the EFA and in 2015 the goals were adopted. The fifth and sixth goal of the Dakar declaration insisted to promote life skills in youth and adults, and improve every corner of educational quality.

Government of Pakistan (GoP) in National education policy (2009) gave the guideline to enhance the quality of education by setting standards of educational inputs, processes and outcomes. Hence, to have the quality of education, all the HEIs have to maintain standards fixed for all the three dimensions. The educational institutions are categorized on the basis of their provision of quality education (QE). The HEIs need to produce competent professional that may play the role of socio economic development of the country (Regassa, 2013). Provision of QE is equally significant at all levels but especially attended at higher education (HE) level. The HEIs do their best to compete with others in provision of QE. According to Shaheen, et.al (2020) QE was the main milestone for HEIs, these institutions have upgraded system of quality maintenance. The internal quality is maintained by quality enhancement cells (QECs) by monitoring and giving suggestions for improvement. However, externally the quality assurance agency (QAA) at higher education commission Islamabad gives guide lines for quality recruitment, research and funding etc. The universities prepare curricula and syllabus for themselves as well as colleges and conduct examination but these colleges are not under the managerial control of universities. The post graduate colleges work under the ministry of education supervised by regional directorates.

Higher education (HE) in Pakistan starts after the completion of 12 years' education; from undergraduate i-e Bachelor level to graduate and post graduate courses. It is extended in universities which play the role of teaching as well as research or in post graduate colleges that work as teaching bodies According to Mishra (2007) it expedites the teaching and research at various levels, and helpful in extension of the system. It enhances the cooperation among countries of the world and creates mutual understanding. The duty of HE institutions is to provide teaching facilities, conducting research and making innovations. The exchange of knowledge at this level helps on increasing cooperation among nations and understanding to go ahead collectively.

Formerly, universities provided 3 years' degree (BSc, BA) program and was called BSc or BA honors followed by 1 year MSC degree. The degree colleges offered 2 years BSc (Pass) degree and the same student had to get more 2 years MSc (pass) degree from the universities. These degrees were not compatible with the international degrees, hence these were not recognized. Hence, higher education commission (HEC) introduced a new degree system that is compatible both in structure and quality. Now, both universities and colleges extend 4 year BS degrees of equal standard and structure. In Khyber Pakhtunkhawa (KPK) the postgraduate colleges are extending new 4-year degree like universities with same curricula, structures etc. The current study investigates the gaps in quality education system that hinder the enhancement of quality of education at post graduate colleges in (KPK) province.

Statement of the problem

The present study aims to investigate Government Post graduate College Nowshera in terms of quality of education, the existing state and gaps, being the representative of public sector post graduate colleges of KPK.

Research questions

1. How does college environment affect students' learning?

2. How do instructors' pedagogical 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 colleges?

5. What are the many types of assessment and how do they affect the quality of students' learning?

Research Design and Methodology

The current research is a qualitative case study. It was designed to investigate the gaps in quality of education at public sector post graduate colleges of KPK. The study was delimited to Government postgraduate college Nowshera which represents the post graduate colleges of KPK having same structure and facilities. The sample of 06 students from 03 departments, their teachers, head of departments and principal, a total of 13 respondents made the sample of the study through purposive sampling (Gay, 2012). To collect the primary data, an unstructured interview schedule was prepared, face to face interviews were conducted and secondary data was collected through official record and broachers. Inferential statistics were used to analyze the data, the data was grouped as per themes and research questions, conclusions were drawn and recommendations made.

Theoretical framework

The current research was based on grounded theory of Given (2008).It is the best method of describing and analyzing social situation. Cohn, et.al (2007) stated seven steps in grounded theory as define well the research question, point out the population, suitable sampling, best way of documentation, describing the themes for analysis, collecting and coding data, data analysis, and summarizing and making inferences as a result. It was the best choice, hence the researchers selected the grounded theory and interpretive paradigm to complete the study**.**

Quality & Quality Education

The service providers, customers, and common people use the word quality but there is no comprehensive definition of quality. Quality is the degree of excellence of something (Cambridge, 2021) or standard of something when it is compared with things like it (Oxford, 2021).   The experts have not reached a common definition because it is an elusive term having variety of interpretations (Bobby, 2014). Various groups of people define quality in their own way but there are four basic stakeholder may contribute in defining quality which include the investors, consumers, buyers, and the producing agency and its employees (Srikanthethen & Dalrymple, 2003). Juran (1994) defines quality as "fitness for use", "conformance to requirements" (Crosby, 1980)), "the totality of characteristics of an entity that bear on its ability to satisfy and implied

need" (ISO, 8402). Elshaer (2012) gave a comprehensive definition of quality as "a situation when a set of inherent characteristics consistently fulfill the continuously changing requirements of the organization's customers and other stakeholders".

Exceptional of schooling is the important aspect for the improvement of a country. It influences without delay or indirectly on employability, improvement of abilities, effects and competences that assist college students inside the group. Teachers are being informed to accumulate today's methods to educate the younger technology for the improvement and increase of the newbies (Budiharso, 2020). Students get that understanding that is imparted with the aid of teachers. So, instructors should be capable to generate creativity and to have the capacity to provide performance, competencies and excellent newcomers.

Consistent with UNESCO (2021) the first-class of training is measured by means of stakeholders within the terms of results, but input and process have to also have nice in terms of performance, effectiveness, excellence, and social justice. Consequently, handiest the product can't be the base to degree the pleasant, the other factors like input and procedure will also be measured. The education can be supplied through efficient instructors having command on their relevant topics and trained in turning in effective teaching. The input along with the content material and coaching process can be top notch with all of the marketplace values and required requirements. The crucial element is likewise social justice; the satisfactory training usually works for each community and refrains from injustice. It gives the proper to increase and grow in the global of competitive education to each institution of people without any discrimination. Those elements may collectively produce the excellent product, called as satisfactory schooling. according to Thareja (2017) the schooling considered w.r.t relevant definitions of exceptional, mostly, the focus has been restrained to three defines namely fitness to use or purpose, conformance to requirements- customers' necessities (employability, out comes) and totality of characteristics of an entity that endure on its capacity to meet said and implied want (ISO, 8402). The quality of training can't be received without first-class inexperienced persons, mastering surroundings, have a look at material, coaching studying method and outcomes (GoP, 2016).

Quality Indicators

These indicators are the symptoms or characteristics of an education system that show the state of quality. UNESCO (2000) and GoP (2016) gave the following five indicators of quality education.

Learning environment

These include quality learning environment (LE) having infrastructure facilities, qualified human resources, Inclusive environment with tolerance for diversity goal oriented leadership, parents and community.

The quality learners

The quality learners (QLs) are the basic thing necessary for quality education. UNICEF (2000) gave the necessary characteristics of quality learners as learner with good health and nutrition, early childhood psychological experiences, regular attendance for learning and family support.

Quality process (QP)

The analysis of the activities in a program on the basis of quality standards is followed by quality process (QP). According to Khursheed (2014), Scheerens, Luyten & Van

Ravens (2011) QP is estimated in terms of standards fixed in whole program offered, quality of teaching, and time on task, institutional atmosphere and educational leadership. These indicators may be achieved through monitoring and pedagogical inspection, reports, and self-evaluations.

Quality content (QC)

Quality content (QC) 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)

Quality Outcomes (QOs)

Quality Outcomes (QOs) are the result of quality input, process and environment. Generally masses analyze quality on the basis of output quality on comparing with their standards. The product is as compared with different similar product received within the same fee to be had in the market. For this reason, here the exceptional learner after being knowledgeable thru a satisfactory system is available earlier than human beings. The evaluation of the scholar may be formative and summative; but it measures the overall efficiency of the learner. The instructor makes use of formative assessment method to evaluate the students on daily basis to know his development but summative assessment is necessary to evaluate him after a milestone. This evaluation is made at the end of a semester or academic 12 months. In line with Eze (2009) instructional achievement is measured and taken as high-quality indicator. However, learning environment, the study material, teaching learning process and the results obtained equally matter (Madni ,2019).

Review of Studies

The researchers from all over the world have contributed to reach the reasons about declining trend in quality of education. Some of the efforts are given below:-

Khan, S., Ali, R. &., Arain, S.S. (2022) in their comparative study concluded that the un conducive environment, missing facilities, under developed infrastructure of colleges, lack of training of teachers, under developed laboratories and libraries, using old style of teaching demystified the quality of education as compared with the university.

The missing facilities of libraries, AV aids and relevant study material decline the quality of education. In the absence of additional activities and using old fashioned, teacher centered methodology affected the quality. It was also found that the quality of education was low in more populated classes (Arain, Khatoon & Samson, 2021).

In another study it was found that the quality may be calculated in terms of quality of teaching & learning process. However, the research activities and production of research skills also powered the quality. The management opined that accreditation process can enhance the quality of education at HEIs (Al-Amril, Mathew, & Zu, 2020).

The learning conditions directly affect the quality of education. If the learning environment were less positive, it affected the teachers, administration and other concerned, hence finally lowered the quality of education. (Budiharso & Tarman, 2020). They further concluded that safe and sound working atmosphere enhanced employees' retention and that resulted to maximum quality in all.

Al-Amri, A.S (2020) carried out a studies on requirements to measure excellent in HE at Malaysia. Students were located to opt for standards associated with teaching and gaining knowledge of excellent. Employers have been extra concerned with graduates' research skills, and enterprise and network involvement. Body of workers showed awareness about the accreditation technique and gave some suggestions for enhancements.

Allam, Z (2020) performed a survey on quality of HE in Saudi Arabia and discovered six elements that influence, teaching and studying with teachers qualification, systematic sources, admission levels, content, effects evaluation and the teaching methods with style.

Shaheen, N., et.al. (2020) conducted a studies to analyze high-quality of training thru conducive surroundings in Pakistan. They attained that conducive magnificence room surroundings become vital for green studying. Moreover, collaborative and real processes have been necessary for great of training. They concluded that elegance room surroundings changed into effective for instructor and gaining knowledge of method.

Yaghoubi, Salimi, & Zaranadi (2018) of their research determined the elements affecting the first-rate of schooling ; coaching competencies, expertise of principles and rules of training, assessment of skills, being concerned of ethics, scientific information, professional traits, training and coaching, and commentary of educational rules. The scholars, mind-set and personal characteristics additionally have an effect on the instructional exceptional.

Kundu (2017) concluded that there may be no commonplace framework to measure the particular first-class dimensions. However, he in addition suggested that first-rate may be measured by the point of views of all the stakeholders and dimensions. The excellent can be measured inside the shape of outcomes, software, infrastructure, centers, teaching methodology, up to date curricula, management and offerings.

Findings

The inferential statistics was used to interpret the data, the data was analyzed and grouped according to research questions and themes as under:-

Impact of learning environment

The infrastructure of the college mainly consisted of lecture halls. The quality basic facilities provided were of below average. The students were bound to class room learnings and the students seemed dissatisfied. The infrastructure was just rooms and seemed no planning and quality facilitation. One of the respondent stated *"we just come to attend classes and sit in grassy parks during leisure', there is no quality canteen nor the standby power supply in case of electricity interruption"*. The laboratories available were of low level as compared to modern

needs. The dealings of the officials seemed formal and no orientation was arranged for new comer students. One of the respondent representing the management replied that "We *have limited infrastructure and we do our best; within the available funds and infrastructure*". The teachers felt need of training and students showed their dissatisfaction.

Pedagogical practices and their impact

The teachers used traditional lecture methods to teach the students. The use of modern technologies like projector technique or else were not used. The students listed to teachers and took notes for their academic nourishments. 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. One of the respondents said "the *current staff was appointed to teach old curricula, hence only a few teachers will be found having doctorate degrees*". The respondents reported no strict check and balance on teachers' performance on college side.

Coverage of curriculum and contribution

The respondents reported satisfactory coverage of curricula; the teachers covered the courses well in time. However, it was mostly theoretical and missed the practices of skills. One of the respondent stated "*the courses are covered well in time but the practical work is done at the end of the courses*".

The management advocated their policy and thought it their success on completion of courses. According to statement of one respondent from management *"it is our history that we always complete our courses well in time and our students get better grades*". The coverage of courses was important for quality learning, however the transfer of skills was also important.

Contribution of resources availability

The infrastructure, general and academic facilities does not fulfil students' needs. The provision of facilities required funds and planning. One of the respondents stated "the *infrastructure is not compatible with modern education facilities of HE. It was planned as formal colleges, hence a fresh planning and special interest of concerned is needed*" The colleges get only limited funds from provincial government which may likely be used as operating charges. The colleges need more financial aids for up gradation. The colleges need well equipped laboratories, libraries, hostel facilities but in colleges they are of minor level. The facilities of university in infrastructure and learning material are much better than colleges and it needed to equalize them up to university standards. The presence of resources at university has positive impacts over students.

Effect of assessment modes and their impact

The college conducted summative evaluation through assignments and midterm examinations however formative evaluation i-e final examinations were conducted by university. The assignments carried no marks and no academic quizzes were arranged. The assignments were mostly formal and essay type. The assignments were however not compulsory which lost the interest of students. There was no special body to check the work of teachers; all of the system depended on supervision of principal. One of the respondent stated "*all the teachers are senior faculty members and expected to work hard, however there is no strict check and balance over teaching*" The students and teachers evaluation has impact on quality of education. The monitoring of all the

relevant at any stage made him more responsible and in the absence of monitoring the management can't know the better faculty members and missed to appreciate their efforts.

Conclusion and Discussion on Results

The results reveal under-developed infrastructure of the college with minor level general and academic facilities. The learning environment is created with suitable, planned and goal oriented infrastructure and relevant facilities. The effective use of learning environment may result in all-round learning capability of the students (Closs, 2022).The general facilities like drinking water, stand-by power solution, standard canteens and activity accommodations of quality level. The libraries which are functional, up-dated with current research, print as well as in soft form, duly linked with other information reservoirs are the basic needs of graduate students. Hence, in the absence of such facilities of world standard level the expectations of high quality education would be futile. The college did not arrange any orientation program for new comer students; which shows their interest and direction of the management. It seems that education being provided was undirected; when the students were puzzled, how to run in the system. The college had only one-fourth faculty with doctorate degrees and no member had a foreign degree. Hence, in the absence of high qualified staff, there were limited pedagogical skills in the staff. The academic qualification of teachers had a constructive effect on performance (Owolabi, O.T., & Adedayo, 2012).The college teachers used the traditional lecture methods and coverage of course was their motto. HEIs failed in playing effective role to promote pedagogical skills with the use of modern instructional technology (Sultana, et.al, 2009).There was no arrangement for modern teaching methods nor the attachment of practical work with the theory. Hence, it affected the quality of education badly. The coverage of course was satisfactory at the college; however it depended only upon old traditional, lecture methods. The teaching was teacher center and depended upon the teacher made notes. It affected the quality and affected the creativity in the students. The colleges have limited resources; the see the provincial government for funding. Moreover, every time they have to take approvals of the concerned authorities. Moreover, governments do the collective projects of development all over the province. So, the especial needs of a particular college remained in background. The assessment of both type was carried on by college but the formative evaluation was not given so much importance. There were assignments for the formative evaluation but they did not carry marks nor were the quizzes arranged for the students to nourish their academic skills. However, the summative evaluation or final exams were equally conducted by the university to whom college was affiliated. The practice of unimportance of formative assessment also lowered the QE as the lowering motivation and interest in students.

Recommendations

The study recommends equally development of college infrastructure like universities. Providing standard libraries, laboratories and other general and academic facilities. The training of college employees for broadening their vision and arrangement of orientation programs and activities. The appointment of highly qualified teaching faculty and training of pedagogical skills to the existing faculty. Providing necessary equipment for modern teaching methods and arrangements. Arrangements of seminars, conferences, debates equal to university. Converge of courses using modern methods stuck with activities and practical works. Provision of extra funds and making colleges,

self-dependence and free in utilizing funds. Making evaluation formative modern and introduce modern technology with assignments, quizzes etc.

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