

Impact Of Job Status And Demographic Trends On Quality Education: A Case Study Of Private Universities In Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this paper was to examine the quality of various aspects of higher education in the private sector of Pakistan by adopting a descriptive method of research. The population of the study constituted 270 administrators, 6,180 teachers and 61,108 students in existing 54 private universities and degree-awarding institutions of Pakistan. The method of cluster sampling was used to select the study sample of 840 people, which was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, 12 clusters of universities were randomly chosen out of the total population of private universities. In the second stage, 60 administrators, 180 teachers and 600 students were selected through a random sampling procedure with five administrators, 15 teachers and 50 students from each selected cluster. Three questionnaires, developed and refined through pre-testing, were used as measuring instruments to collect data. The researcher personally visited each university and collected data from the sample. The collected data was tabulated, analyzed and interpreted by using ANOVA and t test techniques.

Keywords: Quality Education, Access, Relevance, Faculty, Managers

INTRODUCTION

Private sector plays a competitive role and contributes effectively in strengthening the quality of higher education in Pakistan. Unfortunately, the Higher Education commission has no authority to check the issues of job security for staff, heavy dues, and location of universities in major cities. There is a dire need to conduct a focused research in this area to explore validity and reliability.

According to the UNESCO (1998), quality is indispensable for higher education to develop skilled and trained human resources. The policy of quality education, aiming at the 'quality safeguard' approach, is to focus each of the components of the institution as an integral coherent system of input, process and output. The quality of higher education depends on the following:

- Quality of staff, which implies an acceptable social and financial status, a will to reduce inequalities, such as gender disparity, and a concern to manage staff in accordance with the merit principle and provide them with in-service training. In order to fulfill their role in changing society, there is need for incentives to encourage researchers to work in multidisciplinary teams on thematic projects, thus breaking with the habit of exclusively solitary scientific work.
- Quality of curricula, which calls for special care in the definition of the objectives of the training provided in relation to the requirements of the world of work (technical and skilled manpower, job orientation) and the needs of society, an adaptation of teaching methods to make students more active and to develop an enterprising spirit, an expansion of and greater flexibility/training facilities so as to make full use of the possibilities afforded by IT and to take the characteristics of the context into account, and the

- internationalization and networking of curricula, students and teachers.
- Quality of the students who constitute the raw materials of higher education, which requires special attention to their problems of access in the light of criteria related to merit (abilities and motivation), proactive policies for benefit of the disadvantaged, exchanges with secondary education, and with the involvement in the transition from secondary to higher education to ensure that education is an unbroken chain.
 - Quality of the infrastructure and environment, which involves use of information and communication technologies, distance education facilities, and the possibility of a "virtual university".

Virk (1998) was of the view that higher education in Pakistan needs urgent reforms as it is not presently contributing effectively to economic growth of the country. The standard of higher education is not enviable because the universities, in their present form, are neither geared to create new knowledge, nor does their graduate study program measure up to international standards. Rapid expansion of the system, limited financial input, and student unrest have eroded the teaching/learning process, despite the modernization of curricula. The supply of funds to universities is limited, coupled with inefficient use of public funding. The universities are unresponsive to market trends and are essentially divorced from the world of work. Higher education is more supply-oriented than demand-oriented. The research base in universities is rather weak. However, he adds that centers of excellence, the center of advanced studies, area study centers, and mono-disciplinary institutions in the universities have made substantial advances in a number of research fields. Yet, inadequately equipped libraries and laboratories, as well as a shortage of qualified teachers continue to hinder the progress of higher education toward achievement.

Prachayani (2006) states that the Pakistani government has stressed the role of private sector in promoting higher education in order to help enhance low rates of higher education enrollment and national literacy in a context of resource constraints. Research-oriented education and modern teaching methods are the prime foci of such a promotion. Notwithstanding a view that private institutions have been providing laudable services and quality education, the government will continue to monitor the performance of both private and public institutions.

The low quality of teaching faculties, as a whole, is one of the major causes of low standards of education. The research strength and quality of academic programs of an institution depend on the quality of the faculty. Poor quality and shortage of qualified teachers continues to hinder the progress of higher education towards achieving international standard (Isani and Virk, 2003).

Coffman (1997) states that the growth of private higher education has had some positive impacts. Private universities generally pay much higher salaries and the best ones offer quality libraries and research facilities. They tend to respond to the public demand for modern, hands-on practical training in business and technology.

Castro and Levy (2000) describe that private institutions rarely assume or claim to assume academic elite roles complete with doctoral education, basic research, large laboratories and libraries, or mostly full-time academic staffs. This provides an opening for critics to belittle these institutions as not "true universities"; i.e., not fulfilling university roles.

Bernasconi (2004) concludes that compared to the other types of private universities, the affiliated ones possess distinctive mission statements and declarations of principles, consistent with the orientations of their sponsor institutions, tend to be smaller, and tend to have more full-time and better qualified faculty. Some receive financial support from their sponsor organizations or its members. Distinctiveness was not found in student selectivity, nor in tuition levels, program offerings, curriculum design, the weight of research and graduate programs in their functions, student socio-economic profile and faculty involvement in governance.

Brenda and Baron (2000) argued that there are many items related to duties carried out by non-academic staff; e.g. administrators and faculty support staff, over whom the academic staff may have no direct control. Academic staff should also take care of non-academic issues so that students attain satisfaction in their studies. The students are not interested in university organizational hierarchies and expect all university staff to work together.

Ruch (2001) states that private institutions are responsible for their own funding, along with internal governance and management and the relationship and due diligence to students, parents, government and public authorities. Lessons from other countries with established private institutions have shown that in the majority of cases, institutions are financed by tuition payments from students. For example, in the USA, nearly 95% of the profit colleges' revenues is generated from tuition and fees in contrast to 42.2% for private not-for-profit and 18.4% for public not-for-profit higher academic institutions.

Hamidullah (2004) conducted a study on the "comparison of the quality of higher education in public and private sector institutions in Pakistan". The objectives of the study were to compare the quality of staff, quality of student, and quality of infrastructure of higher education in public and private institutions. The sample was 20 universities/degree-awarding institutions, ten each from public and private sectors. The major findings of the study were that teachers in the private sector were more confident and competent than the public sector; the quality of students was better in the private sector than in the public sector; private sector universities were far better than in the public sector, whereas playgrounds, common rooms, cafeteria, hostels, dispensaries and transport facilities were better, to a greater extent, in public sector universities; and lastly, as far as quality of management was concerned, both sectors were weak.

Recently, institutions of higher learning are characterized by student diversity, newer teaching technologies, changing public expectations, shifting emphasis towards the learner, expanding faculty work loads, and a new labor market for faculty (Austin, 2002). These characteristics indicate a major transformation in higher education (Rice 1998, and Schuster 1999).

A survey of private education institutions indicates that many of these institutions offer courses in fields such as accountancy, business studies and computer studies, which do not require large capital outlay (Tan, 2002). With a competitive trend for student numbers, cost-revenue calculations, and limited scope for significant changes to work practices, funding for academic careers is unlikely to obtain high priority.

The issue regarding the quality of education in private institutions is the main focus of this study. It is a fact that quality of education cannot be enhanced in isolation. It has to be coordinated with quality of management, quality of teaching staff, quality of curricula, quality of infrastructure, and quality of research, ultimately resulting in quality graduates.

Only a few studies appear to have been conducted to investigate the quality of education in Pakistan. The present study was designed to investigate the overall views about the quality of higher education in the private sector of Pakistan.

Statement of the Problem

The major purpose of this study was to examine the quality of various aspects of higher education in the private sector of Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

1. To compare the views of administrators, both male and female, permanent and contract-based, on quality of various aspects of higher education.
2. To compare the views of male and female teachers, permanent, contract-based and visiting teaching faculty on the quality of various aspects of higher education
3. To compare the views of male and female students on the quality of various aspects of higher education.

Research Procedure

All administrators, teachers and students of privately managed universities and degree awarding institutions in Pakistan constituted the population from which samples were drawn for the study. A cluster sampling technique was used in order to select the study sample of 840 people, which was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, 12

clusters of universities were randomly chosen out of the total population of existing 54 private universities. In the second stage, 60 administrators, 180 teachers and 600 students were selected through a random sampling procedure with five administrators, 15 teachers and 50 students from each selected cluster. The researcher prepared three separate questionnaires on the basis of literature review. Three questionnaires - one each for administrators, teachers and students - were developed based upon a 5-point Likert scale as instruments for data collection. The questionnaires comprised of items mainly regarding the quality of various aspects of higher education. These quality aspects are described by UNESCO (1998).

Data Analysis

The responses obtained through the above-mentioned research instruments were scored before statistical analysis and interpretation.

The following scoring procedure was adopted:

Strongly Agree	5
Agree	4
Un-decided	3
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	1

The data collected were analyzed by using computer software SPSS, version 11.0, and adopting the following procedures:

1. The researcher fed the data into computer.
2. After the data feeding, the researcher checked the data values for any error or abnormal value or out-of-range value for particular variables. This step is called ‘data clinic’.
3. The data transformation technique was applied to compute the total scores of three questionnaires and its subscales.
4. The frequencies of all demographic variables were taken. The statistics on the scores of the questionnaires were computed as cited below:
 - a. A t-test was applied to find the mean difference on the scores of three questionnaires and its subscales between two groups, on the variable of gender, experience and nature of job, etc.
 - b. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed to find the mean difference in the scores of three questionnaires and subscales between three groups.

The responses of the respondents on the quality of various aspects of higher education in private universities are tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted in this section.

Table 1: Significance Of Difference Between Mean Opinion Scores Of Male And Female Administrators On The Quality Of Various Aspects Of Higher Education

Scale	Male(N=34)		Female(N=16)		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Quality of Management	30.06	3.428	22.94	6.708	4.946**
Quality of Infrastructure	34.97	5.277	28.94	7.407	3.303**
Quality of Faculty	33.97	6.018	33.94	8.362	.016
Quality of Students	9.18	.936	8.63	1.996	1.338
Quality of Curriculum	4.79	.410	3.25	1.612	5.286**
Quality of Institutions	10.79	2.805	9.75	4.139	1.050
Total	123.76	11.510	107.44	24.536	3.223**

**p < .01

Table 1 indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between mean opinion scores of male and female administrators on the quality of management, quality of infrastructure, and quality of curriculum. Male administrators had more positive opinions on these dimensions. However, no significant difference in mean scores of male and female administrators existed on the quality of faculty, quality of students, and quality of institutions.

A significant difference was found in the mean opinion scores of male and female administrators in the overall quality of higher education. The mean opinion scores of male and female administrators were significantly higher than their female counterpart.

Table 2: Significance Of Difference Between Mean Opinion Scores Of Permanent Administrators And Contract Based Administrators On The Quality Of Various Aspects Of Higher Education

Scale	Permanent (N=20)		Contract (N=30)		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Quality of Management	30.05	5.889	26.27	5.265	2.374*
Quality of Infrastructure	36.35	5.613	30.83	6.363	3.145**
Quality of Faculty	37.35	5.050	31.70	6.889	3.143**
Quality of Students	9.35	.933	8.77	1.569	1.493
Quality of Curriculum	4.75	.444	4.00	1.438	2.254*
Quality of Institutions	11.30	2.515	9.90	3.642	1.495
Total	129.15	15.301	111.47	16.714	3.788**

*p<.05; **p < .01

Table 2 states that there is statistically a significant difference between mean opinion scores of permanent administrators and contract-based administrators on the quality of management, infrastructure, faculty and quality of curriculum. The figures indicate that permanent administrators had more positive opinions as compared to contract-based administrators. However, no significant difference in mean scores of permanent administrators and contract-based administrators existed on the quality of students and quality of institutions.

There was a significant difference in the mean opinion scores of permanent and contract-based administrators in the overall quality of higher education, with the mean opinion scores of permanent administrators being significantly higher than for contract-based administrators.

Table 3: Significance Of Difference Between Mean Opinion Scores Of Male And Female Teachers On The Quality Of Various Aspect Of Higher Education

Scale	Male(N=113)		Female(N=67)		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Quality of Management	27.43	4.450	24.13	4.352	4.848**
Quality of Infrastructure	17.27	4.027	15.90	3.372	2.340*
Quality of Faculty	43.68	5.179	41.87	4.609	2.367*
Quality of Curriculum	2.61	1.312	2.28	1.433	1.561
Quality of Students	6.41	1.916	5.63	1.841	2.679**
Quality of Institutions	21.35	4.462	17.96	3.226	5.445**
Total	118.75	13.829	107.76	10.159	5.660**

*p<.05; **p < .01

Table 3 shows that there is a statistically significant difference between mean perception scores of male and female teachers in the quality of management, quality of infrastructure, quality of students, and quality of institutions. Male teachers had more positive opinions regarding these dimensions. However, no significant difference in mean scores of male and female teachers existed in such areas as quality of curriculum.

A significant difference was found in the mean opinion scores of male and female teachers in the overall quality of higher education. The mean opinion scores of male and female teachers were significantly higher than their female counterpart.

Table 4: Significance Of Difference Between Mean Opinion Scores Of Permanent, Contract Based And Visiting Teachers' On The Quality Of Various Aspect Of Higher Education

Scales	Nature of job	N	Mean	SD	F-Value
Quality of Management	Permanent	39	27.10	5.418	11.504**
	Contract	75	27.56	3.239	
	Visiting	66	24.14	4.933	
Quality of Infrastructure	Permanent	39	17.54	5.046	1.836
	Contract	75	16.92	2.954	
	Visiting	66	16.11	3.879	
Quality of Faculty	Permanent	39	46.69	6.096	18.723**
	Contract	75	42.84	3.417	
	Visiting	66	41.02	4.764	
Quality of Curriculum	Permanent	39	3.05	1.317	7.505**
	Contract	75	2.59	1.295	
	Visiting	66	2.05	1.341	
Students	Permanent	39	6.36	2.242	5.160**
	Contract	75	6.51	1.446	
	Visiting	66	5.53	2.070	
Quality of Institution	Permanent	39	22.56	4.919	16.479**
	Contract	75	20.60	2.918	
	Visiting	66	18.05	4.504	
Total	Permanent	39	123.31	17.464	24.958**
	Contract	75	117.01	3.751	
	Visiting	66	106.88	14.333	

**p<.01

Table 4 states that there is a statistically significant difference between mean perception scores of permanent, contract-based and visiting teachers in the quality of management, quality of faculty, quality of student, quality of curriculum, and quality of institutions at .01 level. In all these scales, permanent teachers have more positive opinions compared to contract-based and visiting teachers. However, on the scores of quality of infrastructure, there is no mean difference.

Table 5: Significance Of Difference Between Mean Opinion Scores Of Male And Female Students On The Quality Of Various Aspects Of Higher Education

Scale	Male(N=314)		Female(N=286)		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Quality of Infrastructure	26.33	4.336	19.88	4.311	18.260**
Quality of Faculty	29.55	4.982	24.79	5.061	11.595**
Quality of Students	4.35	2.107	3.55	1.514	5.328**
Quality of Institutions	11.44	3.435	8.77	2.811	10.360**
Quality of Curriculum	2.39	1.229	1.69	.908	7.831**
Total	74.06	8.572	58.68	6.734	24.281**

**p < .01

Table 5 shows that there is a statistically significant difference between mean opinion scores of male and female students in the quality of infrastructure, faculty, students, institutions, and quality of curriculum at .01 level. The trend states that male students have a more positive perception than female students.

A significant difference was found in the mean opinion scores of male and female students in the overall quality of higher education, with the mean opinion scores of male students being significantly higher than female students.

DISCUSSION

In the present study, it was found that male professors and teachers possessing higher qualifications, longer experience, and job security strongly backed up the quality aspects of higher education in their institutions. The reasons for such an optimistic view may also be more personal than professional.

It was also revealed in the study that male students enrolled in master degree programs expressed more positive opinions concerning such quality components of higher education as infrastructure, standard of teaching faculty, and curriculum of higher level courses. It may be due to the fact that male students feel they are more adjusted to the system due to the nature of Pakistani society that tends to be male dominated.

It is a fact that most private universities were established with financial gains in mind, whose administration was not much interested in the needs and aspirations of individuals and society. The administrators of universities were interested in protecting their vested interests rather than focusing on quality education.

In the present study, it was found that all administrators responded more positively, as compared to teachers, regarding the quality of higher education on all dimensions. On the contrary, students expressed negative reactions in almost all facets of higher education. Responses of administrators and students were thus found to be conflicting. Administrators supported the system, perhaps because they designed and implemented the policies of their institutions. It seems evident that they were less likely to accept failure. On the other hand, students were facing financial stress as they are being charged heavy fees. Therefore, their opinions for free education with some stipend for deserving students may be considered more balanced, fair, realistic and closer to reality. In the study, it was revealed that male administrators - who hold richer experiences, higher qualifications and enjoy permanent jobs with fringe financial benefits - expressed greater satisfaction with the quality of management and curriculum. This finding may also be subjective because the category of administrators forms the central core of the administrative machinery.

Although the researcher made an effort to obtain views of the stakeholders regarding actual state of functioning of private universities and identifying problems and prospects of private universities, the results of the study may be erroneous. Ground realities are debatable because the respondents did not give sufficient time for filling in the questionnaires or concealed true opinions about reality due to a variety of personal reasons. They only tended to tick the columns or rows in the questionnaire without giving much thought and attention to the statements. It would have better to interview the respondents involved in the system of the private sector. Moreover, parents of the students could also be contacted regarding existing facilities and flaws of the private sector. The teaching system, methodology, and technology being used in the classroom could be directly observed for assessment and evaluation of daily classroom teaching. Moreover, achievement tests could be developed and administered to the students of the institutions in the private sector for the assessment and evaluation of their actual performance.

In addition to the above, other possible flaws of the study might be the inadequate sample of the study. The present study was conducted at the national level and the study population comprised of all administrators, teachers and students of universities and institutions of higher learning in the private sector. The sample was delimited to only 840 comprising 60 administrators, 180 teachers and 600 students, which was not representative enough because of using the cluster sampling technique. Had random sampling been used instead of cluster sampling, more authentic results would have been obtained.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were drawn in light of the findings of study: Male, experienced, permanent, and more highly qualified administrators indicated favorable opinions about the quality of higher education, particularly quality of management and quality of curriculum.

Male professors, teachers with higher qualification, teachers possessing greater experience, and permanent teachers evidenced more favorable opinions regarding the quality of higher education, especially the quality of institutions.

Male students, and those who enrolled in master degree programs, expressed more favorable opinions regarding the quality of higher education, especially about dimensions of quality of infrastructure, quality of faculty, quality of students, quality of curriculum, and quality of institutions.

Male respondents exhibited more positive views about the quality of various aspects of higher education.

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