

## **Quality Assurance of Teacher Education Programs - A Dilemma of Higher Education in Bahawalpur Division, Pakistan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Teachers' training and teacher training programs are attracting the attention of a wide range of academicians and policymakers these days. The Government of Pakistan has provided a standard for the accreditation of teacher training programs recently. This study attempts to determine the extent of implementation of these standards in teachers' training programs in Pakistan. Data was collected for this study using in-depth qualitative interviews. The target population was the teachers of higher education institutions in the Bahawalpur Division offering teacher training programs. Data were collected from those 20 respondents who were voluntarily willing to participate in the study. Using content analysis technique, the authors show that currently only one standard criterion, that is assessment quality of the program is up to the mark. The study shows that teachers are dissatisfied with the quality of the curriculum, finances provided by the institutions, research culture, governmental policy towards government institutions, and links with the community. The respondents indicate that the government policy towards teacher training programs is the main hurdle towards*

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*the enhancement of the quality of teacher training programs. The government should apply the same policy in teacher training programs with regard to public and private institutions for obtaining the degree as private institutions do not follow the same criteria for awarding the degree e.g., students of private institutions do not attend the institutes regularly. There is a dire need to implement approved standards in teacher training programs in Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** Quality assurance, teacher training programs, teachers' content analysis

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher education plays a crucial role in grooming the teaching skills of teachers. Teachers are the backbone of a well-developed and well-educated society. All developed countries have made progress due to a better education system in which qualified and skilled teachers play a vital role. Training has been criticized in every era especially after the World War II (Ahmed 2012). The quality of public sector teacher education depicts a gloomy picture owing to the poor level of teacher competency, deficiency of classroom-based support for teachers, poor quality of textbooks, a poor system for the assessment of students learning, and feeble governance and management (World Bank 2006).

Developing countries, like Pakistan, lack sufficient resources for teacher training. Moreover, a short training period of teachers, unjustified focus on expanding quantity, a narrow curriculum, overemphasis on theory rather than practical work, and professional training institution's lack of coordination lead to poor status of teacher education in Pakistan. Further, poor quality of instructions on implementation of valuable reforms, unclear objectives, poor quality of textbooks, corrupt examination system, poor system of management and liability, and lack of research and evaluation of professional training program for teachers are creating enormous difficulties in this field (Dilshad 2010).

Teacher training is mainly provided by Government Colleges for Elementary Teachers (GCETs), Government Colleges of Education (GCE), and University Departments of Education/ Institutes of Education and Research (IERs) via various academic programs in Pakistan. National Education Census (Government of Pakistan 2005) shows that 26% of teachers are untrained and only 37% have a "Primary Teaching Certificate" (PTC) and "Certificate of Teaching" (CT). There are 270 teaching bodies in Pakistan out of which 227 are imparting teacher training under the umbrella of government and 53 are private sector institutions (Academy for Educational Development as cited in UNESCO 2006). The Education Policy (2009) mentions that "poor quality of teachers in the system in large number is owed to the mutation on governance, an obsolete pre-service training structure and a less than adequate training regime" (USAID and AED 2005).

Standards for teaching in different countries are meant to support teacher education programs, in particular, and institutions in general, as they spiral through the development stages. An important function of standards is to inculcate professionalism among teacher educators and prospective teachers. The policymakers at the national and provincial levels in the public and private organizations interested to improve and

support any teacher education program may use these standards as guidelines. These standards can help to link the school system with teacher education programs. These can also provide a framework for conducting and evaluating research related to teacher education.

Higher Education Commission (HEC) has developed the National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (NACTE) for the enhancement of quality of teacher education so that it may accredit all teacher education programs offered by private and public sectors institutions. For this purpose, NACTE has settled seven standards for accreditation. These standards support teacher education. The development of professionalism among teachers is a crucial purpose of these standards. Policymaking both at national and provincial levels gives special emphasis on teacher education and these standards serve as a guideline for the education program. The study is an attempt to identify the implementation and gaps in the implementation of these standards being practiced in Pakistan. Further, the study also tries to identify the problems faced by the teachers to improve the quality of teacher education (Mirza 2009).

The primary objective of this study is to determine the extent to which standards of NACTE are implemented in public sector institutions of teacher training programs in Pakistan. Moreover, we also try to identify the problems faced by the teachers that affect the quality of training programs for teachers in Pakistan.

This study is descriptive by nature. Qualitative interviews have been used for the collection of data. The study is delimited to the institutions offering teacher education programs in the Bahawalpur Division. Two GCET are situated in Bahawalpur Division whereas the Department of Education in Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, and Rahim Yar Khan campuses are included in this study. Except for GCET for females, all institutions have a co-education system. All male and female staff comprises the population of the study. The sample for this study comprised of 20 teachers.

Using content analysis, we find that staff in the public sector universities was of the opinion that there is still a need to work for the implementation of training standards by the government. The study shows that teachers are dissatisfied with the quality of the curriculum, finances provided by the institutions, research culture, governmental policy towards government institutions, and links with the community.

The rest of the paper is structured as under. Section 2 covers context of the study. Data and methodology are explained in section 3. Section 4 explains the findings of the study and finally, section 5 concludes the study.

## 2. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Quality assurance is gaining importance all over the world with the enhanced importance of education. For the improvement of higher education, it is vital to implement it in all of the institutions. In Pakistan, different agencies are working to enhance the standard of higher education to improve the quality of education. For providing “education for all” the teacher education system has expanded in terms of numbers but on the other, qualitative side received little attention (Mirza, 2009). Over time, however, attention is being given to the quality side in Pakistan at different levels.

- a. For this purpose, an agency was developed in 2004 by the name of Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in the light of the guidance provided by the HEC to enrich the quality culture in higher education. In the first phase, Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs) were developed in 10 public sector universities and in the second phase, it was developed in more than 20 universities. Furthermore, 24 QECs were established in 2010-11. Recently, 148 QECs are working in private and public sector universities for the expansion of quality education (Hina and Ajmal 2016).
- b. In 2006, a National Assessment and Accreditation Council was set up for quality assurance and accreditation of the institutions.
- c. There is now an increasing development in Pakistani educational institutions/organizations to get ISO 9000:2001 certifications.
- d. HEC Pakistan has also developed a manual to provide guidelines for quality assurance and its enhancement (Ahmed 2012).

“Quality Assurance is the planned and systematic review process of an institution or programs to determine whether or not acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced” (Batool and Qureshi 2007, p.1). The European Commission reflects quality assurance as “an all-embracing term referring to an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining and improving) the quality of (teacher) education systems, institutions or programs” (Eurydice 2006, p.74).

The HEC has provided nine principles of quality assurance for the quality enhancement of higher education and they may also be implemented in institutions offering teacher training such as teacher education should emphasize the needs of the customers or participants or society, leadership, people’s full participation without any discrimination, making choices based on facts, the continuous improvement according to the global needs of quality assurance system, collective benefits, ensuring that

quality assurance agency is dynamic and devoted to recognizing the issues to be addressed in future (Batoool and Qureshi 2007).

Quality assurance demands professional standards and dynamic device of accreditation for the institutions offering teacher education. The Policy and Planning Wing of the Ministry of Education in partnership with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is conducting Strengthening Teacher Education Project (STEP) with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Professional standards for teachers in Pakistan are provided to teachers which guide them (Government of Pakistan 2009). Assan (2014) discussed that according to the lecturer, quality assurance is influenced by several factors i.e., the lecturer's income, academic qualification, job satisfaction, teaching experience, career achievement, students' knowledge, and experience.

With the help of quality indicators, the quality of teacher education programs may be measured. Sanyel (2013) has described the 16 quality indicators while working with a team of expert professionals. These indicators included showing qualities of commitment, involvement, and competence, taking initiative to learn up-to-date pedagogical skills, providing practical learning experiences, and finding out better ways to improve experiences steadily. Moreover, development and distinguished learning material for achieving objectives, making comfortable seating arrangement and organization for learners, developing strategies that alert students to deal with diversities of society are also included in these indicators. Further indicators described by the Sanyel included designing a mechanism for collection and dissemination of evaluation data, following learning experiences, development of theoretical courses for the understanding of educational perspective, developing reflective thinking and practice rather than to inform, making efforts for establishing connections among the various components of the curriculum and program offered, access to new technology and regular use of it.

Dilshad and Iqbal (2010) mentioned 30 indicators of quality assurance in a research study. Out of these 30 indicators 17 were considered of utmost significant, 12 moderately, and one of little importance. They found that "teacher professional development" was most important while the publication of "self-assessment report" was ranked the lowest. Stella and Gnanam (2004) has provided seven core indicators for the quality of teacher education program as curriculum planning and design, curriculum transaction and evaluation, research, development and extension, infrastructure and learning resources, student support and progression, organization and management and healthy practices. Hoban (2004) also mentioned that the

deficiency of communication between higher institutions and schools is also a reason for problems during teacher education programs.

Azuka (2012) also discussed steepchases in the way of quality education i.e., cost of education, inequality among spreading of educational services, poor application, the poor capacity of government, and social-cultural beliefs and practices. He further described that the miserable quality of teachers, uncertainty in policies and strategies, exploitation, and continuous strikes by teachers are the major hurdles to establish quality education in Nigeria. A study carried out in Zimbabwe revealed that substandard supervision of teachers, scarce resources, shortage of teachers, brain drain, and economic factors are obstacles in the way of quality education (Wadesango and Kurebwa 2012). African Virtual University in Kisanga and Machumu (2014) described the need for quality assurance and said that quality assurance in any university means that institution is working effectively and efficiently and providing education, training, and research and community services for imparting social and economic progress. The study of Shabbir et al. (2014) revealed the problems and issues related to quality assurance practices in Pakistan. The study was qualitative in nature. The study pointed out that students, teachers, and heads of QECs face diversified problems such as deficiency of professional development, the dearth of resources, absence of awareness related to latest research, the dearth of guidance and counselling centres, deprivation of permanent teaching staff, shortage of assessment and evaluation system, untrained non-teaching staff and poor feedback system in universities.

The study of Munshi and Bhatti (2008) revealed that the key aspect of quality assurance is transparency, time-on-task measures, assessment, systematic monitoring, student support services, faculty credentials, selection and training, and academic accreditation/quality control.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The basic objective of the study is to determine the extent to which standards of NACTE are implemented in public sector institutions of teacher training programs in Pakistan and the problems faced by the teachers affecting the quality of teacher training programs. For this, in-depth interviews were taken in the light of standards provided by NACTE in 2009 (Mirza 2009). According to Boyce and Neale (2006, p.3) “In-depth interviews are useful when you want detailed information about a person’s thoughts and behaviours or want to explore new issues in-depth”. That's why the in-depth interview technique was selected for the collection of data. The interview was based on the standards which were approved by NACTE in 2009 after consultation at the provincial and national level. This consultation process was in the form of workshops

and seminars. These standards cover all the aspects to assure the quality of teacher education such as “curriculum and instructions, evaluation and assessment, physical infrastructure, academic facilities, learning environment, human resource, finance management, research, and outreach”. There are three main institutes in the Bahawalpur Division that are imparting teacher training in the area. The institutes are The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, GCET, and Sadiq Public University. Two institutes were randomly selected for the study. The total number of teachers in the training programs of these institutes was 61<sup>1</sup>. A message was floated to the faculty for participating in the study via telephonic messages and WhatsApp. Initially 28 teachers gave their consent for the interviews with the majority of respondents from the Bahawalpur Campus of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur. However, a total of 20 respondents were selected randomly for the interviews with four respondents coming from each campus of the university and GCET male and female institutes. These four members were selected using a convenient sampling technique only from those members who volunteered to participate in the study for getting better results. These in-depth interviews were conducted telephonically with the permission of the respondents. Descriptive statistics are reported based on a series of standardized categorical questions issued in the interviews. The study is conducted to assess the perception of the teachers on the quality and implementation of all these standards. Detail of the sample for the current study is as presented in table 1 below.

**Table 1: Sampling Details**

Sr. No	Institutions	No of Respondents
1	The Islamia University of Bahawalpur (Baghdad-ul-Jadeed Campus)	4
2	The Islamia University of Bahawalpur (Bahawalnagar Campus)	4
3	The Islamia University of Bahawalpur (Rahim Yar Khan Campus)	4
4	GCET (Male)	4
5	GCET (Female)	4
	Total	20

<sup>1</sup> The total number of teachers in the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Bahawalpur Campus was 21, in Bahawalnagar Campus it was five and Rahim Yar Khan Campus had six teachers at the time of interviews. The number of teachers in GCET male was 16 and in GCET female it was 14.



*Note: GCET stands for Government Colleges for Elementary Teachers and Baghdad-ul Jadeed Campus is the main campus of the university situated in Bahawalpur.*

Data was collected using the interview technique. The Islamia University of Bahawalpur is the largest in South Punjab with a population of 25,000 students and staff. The university is situated in the city of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. It also runs two sub-campuses i.e., Bahawalnagar Campus and Rahim Yar Khan Campus, and therefore, caters to the whole division of Bahawalpur. From each campus, four faculty members were selected who were willing to participate in the current study. Two GCET (male and female) were selected as there were only two GCET in Bahawalpur. From each college, four males and four females were selected who were willing to provide data voluntarily.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of demographic information of the respondents showed that 54.5% were male and 45.5% were female and 54.5% respondents were from the university and 45.5% were from GCET. Concerning professional qualification, 18% of respondents had the qualification of B.Ed. All respondents are from teacher training programs as the emphasis in this article is on quality assurance of teacher education programs.

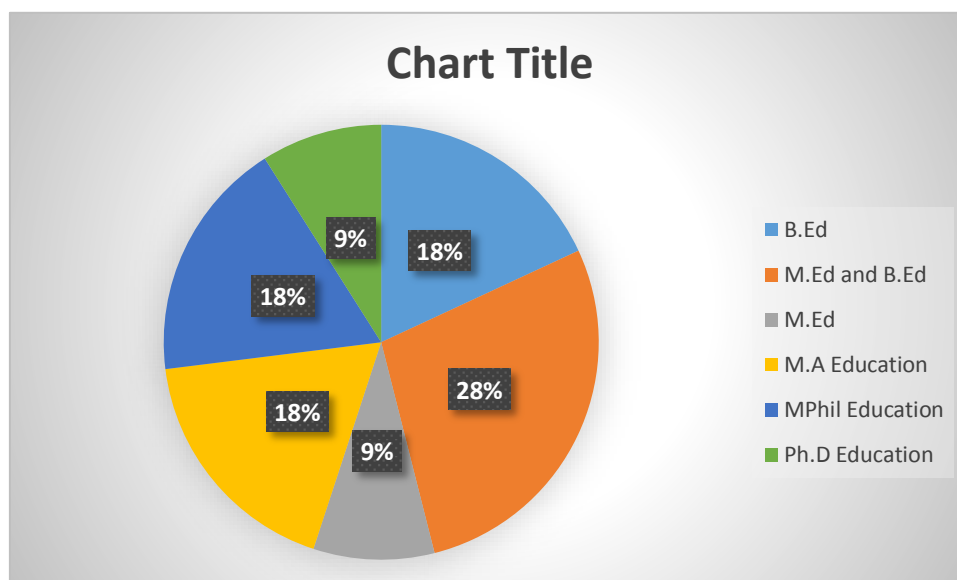
**Table 2:** Gender-Wise and Institution-Wise Distribution of the Sample

Sr. No	Gender (%)		Institution (%)	
1	Male	54.5	University	54.5
2	Female	45.5	GCET	45.5
3	Total	100%	Total	100%

*Source: Interviews conducted by the authors*

There were 28% faculty members who had two professional degrees i.e., B. Ed and M E.d, 9% faculty members had M.Ed. and 18% had M.A. in Education. Some 18% of faculty members had the qualification of MPhil and 9% had Ph.D. Moreover, 36% of respondents had the experience of 1 - 5 years, 36% 6 - 10 years, 18% 16 - 20 years and 9 % within the range of 21 - 25 years.

**Figure 1: Professional Qualification of Teachers**

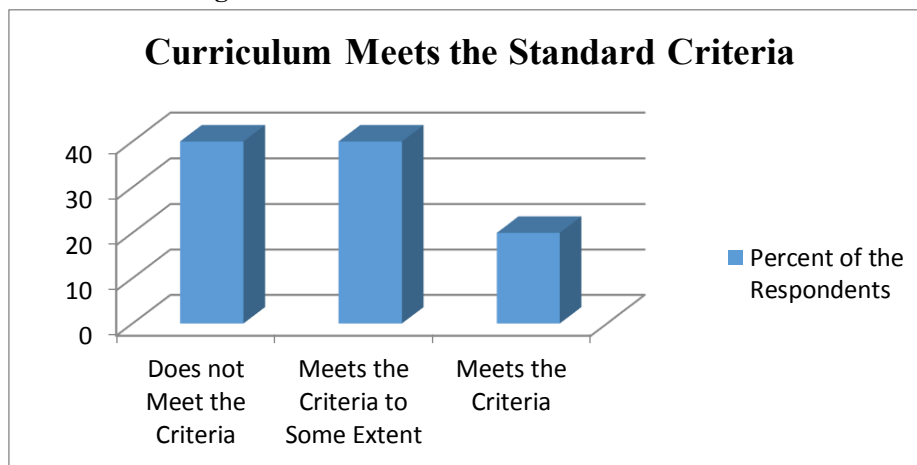


The coding of the respondents was UTB1, UTB2, UTB3, and UTB4 for teachers of university teachers of Baghdad-ul-Jadeed Campus. UTBwn1, UTBwn2, UTBwn3, and UTBwn4 for teachers of Bahawalnagar Campus. UTRYK1, UTRYK2, UTRYK3, UTRYK4 was used for university teachers of Rahim Yar Khan Campus. For the teachers of GCET, for males, coding used was GCETM1, GCETM2, GCETM3, and GCETM4. Coding for female teachers of GCET was GCETF1, GCETF2, GCETF3, and GCETF4.

#### 4.1 Curriculum and Instructions

Concerning the first standard i.e. curriculum and instruction, 40% of respondents were of the view that curriculum which is taught in the teacher training institutions does not meet the criteria of students in true spirit whereas, the same percentage of the respondents were of the opinion that it meets the criteria to some extent. The remaining said that it does not meet the requirement. All university teachers were of the view that it meets the requirements whereas college teachers thought that there is a need for change, one of them said that this syllabus had not been reviewed for a long time and it should be improved according to modern needs.

**Figure 2:** Curriculum Meets the Standard Criteria



*Source: Authors' Calculation*

All the respondents agreed that effort to ensure the curricula of institutions of learning should meet the demands of the employers of labour. Studies suggest that there is a need to develop a cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domain for teachers and students as well. The curriculum should be revised according to the competencies of the teachers. All respondents were of the view that the practical and theory portion should be included in the curriculum. Most respondent were of the opinion that the majority of the portion is theoretical and only a little portion of the practice had been included.

#### **4.2 Assessment and Evaluation System**

About the second standard i.e., assessment and evaluation system, majority of the respondents were of the view that their institution has a fair and transparent evaluation system of assessment and they are evaluated according to the learning objectives.

#### **4.3 Physical Infrastructure, Academic Facilities, and Learning Resources**

Concerning the third standard i.e., physical infrastructure, academic facilities, and learning resources, it was inquired whether sufficient physical infrastructure, academic facilities, and learning resources are available in their institutions. Teachers of GCET were of the view that available infrastructure is sufficient whereas university teachers were of the opinion that physical infrastructure was not sufficient. The facility of internet and digital resources were available in both types of institutions i.e., The Islamia University of Bahawalpur and GCET Bahawalpur. Both institutions have functional libraries. Respondents from Bahawalnagar and Rahim Yar Khan Campuses

said they did not have sufficient number of books in libraries. One of the respondents from campuses said that the number of books in the library is not according to the requirement.

There was a clear difference on one point that GCET has lab schools whereas university does not have these. Issah et al. (2016) have concluded from research that inadequate or complete lack of facilities causes poor academic productivity and stress on teachers. It was recommended that institutions should give priority to the development of students and teachers. A study by Bakari et al. (2014) reveals that physical facilities are part and parcel of the good performance of the students.

#### **4.4 Human Resources**

The fourth standard is that whether an appropriate number of teachers and supporting staff is available in the institutions or not. The standard also requires to maintain the qualification and capability of the staff. Respondents from both the university and GCET responded that the teaching staff is not according to the required number. Respondents from GCET said that staff, as well admin, is skilled. The respondents from the university also said that their teaching staff is qualified and trained whereas. admin staff cannot perform their duties skilfully. One of the respondents said that the admin staff does not have computer knowledge which is very important nowadays especially in the semester system. Armstrong (2006) described that human resource planning defines what type of human resources are required by the organization for the achievement of goals. If we want to plan any education program, then we should know what type of competent people are required. Thune (2005) has discussed that institutions should confirm that staff is qualified and competent and involves the students during the teaching-learning process. This is compulsory for creating a conducive teaching-learning environment.

#### **4.5 Finances and Management**

This criterion ensures sufficient availability of finances and its efficient utilization and management in the teaching institutes. Teachers from GCET were satisfied with the availability of finances and their management whereas University teachers said that the University does not have sufficient resources. One of the respondents said that the University does not provide resources especially for co-curricular activities and sponsors are sought after for this purpose.

Another respondent from the campus of the university said that for campuses it is very difficult to get finances. They have to wait for a long time to get finances. Oladipo et al. (2009) suggested that the severe shortage of teaching staff in Nigerian Universities

was one of the causes for the low-quality assurance in education institutes. Obanya (2010) described that important indicators of quality in education are funds and financial resources. Sufficient funds must be provided to recruit suitable teachers, train them, and provide motivation in the form of remuneration and welfare package. Therefore, we expect low-quality delivery of education in Pakistan's institutes due to a lack of financial resources.

#### **4.6 Research and Scholarship**

Research activities are part and parcel of any quality assurance criteria of the teaching institutes. Support from the institution to teachers and from teachers to students in research activities is, therefore, a crucial step towards quality assurance.

The respondents were asked if institutions support teachers to conduct and publish their research and if teachers support their students in the same. University teachers responded that they always motivate to do more and more research work. While promoting the university faculty research publications had an important role, however, university being an institution does not help the faculty members during publication. Faculty of the university provides help during the research work of the students as research work is a compulsory part of the degrees offered by the University, whereas, research work is not compulsory in colleges and their teachers do not have experience of research work. In this perspective no research work is done at the college level. University respondents said that universities provide different scholarships to their students whereas teachers from the college side said that college students have fewer opportunities of getting scholarships. A study from Akareem and Hossain (2016) also claims that 77.7% of students do not get scholarships in Pakistan.

#### **4.7 Community Links and Outreach**

Institution link with the community and outreach is another quality assurance criterion. A study by Ayeni and Adelabu (2012) concluded that schools and their significant stakeholders should collaborate so that learning infrastructure and environment may improve. However, a majority of the college and university respondents opined that they rarely interact with the students' parents. One of the respondents from GCET said that usually the head of the department interacts with parents and other stakeholders and usually he/she interacts on behalf of the teachers as well.

### **5. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The leading objective of the study was to find out the extent to which standards of NACTE are being implemented in public sector institutions of teacher training

programs in the Bahawalpur division. The researchers used the interview technique for collecting information. The researchers asked about seven standards of accreditation provided by NACTE. Given respondents' opinion, the curriculum does not fully meet the requirement according to the demands of the modern era. Respondents of the university were more satisfied as compared to college teachers with the curriculum being taught. Respondents from the university side were of the opinion that the curriculum should be revised. Its major part is based on theory; a more practical part should be included in the curriculum.

The majority of the respondents were of the view that assessment and evaluation are done fairly and transparently. Further, they said that the whole process of assessment is done according to the learning objectives.

Human resource is one of the important standards for accreditation of teacher training programs. It was evident from responses that teaching, as well as non-teaching staff, was not available in the institutions according to the demand of the institutions. Available staff was not trained according to the needs of the time, especially in the universities.

College teachers were quite satisfied with the availability of finances whereas university teachers complained about the lack of financial resources, especially for co-curricular activities. Moreover, both college and university teachers were satisfied with the management of resources. It was also concluded from the discussion that university helps their teachers as well as students in research activities. On the other side, colleges do not motivate their employees as well as students for research activities. Moreover, the promotion of college teachers is not associated with publications. This leads to less motivation for research in college teachers. From the discussion, it was also evident that universities, as well as college teachers, have the least contact with the community. College teachers claim that they have more links with parents of teachers as compared to university teachers.

The result of this research shows that more emphasis should be given to the implementation of standards of NACTE in the true sense in Pakistani institutions offering teacher education programs. It is very important to increase the involvement of more stakeholders i.e., parents, teachers, and students should be involved during the formation of standards for quality enhancement.

The impediments which affect the quality of academic programs are also highlighted by the college as well as university teachers. The same weightage is assigned to the candidates who get a degree from government and private institutions. The conditions for getting a degree are more flexible in private institutions.

Following were the recommendations based on the findings of the study to ensure quality assurance in teaching in the public sector of Pakistan: (i) Curriculum should be revised and updated according to the requirement of modern times. (ii) Research culture should be encouraged especially in colleges. There should be incentives for the teacher as well as for students for research. (iii) The government should involve local educationists while designing the standard for teacher training programs. (iv) The government should revise the policy about teachers' training programs and weight should be given to the students who get degrees from government institutions. (v) To ensure a better quality of teachers, the government should frame a policy in which emphasis should be on quality and not quantity. The government should discourage private institutions and this responsibility should be given to government institutions only with strict check and balance.

The finding of this study has implications for the HEC, Accreditation Council for Teacher Education Program, and Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) management. The study may help the stakeholders in this context to devise better policies in the future.

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