

Role of quality Assurance in Establishing Quality Culture at Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi

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Abstract

Current study aimed to assess the productiveness and role of various QA practices in establishing quality culture at PMAS-AAUR. Methodology: The data over a period of ten years (2007 to 2016) including implementation of research laboratory note books, number of theses sent for foreign evaluation, self-assessment reports (SARs) and implementation plans (IPs), corrective actions (CAs) and QEC-AAUR ranking obtained from QEC-AAUR archive was evaluated. Graphical analysis was performed for various parameters against time. Results: Results revealed that quantitative assessment of internal QA mechanism obtained score fluctuated till July-Dec, 2012 and after that it increased constantly over the time period. Data regarding number of registered research laboratory note books and theses sent for foreign evaluation showed that functional and stable practices are being employed at PMAS-AAUR from the implementation year i.e. since 2007. The SARs data revealed self-efficacy level which helped in deciding what types of implementation plans were chosen in successive years at PMAS-AAUR. Data regarding IPs with respect to time showed development of focused IPs that helped in taking effective CAs in the following years. It was observed from the results of CAs data that gradually more focused and concentrated CAs were taken for making the required progress at PMAS-AAUR. Conclusion: Overall, all examined parameters including number of registered research laboratory note books, theses sent for foreign evaluation, SARs, IPs, CAs and QEC-AAUR ranking remained productive and explicitly enhanced development of quality culture by improving quality at PMAS-AAUR.

1. Introduction

The concept of enhancing quality of higher education emerged in the 1980s when Western European policy makers turned their interests in assuring learning and teaching quality (Eaton, 2010 and 2012). Quality is coherence to an organization's own defined quality requirements

(Lakshmanan, 2010). This concern about quality education in higher education institution later on became viral from west to all over the world. Before establishment of quality enhancement cell at PMAS- arid agriculture university Rawalpindi, there was lack of employing QA practices such as implementation of research laboratory note books, SARs, IPs and CAs. After the establishment of QEC, although QA practices were implemented full in their spirit at PMAS-AAUR but still there was no mechanism to evaluate the productivity, effectiveness and weaknesses of the QA practices without which HEIs standards of quality education could not be improved significantly. Therefore, this study aimed to assess the productiveness and role of various QA practices in establishing quality culture at PMAS-AAU

2. Literature Review

Globally and especially in Pakistan, this growing trend of administering quality education in higher education institutions is mainly attributed to rapid expansion in the number of students, exhausting public funding, diversity in educational institutions, programs, student body and a quest for practically more viable public service (Stensaker and Maassen, 2015). Moreover, both academic literature and general public realized inadequacy of traditional ways of enhancing academic quality and regarded these as outmoded and least effective against dynamic higher education systems and their respective environments (Dill, 2010). Morley indicated that now-a-days, it is not possible for any university in any national location to circumvent the “gravitational pull” posed by QA debate (Morley, 2003). Questioning the productivity of QA practices in HEIs is obligatory and timely, as many developed countries such as Australia, United Kingdom and China are administering reforms in their higher education institutions by ensuring QA in these institutions (Liu, 2015). Quality education is basically an outcome of quality culture at HEI. According to European University Association, a quality culture refers to an organizational value system that yields an environment committed to continuous enhancement of quality. Establishment of quality culture at HEI involves employing sustainable QA practices. QA is the main player of quality culture and in turn depends on execution of various QA practices such as self-evaluation, implementation of research laboratory notes books, theses for foreign evaluation, IPs, CAs and QEC-AAUR ranking.

This study highlights the dire need to make aware higher education institutions about the role of QA practices and helps in understanding the need for excellence in quality by employing such practices in HEIs.

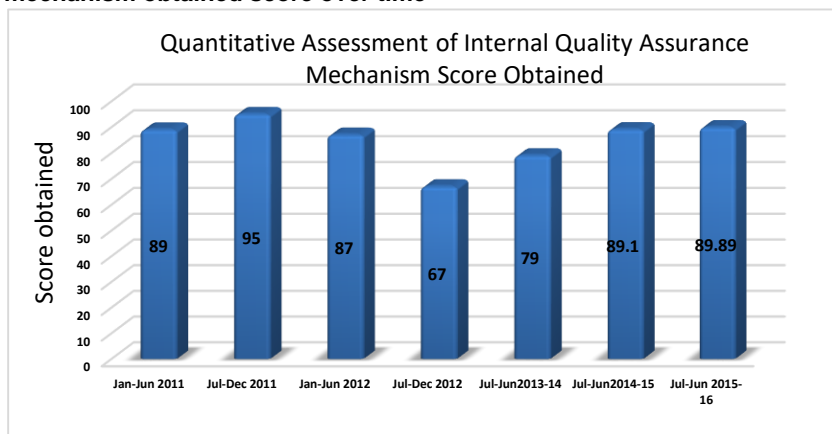
3. Research Methodology

It was a descriptive case study. The Quantitative analysis was done to get the findings and conclusions. Role of QA practices in establishing quality culture at PMAS-AAUR was determined by evaluating ten years (2007-2016) existing data obtained from QEC-AAUR archive including the implementation of research laboratory note books, theses for foreign evaluation, SARs, IPs, CAs and QEC-AAUR ranking. Graphical analysis was performed for various parameters against time.

4. Results

Quantitative assessment of internal quality assurance mechanism obtained score fluctuated till July-Dec, 2012 and after that it increased constantly over the time period. Bar Graph further illustrated the importance of ranking of QEC of this university (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Quantitative assessment of internal quality assurance mechanism obtained score over time



The bar graph showed the relationship between the years and the number of Phd thesis sent to foreign countries for evaluation. Thesis for foreign evaluation data revealed that the number of thesis for foreign evaluation at first increased over the years and now comparatively had attained stability. Data regarding number of theses sent for foreign evaluation further illustrated significant contribution in enhancing pool talent in the field of higher education at PMAS-AAUR (Fig. 2).

Figure 2: Number of Theses sent for Foreign Evaluation

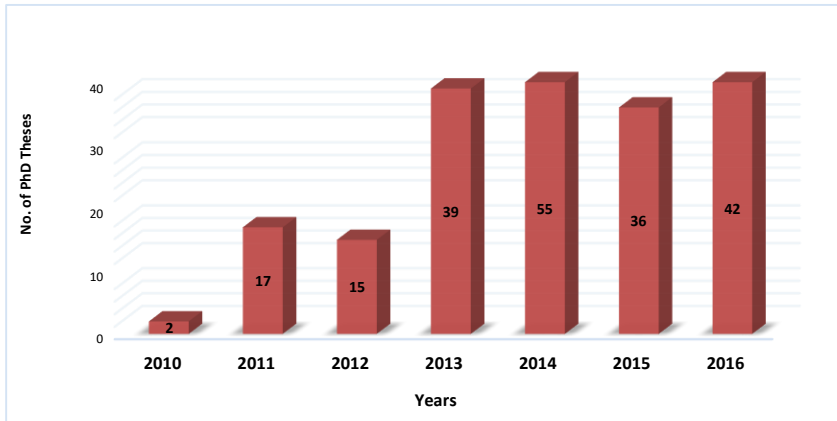
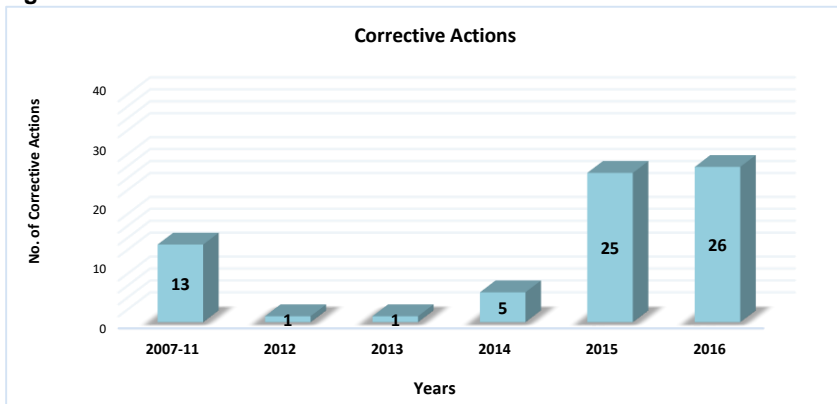


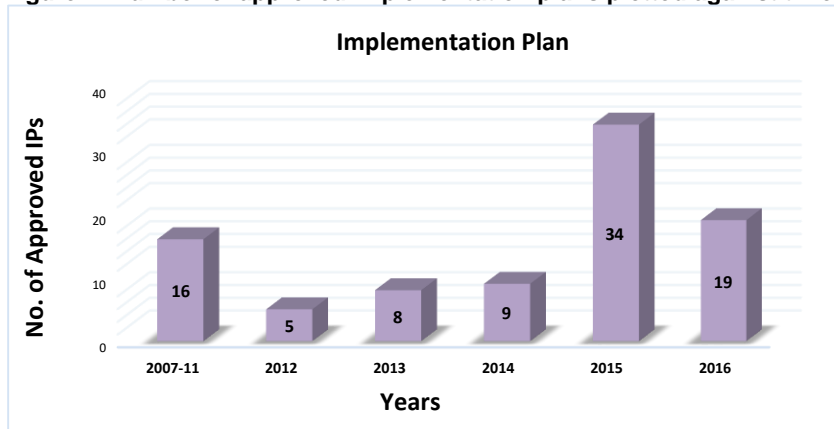
Fig. 2 Number of Thesis for foreign evaluation versus time CAs data revealed that with a time period, gradually more focused and concentrated CAs were taken for making the required progress regarding establishment of quality culture in the university. It further revealed that this practice had been exercised on regular basis since establishment of QEC at HEI (Fig.3).

Figure 3: Number of corrective actions taken versus time



IPs data showed that a constant effort is being exercised by the HEI to ensure QA by making IPs on regular basis that further opened a door to take effective CAs in future (Fig. 4).

Figure 4: Number of approved implementation plans plotted against time



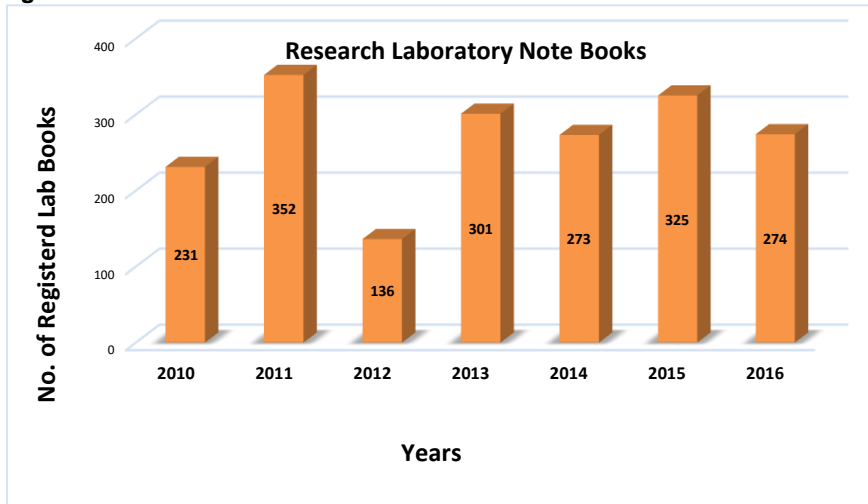
Number of approved SARs data revealed an increasing trend in the number of approved SAR reports over a period of 10 years where each SAR cycle comprises of 2 years. It was also observed that QA practice had been executed regularly in HEI over time. Moreover, results regarding SARs showed self-efficacy level which helped in deciding what types of IPs were chosen in future (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5 Number of approved self-assessment reports over time



Number of registered research laboratory note books data depicted an increase in the trend of maintaining lab books in the institute after 2012 which remained comparatively stable afterwards (Fig. 6).

Fig. 6 Number of registered research laboratory note books plotted against time



5. Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

On the basis of quantitative analysis of data, it was observed that various major QA practices are being employed in HEI under the guidelines of HEC. QA practices such as QEC ranking, volume of theses for foreign evaluation, and number of research laboratory note books have comparatively gained symmetry in the past few years. SARs comprising of two years of cycle are regularly being prepared since establishment of QEC in HEI which are further assisting in the development of effective IPs and execution of corrective actions on yearly basis. However, lack of faculty trainings, insufficient physical and financial resources, feedback systems and communication systems are serving as major hindrances in employing QA practices at HEI (Shabbir and Khalid, 2016). Di Yerbury (2000) in this regard, clearly asserted that it is mandatory for all universities to adopt productive QA practices failing which their qualifications and courses could not be well regarded both at national and international level. Moreover, Iqbal (2004) focused on implementation of more standardized QA practices to assess the knowledge of graduate and postgraduate students. In a similar way, Black and William (1998) asserted that feedback system is a vital part of self-assessment process.

Overall, all examined parameters including research laboratory note books, theses for foreign evaluation, SARs, IPs, CAs and QEC-AAUR ranking remained productive and explicitly enhanced development of quality culture by improving quality at PMAS-AAUR.

In the light of conclusion and findings, following recommendations are proposed to enhance QA practices in HEIs of Pakistan

Higher education organizations should provide required funding to universities on priority basis for enhancing quality and research culture at HEIs. There must be co-ordination and collaboration among all the universities to share productivity, effectiveness and weaknesses of QA practices being employed in HEIs so that QA practices can be upgraded.

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