

Review Article

Benefits and Challenges of a Quality Enhancement Cell in Nursing Education and Application of Bolman and Deal's four-frame Organization Theory: The Pakistani Perspective

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Abstract: Quality enhancement cell and accreditation is an emerging concept in Pakistan that has a promise to incorporate quality improvement in every aspect of a nursing education. However, the concept of quality education is challenged and misunderstood from a variety of angles. A number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Pakistan has expanded over the last decade secondary to the demand for high-quality education. By maintaining the quality in different programs, the institute can opt for international standards and accreditation, and the education system can be improved. One of the ways to achieve quality in education is by establishing a Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) with the help of the QEC manual and training. The major responsibilities of a QEC include consolidating students', and teachers' feedback about curriculum design and delivery, carrying out self-assessment of educational programs and recommending improvement aspects of it. Introducing nursing education in Pakistan, HEC identified eleven themes such as curriculum, labs facilities, student support, faculty support, institutional support, mission statement and goals, planning and evaluation, organization and governance, integrity, assessment and quality assurance, and process control. Last but not the least, it was determined that the QEC manual, mechanism, and performance evaluate the quality of all disciplines uniformly. By aligning all quality keys on the same grid (Manual), Teacher Education Programs (TEPs) in Pakistan are indirectly supported in their efforts to improve quality. It was concluded that the Self-Assessment Manual used by QECs in Degree Awarding Institutions in Pakistan served as the basis for the qualitative analysis.

Keywords: Benefits and Challenges, QEC or Quality Enhancement Cell, Nursing Practice or Nursing Institution or Nursing Education, Bolman and Deal's four-frame Organization Theory, South Asia or Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is undergoing a transformation, and newly established, small, and private institutions are particularly affected. Institutions must strive harder to compete for this transition, as it will result in more competition, higher fees, the hiring of skilled faculty members to satisfy the needs of students, and the fulfilment of students' and teachers' needs. Moreover, institutions are accountable for any unpleasant happening. Going through this transition, transformational leadership can play a charismatic role as this leadership will influence people or followers to execute more than what are expected from them (Tsevelragchaa, 2012). Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan stated its vision for Quality Assurance in education to develop a higher education system that would meet the national needs and compete for the international standards of higher education. The vision facilitates HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) in Pakistan to achieve excellence in teaching, learning, and research (Pakistan, 2020). Quality in the education system can be ascribed if research and evaluation are engraved in education (Ramzan & Khan, 2020). This goal can be achieved by creating a Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) that ensures academic improvements, faculty development, and student centered outcomes.

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Application of Bolman and Deal's four-frame organization theory

Development of a QEC is a systemic process which can be achieved by using Bolman and Deal's four-frame organization theory. It has four essential components, structural, human resource, political and symbolic. This four-frame theory explains how educators and leaders can contribute to upgrading the quality of education and the institution's overall quality. A manager (educator) primarily develops the structure of the organization's QEC including its human resources. Leaders, being symbolic, influence stakeholders politically, motivate them, and upgrade their morale (Bolman & Deal, 1992). A balance is needed in the four frames for developing a solid organization and QEC. These four frames of leadership are follows:

Structural frame

The structural frame can state precise directions for faculty and students, observe reasons and accountability of bottom-line results, and make every possible effort to solve the issues. It will also clearly state the rules, procedures, and policies (Bolman & Deal, 1992).

Human resource frame

The human resource frame aligns with the needs of the organization and the needs of stakeholders. An effective QEC seeks to empower and support its faculty and students (Bolman & Deal, 1992). In a novice institute, interests of people are divergent, and sources are limited.

Political frame

Forming a QEC in scarce resources is a big deal; here comes the political frame of leadership. This frame addresses the resources and limitations and how to make a coalition to satisfy people (Bolman & Deal, 1992).

Symbolic frame

The symbolic frame deals with human behaviors, and a symbolic leader urges the stakeholders to work for similar interests. Students' results significantly impact the institute's reputation; similarly, the behavior and faculty performances are equally important. QEC has to deal with the performance of both entities. Nursing leaders, when using a symbolic frame, will influence the behaviors of stakeholders in the interest of the institute (Bolman & Deal, 1992).

There is a growing concern that higher education becomes an international service if the recognition, standards, and quality in education are ensured (Prasad & Stella, 2006). With the establishment of HEC in Pakistan, there was a need for a quality system in higher education to evaluate the academic programs and manage learning standards. HEC outlined three criteria (access, quality, and relevance) for evaluating institutional success with the help of QEC. They further developed a comprehensive strategy to address these issues, outlining four primary reform objectives: i) Faculty Development, ii) Improving Access, iii) Excellence in Learning and Research, and iv) Relevance to National Priorities. To begin improving the performance of HEIs through QEC, HEC started by developing the Performance Evaluation Standards for the HEIs that would be used for the purpose. HEIs must meet eleven standards to acquire the desired certification for quality higher education, international visibility, and a prominent place in the HEIs' regional and international rankings. The eleven standards define the primary areas on which HEIs should concentrate. Their efforts to evaluate their effectiveness and future development include Mission Statement and Goals. Planning and evaluation, Organization and governance, Integrity, Faculty details, The student's details, Institutional Resources, Academic Programs, and Curriculum, Public Disclosure and Transparency, Assessment and Quality Assurance, and Student Support Service ("Institutional Performance Evaluation," 2021). In addition, the institutions have the capacities that provide opportunities for learning in terms of quality (Herani *et al.*, 2015). Before, QEC there was no organized system that could monitor the quality of the program, course, and faculty performance in the institution.

BACKGROUND

In 2002 ordinance, the HEC of Pakistan introduced a Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to deal with the above mentioned scope of QEC. Subsequently, QAA of HEC, Pakistan ensured the establishment of a separate cell called, 'Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC)' in every university to monitor academic quality and strengthen internal quality assurance systems. In all universities, QECs' progress is monitored yearly by HEC. QEC works in close collaboration with chancellors/VCs of the universities on university's initiatives. The role of QEC in every university is to facilitate the program regarding initiation of Self-Assessment Report (SAR) through Program Teams, facilitation of SAR (if expertise available), reviewing of SAR (through Assessment Teams), feedback evaluation, and facilitation in Institutional Performance Evaluation.

Moreover, new program approval, perceptions of students, monitoring of faculty members, an annual evaluation of programs, feedback from students & faculty, and the review of subject and qualification framework are domains of QEC (Rauf, 2006). HEC, Pakistan recommends being actively engaged in the quality delivery of the academic programs in the nursing institute. For this purpose, a Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) can be established at the nursing institute to

ensure the HECs' recommended internal quality assurance (IQA) mechanisms. The origins of Quality Enhancement Cells can be traced back to the founding of a Quality Assurance Agency in May 2005. Along with numerous other initiatives to improve academic quality in HEIs, these QECs execute a quality assessment process for educational programs called the Self-Assessment Process (SAR). This method results in a Self-Assessment Report (SAR). The primary aims of preparing a SAR are to enhance academic programs and maintain rigorous academic standards by offering feedback to teachers and administrators to launch an improvement action plan. To equip students with the fundamental skills necessary to succeed in the business, including problem-solving abilities, experimental and data analysis methodologies, teamwork experience, interpersonal skills, and primary and advanced IT capabilities ("Quality Enhancement Cells in HEIs," 2021).

QEC Requirements and Utility Requirement

HEC requires universities and their affiliated institutes to prepare a self-assessment report, and there could be student feedback for the teacher and course feedback. Mostly, universities use an online feedback system for the teacher and course feedback ("Quality Enhancement Cells in HEIs," 2021). Some universities/institutions that follow standards have different approaches to evaluate the program, course, and faculty, such as online feedback systems of the universities/institutes.

Human, Material (equipment/accessories/other) or any other resources

According to the HEC Manual, Pakistan (2006) and the university, the director, assistant director, data analyst, coordinator, and computer operator can be the human resources assigned/nominated or selected for the quality enhancement cell. Moreover, computers/laptops, stationery, papers, printers, chairs, tables, sofas, ac, fans, and lights are also required for the smooth functioning of the quality enhancement cell.

Administrative processes for QEC

The administration initiates a plan of action to improve academic quality. For that, a successful assessment program is started to identify the purpose, outcomes, measurement & design to evaluate, collect and analyze the data. Then action is taken for the improvement of students' learning. Moreover, the audit policy can check the effectiveness of programs in terms of documentation, contents, management, standards, requirements, changes, and training for further improvement, implementation, and procedures. The director Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) of the institute does correspondence with the outside bodies for coordination about the quality of education.

Approval processes

HEC bounds every institute in Pakistan is to set up a quality enhancement cell to monitor their programs' progress. The nurse leader in the nursing institute takes the initiative to set up the QEC for the requirement of the degree programs. The nurse leader prepares the operational budget for assigning the human resources and purchasing the required materials after the approval of the finance department and the Director/MD/Chairman of the nursing institute.

DISCUSSION

Before, QEC there was no organized system that could monitor the quality of the program, course, and faculty performance in the institution. In addition, the institutions have the capacities that provide opportunities for learning in terms of quality (Herani *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, it is recommended that if the quality enhancement cell is established in the newly established nursing institutes, it can improve the quality of the nursing programs. The quality of the teaching and learning in the subject area will also be better. Different workshops could be arranged for faculty development in terms of quality education and research. Moreover, universities can organize workshops for all the affiliated institutes and the program team members to prepare a self-assessment report of the program. University then can visit the institute to monitor the quality of the program.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the quality enhancement cell is responsible for coordinating and conducting feedback evaluations of students, teachers, and courses along with the self-assessment reporting of degree-awarding programs, with the required human resources as mandated by HEC. The public's confidence about the quality and standards will be promoted, and the award of degrees will be safeguarded and enhanced (Pakistan HEC, 2021).

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