J. App. Em. Sc
Vol 5, Issue 2, December 2014

Quality Assurance: The Standards for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Institutions of Pakistan

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Abstract

This paper analyzes and evaluates the hypothetical imperatives, suggested by the educators, educationists and others about the quality of teaching and learning in higher education so that asset of standards to ascertain the quality may be developed. In this paper special attention has been given to the strategies for translating the imperatives into valid and reliable instruments and procedures for making judgments about the quality referred above. Besides, the paper reviews the efforts of higher education commission to change and stream line the method and materials of private and public institutions of higher education with special reference to teaching and learning. Since many of the recognized public and private universities of Pakistan give affiliation to the private colleges who offer undergraduate and graduate programs of studies, their affiliation policies and procedures have also been discussed and debated in the paper with a view to suggest ideas to check and streamline the classroom activities and procedures of such institutions. A very important feature of the paper is the role of the raters of teaching learning and the influence of their personal and professional characteristics on their judgments. In the end a set of standards and associated procedures to evaluate the teaching and learning situation of the universities and degree awarding institutions of Pakistan have been proposed.

Key words: Quality Assurance, Standards, Higher Education Institutions, HEC, Pakistan.

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INTRODUCTION

With the inception of ISO 9000 in 1992, the term quality emerged as one of the most powerful thinking tools of the last decade of the bygone century. This term is now so important that a large number of words have been introduced in the market to differentiate among various kinds of quality and the writers about quality have created the differences among these kinds which probably never existed. Since the difference have been created, and have become real we are compelled to say quality control, quality assurance, quality management etc. are different things.

The management people have attached the word quality to many more words to describe new emphasis of the market since these do not interest us we won't be concerned with them in this discourse. However, the verbal description of the meanings of the words is essential for proper communication. Such descriptions are referred to as definitions and many people put them in the class of clinches. But even an ordinary man, who is not clear about the significance of definitions when he does ordinary things, he is certainly, guided by the definitions in the course of his doings. Therefore, it is very important for us and the reader to state the meanings of some of the terms of this discourse at the very outset, and of the others at their proper places.

In this paper, the term quality refers to "the totality of characteristics of an entity (tangible or intangible) that bears on its ability to satisfy stated and implied needs" (Ali, 1999; Adebayo, 2009; Gravin, 1987). In other words, the term means that the products and services must be in accordance with the needs expressed by their prospective users or customers. Quality assurance is another term, the specification of whose meaning may be useful for the reader of this

discourse. In relation to ISO 9000, it refers to the planned and systematic pattern of all means and actions designed to provide adequate confidence to the users that the product or services will fulfill the requirements of quality (Ali, 1999; Gergel, 2006). In other words, the term refers to making sure that the customer has confidence in the quality of product. Hence, we may say that the quality assurance in higher education refers to making sure that the Pakistanis chartered institutions of higher education follow the standard set forth by HEC or any other legally recognized agency and the stakeholders have confidence in the institutions and the agencies which accredit them.

The terms defined above are in accordance with the concept of ISO 9000 which is an instrument developed by a group of engineers, hence its language suits the tangible products. Since the paper is about the hypothetical imperatives suggested by the educationists, educators and others about the quality of teaching and learning in institutions of higher education, the discourse shall be delimited accordingly.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONAL

The review of published and unpublished documents about the quality of higher education reveal that most of the authors of the criteria or standards for quality and associated procedural strategies presume that the universities and other degree awarding institutions of higher education are relatively complex organizations and are strongly influenced by local needs and international trends, hence indigenous quality assurance models need to be developed for them which incorporate international, national and local needs (Al- Alawi et al., 2009; Tariq & Ali 2014; Odhiambo, 2014).

The local and national needs are obvious first step to design higher education system in a country. But the unprecedented social and physical mobility of people within and between countries has made it necessary for the higher education system to incorporate international values, skills and knowledge in their curricular and instructional designs (Hyam, 2004). Few decades back, the advance nations did not have to worry about the international community to design their education system. But the things have changed to the extent that even the Americans, who still have the best higher education system as compared to the rest of the world, feel that “states and colleges must work together to keep America competitive” (Conklin et al, 2004).

As far as the international requirements are concerned, there are several documents that can help us in this regard. However, the incorporation of national and local needs to guide us in the formulation of standards for higher education, particularly in the area of teaching and learning are the most tying tasks for HEC or other agencies that wish to have quality education in the country (Isani, 2001). Various issues of quality have been discussed in the developing and developed Asian countries; also regarding faculty development, research produced, curriculum development and so forth. (e.g., Anwar, 1993; Khurshid, 1993; Satija, 1999; 2006; Sarkhel, 2006; Saladyanant, 2006; Makiko, 2006; Haider and Mahmood, 2007). It is because on the one hand we do not take our own needs as a serious first step to guide us in the curricular and instructional decisions for the institutions of higher education.

On the other hand, the parents, the most important stakeholders, are not educated enough to suggest the kind of education they want for their kids. Another problem is that the confused job market does not build pressure on the academic institutions to work out programs that serve national and local needs. This has given free ride to run of the mill type academic programs dominated by the textbooks. Hence, a need for the standards to evaluate our higher education and to give them proper direction exists. Rather, it is more desirable at the moment as compared to the past when there were only few universities to cope with. Furthermore, the rush of private universities in the academic world has provided impetus to the scholars, bureaucrats and other highly concerned Pakistanis to give serious thought to the world of higher learning and streamline the curricular and instructional directions of the institutions that are engaged in awarding

a variety of degrees and diplomas to our youth.

The role of Higher Education Commission-HEC in establishment of Standards

Having felt the problem, HEC took an initiative to streamline the business of higher education so that the graduates of our universities and degrees awarding institutions are at par with the graduates of the universities of advance countries and at the same time the institutions produce such young people who may serve Pakistan as skilled workers and experts as per demand of the 21st century. As a result of the initiative, the message spread all over the country that the days of the substandard institutions of higher education have numbered.

To further strengthen the move, the HEC also encouraged open discussions about what should be done to arrive at a set of standards to measure the quality of the institutions of higher education. Besides, the commission is funding quality management systems at the public sector universities so that they have regular programs of quality control at the universities.

The problem with the initiative taken by the commission is that its major emphasis is, so far on the infrastructure and the checklist type aspects of the institutions. The importance of such measures is granted, but, in principle, the teaching and learning situation in these institutions should be the prime focus of HEC since this is the only aspect that counts at the end of the day.

At the moment, the teaching and learning situation in many public and private institutions, with the exception of few, is not very encouraging. Particularly because instead of pursuing serious knowledge, the students of most of the universities, including the A class universities, are exposed to either get through guides or glamorized activities such as threshold presentations with the help of multimedia and trivial individual and group activities etc. which do not add anything to the competence of students except that they relearn to socialize with their classmates and teachers. Ironically, these skills are generally accepted by the market since the students having these skills are perceived to perform better as compared to those students who are after serious questions. This is because the market is not an arena of scholars that demands higher order cognitive skills to be successful. In many of these universities the students are pushed to stuff the glamorous textbooks in their minds so that they may release the knowledge at the time of examination. Does this kind of subordination of books can really bring the changes in the minds of the students so that they are competent enough to successfully operate in the market as independent, dynamic and creative individuals with hypothetical inclination? There is no doubt that the kind of skills that the students acquire from such universities gives them edge in the world of market but what about the rigorous scholarship? In other words, do the Pakistani institutions of higher learning make the students competent enough to theorize? We say no to it since too much market skills take away curiosity, intensive knowledge, reflective thinking and look down upon human values. This situation certainly justifies what HEC intends to do about quality of higher education particularly assuring the stakeholders that the higher education institutions are doing their job in accordance with the nationally and internationally accepted standards.

HEC & Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA)

Going through some of the proceedings of HEC in this regard, gives the impression that the quality control people of HEC are very much into an Australian audit manual prepared by AUQA. The latest version of the manual is almost a seventy one page document. Contrary to our ways of looking at things, the first and the foremost principle of AUQA is respect for the liberty of the universities. In fact this is the characteristic control feature of Australian universities that external accrediting bodies has no legal base to say anything to these universities. The popular term in Australia is self-evaluation and it is the rigorous internal control which keeps the standards of these universities at par with the high quality universities of the world. In line with the liberality principle, for instance the first objective of the document

reads that "the audit of the institutions will take into account that what the objectives of the institutions are and external objectives shall not be imposed". This seems to imply that a university may have any kind of objectives about teaching and learning and as long as they have adopted the procedures to match those objective this is to be treated as quality institutions. However, the universities are not completely free to have any kind of objectives for them because they are expected to meet the standards of professional agencies and statutory bodies hence it is not possible for them to devise the delinquent type of program under the above objective (Australian Universities Quality Agency, 2004).

From our view point the Australian document, the audit manual, is not of much use since it stresses only the procedural rituals to audit the universities but do not state the characteristics of good teaching and learning in the universities that are to be considered in making judgments about their instructional activities. The most meaningful statement embodied in the document is to think about what and how of your products and services and act accordingly and then get to know the extent to which you have achieved (Australian Universities Quality Agency, 2004).This is an obvious statement which is found in almost any document about quality. For instance, Taormina has summarized the fundamental tenets of ISO 9000 as: document what you do, do what you document and verify that you are doing it (Taormina, 1996). Here, we would like to point that this paper heavily relies on the prescriptions of ISO; hence the tenets are our guiding principles. But we are conscious of the fact that ditto copying of the ISO standards to develop quality standards for the higher education institutions may lead us to a treacherous path, hence we have adapted them to suit our national resources and needs (Velury, 1996). Furthermore, the university professors are often weary of structured approaches requiring additional documentation and this observation has made us very selective in the use of ISO guidelines without violating the basic principles of the organizations (Karapetropvic, Ramjani & Wilborn, 1989).

Teaching and Learning

Before we further discuss the implications of ISO standards for our institutions higher education, it may be necessary to state here the meanings of the terms teaching and learning which describe the scope of this discourse.

In an ordinary conversation, people take the meaning of the two as understood which is perfectly alright because in such situations the purpose is usually a social talk on problems and prospects of education. But in the case of serious effort to streamline the educational institutions, it becomes imperative to limit the meaning of these terms in a way so that the readers or the users of the suggested ideas precisely know about the referents of the terms and the ideas associated with it.

Professional literature defines teaching as the acts of teacher when he is in touch with the students with a purpose of shaping their behaviors in accordance with the intended learning outcomes. This is relatively narrow definition from the view of point of this discourse hence we will define it as the management of the learning situation by an instructor (Good, 1973; Jain and Malik, 2014). Hence in this paper the term teaching shall refer to the methods and materials that a teacher employs inside or outside a classroom to help students acquire the knowledge, skills values and attitudes intended by the institutions for them.

The other key term of the paper is learning. This is relatively clear term and there is unanimous agreement that it refers to change in behavior. Since we are not concerned with all kinds of learning, the term shall be confined to the kind of learning outcomes intended by the university for which the university plans and make conscious efforts to see the extent to which students have learned.

The component of Teaching and Learning

The Instructional Plans

From the above definitions it is appear that the teaching and learning are highly complex endeavors and making judgments about its quality is not an easy task since there are many factors that may confound our judgments even if we are honest to our job. Hence, it is more important that under the

present circumstances, attention be given to those aspects of the teaching and learning which can be meaningfully observed or inferred. One of the meaningful things that one can have access to make judgments about teaching is what we call instructional plan. This plan could be written or unwritten. There is no doubt that many teachers can conduct excellent classrooms without having the written plans.

The truth is that such teachers are rare. Further the complexities of the modern world require us that we have something written in our hands. This is also implied by ISO whose first tenant is "to document what you want to do". As the standards of ISO are the guiding principles for this article, it is suggested that the instructional plan should be a written document. In this regard, the question may be asked that what should be included in the plan. Different educationists suggest different things. While discussing about instructional specifications, the American society for quality suggested that the written information available to students about a program or course should include but not limited to the following:

a) Title of the program,

b) Credit, diploma, degree or certificate,

c) Time required,

d) Intended outcomes/training goals,

e) Student entry skill and knowledge,

f) Performance objectives and standards

g) Major concepts and content

h) Process by which instruction is developed (American society for quality, 2002).

Many of the vogue instructional plans include some of these items. The weakest side of these plans is the absence of learning outcomes. In some of the plans, broader training goals are listed as outcomes but this is not what the professional mean by the term intended learning outcomes. To them, the outcomes are the force behind everything that a teacher does. Hence, these should be precise, achievable and measurable. The goals or the objectives stated in the written instructional plans of the universities of Pakistan are not even close to these criteria. Particularly, the public universities of Pakistan list only teaching contents or topics, without learning outcomes as their instructional plans which they refer to as course outlines.

Objectives and Learning Outcomes

In the teaching and learning situations, the most important things are the objectives or the learning outcomes (Moosa, 2005; D'Andrea, 1999; Kuh, Jankowski., et al, 2014; Trigwell and Prosser, 1991). Unfortunately, our teaching community does not take them seriously. This is because the educationists or the educators have not been able to demonstrate to the young teachers the extreme usefulness of this element of teaching. They stress the topics or contents but not the student's behaviors. To the professionals educationists topics don't make sense because in relation to a certain topics several kinds of competencies or behaviors can be developed and universities have to select the kinds of behaviors that they wish to see in the student. For instance, we can ask a student to define governments and democracy, and we can also ask him to state the numerological relationship between government and democracy so that if the numbers of the two concepts are amicable we may suggest for the adoption of democratic system of governments. This is exactly what the Pythagoreans would have done to justify a democratic state. But this is absurd from the view point modern political scientists since this is not what they want the students of political science to learn despite some people still believe the power of numbers. Similarly many more questions may be asked about the concepts which the scientists may think absurd. The point is that the students should be clearly told that what is expected of them in relation to course content. Fortunately, ISO realized it as a problem of all fields because clear statement of objectives is the most important standard professed by the organization. The message is that the instructional plans developed by the teachers or other bodies for the conduct of classrooms should include not only the topics but also the learning outcomes

intended for students. These outcomes should be designed in such a way that they are capable of guiding teaching that is the selection of materials and methods. Further, they should be able to guide the construction of tests and examinations as well.

Several of the educators do not agree with this kind of specification in the formulation of objectives or learning outcomes since they are convinced that a teacher knows what he is doing and his judgment should be relied upon. It may seem alright but there are certain problems. For instance, in many of the universities in Pakistan, particularly the public universities, about fifty percent of the paper setters are external. As these paper setters do not teach the course, their interpretation of the course outline can cause trouble unless they set direct question (which is usually the case), relating to the topics of the course outline. Such direct questions usually do not measure higher order skills consequently, the ability level of the students expressed as numbers stays controversial.

The course Outlines

Besides 21st century is a century of complexities and mobility. As a consequence, the subject matter has become complex and simple rhetorical ways of teaching are not in line with the requirement of the modern societies. We need to act in a planned way so that if a teacher leaves the university the others should be able to follow the outline in letter and spirit. This is very much true about private university who heavily rely on the visiting or part time faculty. It is granted that many of the experienced educators do not need the kind of specification of learning outcomes recommended above, but majority of the teachers do not have that kind of scholarship and we cannot overlook rigorous instructional plans embodying clearly stated objectives because of few highly competent educators. So it is imperative, that the universities explicitly state in their instructional plans the statement of learning outcomes that they intend for students.

It may be argued that all the universities have written documents in the form of course outlines. But his is not what we mean by quality documents because the kind of course outlines that we have in the universities are simply lists of topics which can be very misleading in the sense that they provide only the necessary context of learning about an area of study but do not state the characteristics of the products, the students.

From the view point of learning the important things are not the topics or the contents but the skills, values and attitudes associated with them that what we want our student to learn; and this part of the plans is usually in the heads of the teachers and not in the course outlines. As a result what students learn about the topics is very shallow which is reflected in exam questions that start with the words such as: discuss, explain describe etc. without any specific meanings attached to these words and whatever student writes is usually accepted by the teacher because they themselves do not necessarily differentiate between the meanings of these words. There is no doubt that good teachers know what they want their students to learn but we want such things to be in the documents and not in the heads of teachers. Given that teaching is an intentional activity concerned with student learning, it is sensible that one spends some time on thinking and articulating the intentions in teaching a particular topic to a group of students and on checking whether those intentions are realizable and were realized (Brown and Madeleine, 1988). If these intentions become a part of written document, teachers will be facilitated to systematically conduct the classrooms in accordance with the expectations of the stakeholders and workout ways and means to determine the extent to which the expectations have been met. In others words, written instructional plans not only guide a teacher in his teaching but also help him to prepare valid and reliable tests which are not dominated by his personal preferences or modes.

Implementation of Instructional Plans

In addition to the written instructional plans, we also need to know about the quality of the implementation of the plan or how the teachers carry out the plans. In our opinion this is the most difficult thing to do since quality of the implementation of the plan

requires the observation and scaling of teachers behavior which cannot be measured as we measure length or weight. We ought to have special judgmental tools to observe and scale teacher's behavior when he is in the process of equipping the students with the desire or intended values, skills, attitudes and information. Professionally speaking such tools are not easy to design in the absence of agreement about what constitute good teaching and how to observe it. For instance some teachers believe that some students must be actively involved in the process of learning. Those who define active involvement as participation of students in a variety of activities in the classroom will look for observable activities in the classrooms and classify teaching as good on the basis of such activities. Such activities may not be more than conscious performance on the part of the teachers and students to misguide the observer. The other would say that the use of such activities in the classrooms are conditional because in majority of teaching learning situations listening to the teachers help students to acquire better understanding of the content as it relates to the intentions. The IT oriented people would like to impress the observers with electronic aids despite many IT initiatives has disappointing results (Miller, Lu and Themmatar, 2004).

Cavalier feels that lot of efforts are being spent to introduce modern technology in the institutions of higher education. However what is not included in the response to fundamental question: what does the institution want to accomplish with this technology (Cavalier, 2002). The argument is that the use of technological materials and equipments by the teachers or the students is not an evidence of good teaching but we do get impressed with it while observing the conduct of a classroom by a teacher and as a result rate him as a good teacher.

A group of wizards may prefer to use student's performance score as criteria to make judgments about the quality of teaching. This is, in fact the last thing that many of the professional educationists would agree as an authentic measure of teacher's quality (Heywood, 1989) because the performance of students depend on many things that the teacher has no control on. For instance, if the students are moron even the best teacher would fail and if they are gifted even the worst teacher will easily be promoted to the next rank. It is not that we should not use student's scores to understand the quality of teaching; we should also use a variety of other measures to get to know about the teachers. And this is where we usually fail. The reasons for the failure are diverse. The first and the foremost thing is who is making the judgment. Is he competent enough to do so? To make judgment about a teacher's command over subject matter, one can interview him or look at the accuracy and suitability of the content of his delivery in the classroom. For this purpose we do have the experts. But what about the behavior of the teacher when he is delivering the content? This requires that the evaluator must know what a teacher intends students to learn. If the evaluator is not familiar with teacher's intention, not the topics, he will not be able to make judgment about the quality.

In Pakistan's context the evaluator usually does not know what the intentions of the teacher are. They usually think that teaching is the art of giving information by means of lectures, presentations or other kind of rituals. This is not so since the purpose of teaching is changing the students and not stuffing their minds with ever increasing stock of information. Considering the complexities of making judgments about the quality of teaching, "many studies support the successful evaluation of teaching depends on the use of many instruments (e.g. student questionnaires, examination of course materials, observation either live or video and in certain cases peer group evaluation (9). In our opinion multi strategy approach to the evaluation of teaching without direct observation of teacher's classroom performance, either live or video, may be a practical thing to do under the circumstances.

Evaluating Teaching and Learning

The Measures of Evaluation Description and Problems

In short if HEC is desirous of evaluating or ranking the higher education institutions of

Pakistan, it is necessary that it gives more importance to the teaching and learning as compared to the proper hoc measures because the stakeholders are more interested in the quality of teaching and not the infrastructure. Sometimes making judgment about the quality of the institutions on the basis of such things that do not have direct bearing on the quality of its processes directly responsible for the product becomes highly objectionable. This is exactly what happened in the past, to the ranking of the universities by HEC. The story is that on the basis of selected quantitative measures and physical facilities HEC issued a list of the institutions showing their rank order. This was interpreted differently by different people. Particularly the parents were very much disturbed by the data provided by HEC in this regard. The universities which were considered below standards reacted to the situation and the HEC has had to take it words back and announced that the list did not point to the academic quality of the institution rather it was a rank order in terms of the physical facilities. The failure of this move of the HEC certainly raise questions that how to evaluate the teaching and learning of the universities so that these can be ranked accordingly.

We opine that it may not be useful to evaluate the actual teaching. Rather it should be measured indirectly by knowing the quality of the instructional plans and collecting evidences about the extent to which the plans are implemented in letter and spirit. Under the circumstances this may be the best way to know about the quality of teaching and to do it we may add the opinions of the peers, the students, the management plus meaningful casual visits of the classrooms. The most important thing to remember in this regard is that the strategy that may be employed to evaluate teaching must include the question that to what extent the teaching methods, technique or strategies match the intended learning outcomes since collecting data about teaching without knowledge of the outcomes is meaningless.

The idea of formal teaching and learning is not complete without understanding the output of teaching, which is the change in the ability level of the students. This aspect of teaching has intrigued the educationists since the formal learning has taken place. In the last century it was the most trying issue of the educationists. Hence many ideas about testing found their ways in the schools and universities. The discussion between objective and subjective tests covered thousands of pages of the textbooks. As a result testing emerged as an independent discipline and a new breed of scientists called psychometricians started coming up with answers, seemingly the issue has been resolved to a great extent but serious questions still remain unanswered. Hence the expert suggests that the students should be exposed to different kind of objective and subjective tests. But the nature of learning outcomes restricts us in the liberal use of all sorts of test items for all subject areas. For instance the structure of physical sciences is such that objective type tests make sense. In other words some of the subjects have been conceived in such a way that objective type tests make sense but what about the social sciences? Many educationists claim that even social concepts can be evaluated by mean of objective tests. If the question is the measurement of information the answer may be yes. But this claim is not universally acceptable in evaluating the higher order skills. Since the terms of social sciences have not reached to the point that we may say that there is universal agreement about the meaning of the terms. It is our observation that the social science teachers and their unique experiences to the definition of the terms hence, change the concept proposed in a textbook. The others say that ideas are also behaviors. The point is that the construction of objective type items in the area of social science may not be the most desirable things. The only alternative is left to us is the subjective tests but the subjective tests usually do not cover the content areas of a course of study. The other snag is that the subjective tests are not easy to measure. Another problem is the dubious ability level of the teachers to construct subjective and objective tests since they are not trained in this very important aspect of testing. The message from the expert is that the design of assessment procedures cannot be carried

out independently of either of instruction or that of the curriculum plan. However under the circumstances, exposing the students to a variety of testing situations coming up with composite scores which may reflect the merit for which HEC is striving hard.

In relation to the tests there is also a problem of the interpretation of test scores. The fact is that we have a very simple notion of the meaning of these scores. Generally, we believe that the students who score high are better than the students who score low. The problem is that what do we mean when we say that a particular student has scored high hence he is better. If we compare the students on one test, the proportion is not very objectionable despite some of the educators can take issue with this as well. But when we add different scores earned by the students over the years we get into trouble very soon. Suppose two BBA students have earned grade point average as 3.0 we will treat as a tie between the two. But is it a tie? Even if we overlook the score of the students in the individual subjects of BBA we still do not know as if the students have scored the same because simple average conceals more than it reveals. For instance suppose student A has progressed from low grade to high grade and student B has regressed from high grade to low grade but there cumulative grade point average is equal. Whereas the trend of grades clearly shows that the student A has shown growth and the student B has shown decline. Market implication with regard to the achievement is that the student whose performance in the first semester was poor but improved in the subsequent semesters will perform much better than the student whose performance in the first semester was high but declined in the following ones. But the HEC does not take into account the growth trend of the students. Where as many of the institutions and professional bodies of the world give importance to the recent achievements of the students and not to the achievements made many years back.

Besides, there are other problems related to the performance of the students as measured by numbers, HEC clearly states that those who earn first division in an annual system of examination are eligible for teaching at the level of universities. It also states that for a teaching job at the university level, the person who has acquired 75 percent under semester system can also apply for the same teaching position. This is very confusing to understand. A very simple question is that why do we have the equation semester system 75 = annual system 60. Why cannot we say that semester system 85 = annual system 60 or semester system 55 = annual system 60. The only reason known to us is that the activities of semester system are such that it is easy to score 60. If we accept this argument we are already in a big trouble. For instance the question could be how much easier? We do not think people have reasonable answers to that. Since they have trouble in answering such questions, they keep on coming with such equations despite there are ways to answer such questions in functional ways. The other important question is that if we can have such equation then what is the difference between the learning outcomes of students coming out these two systems. Simply these are measures on different scales such as temperature is measured on Fahrenheit and centigrade. But the measurement on different scales does not change the temperature i.e. temperature is the same we have changed the numbers. If this is true the question is that why do we consider the semester system as better or strive for it despite the higher marks of semester system are associated with the lower marks of annual system? We do things without having any justification, and this is one of the troubles of our system. Hence it is suggested that the grading system should be the same throughout Pakistan or the equivalence should be based on sound scientific grounds.

Another very important question about teaching and learning is that we ought to rank the institutions by observing that how much the institution has contributed to the academic growth of the students since the student may grow without much input of the institutions towards their learning. For instance, do the institutions that are assumed to be producing better products have better learning opportunities including excellent conduct of the classrooms and very sensible schedule of assignment, group work

individual study etc. or is it the students who is achieving because of certain pressures which have nothing to do with instructional schemes of the institutions . for instance the parents who are very much concerned with the education of their kids would do anything to get their kids admitted in the institutions that have acquired the status of high class institutions for known or unknown reasons. It is very common observation that some mothers even sell their jewelry to get their loved ones have education from these institutions. This is particularly a syndrome of middle class families. Since the kids of these families have deep sense of the trouble that their parents go through to put them through education, they work hard not to see the disturbed faces of their parents and since the public universities do not charge that much the students going to these universities do not have the same stress of living up to the expectation of their parents hence do not work hard enough to be classified as high achievers. Now the question is are the methods and materials of the big name institutions or the hard earned money of the parents that make their kids learn? As this is very important to identify an institution as the best, it must be evaluated that to what extent the institutions are contribution to the education of the children independent of the fears of the kids to live up to the expectations of their parents. Besides, it is not necessary that the institutions that produce good students have good teaching methods and materials. Many of the good institutions in Pakistan have their names not because of teaching but because of other things which we are unable to separate from good test scores. For instance it has been observed that some of the institutions take that student whose percentage score is more than seventy or eighty. What happens is that good institutions which get student with 80 % ability level (not the score) and when the student graduates from these institutions their ability level is 70 % since seventy percent is still high first division parents adore the institutions despite their kids have lost ten points in these institutions. A similar criticism is leveled against Oxbridge and Ivy League universities since they cream off the more able students and also take more students from the public (fee paying) schools like ETONS and Winchester (Heywood, 1989). This single factor keeps the flags of these institutions very high. On the other hand there are schools, in Pakistan that take student of 45 percent ability level and when the students graduate their ability level is 47 % but the parents are not happy with these institutions because they look at those institutions whose students lose ten points which cannot be seen since the end result of those institutions was still very high on the in vogue scale. This example shows that the performance of the so called poor institutions was better than the good but it was camouflaged.

DISCUSSION

The puzzling question is how to measure the quality of teaching and learning. An answer is that while evaluating attention must be given to what difference the institution has made in the overall behavior of the students. This will require pre and post-test measures on aspecially designed instruments.

The simple argument is that HEC should come up with creative measures to evaluate the universities particularly the teaching and learning environment of the universities so that the low standard universities have guidelines to grow in certain directions. Such evaluations cannot be made with routine list type information about the universities and penalizing them for not having lot of technological paraphernalia, land and furniture. We feel extremely sorry to say that the relationships of these things measures with teaching and learning is assumed and not established. The studies that claim these to be related with quality employ dubious research to justify their point. We do not negate the importance of such things rather the authors are convinced that these things are important. The purpose is simply to state that major efforts should be given to the teaching and learning and not to glamour. It is unfortunate that we rank the universities on the basis of simple measurements.

The message is that we must not involve ourselves too much in quantitative game rather concentrate more on the ways and means to figure out how to collect evidences

that may tell us about the teaching and learning in the universities. In fact this should be the most important concern of HEC. Since if this aspect of the universities is taken care of, the other aspect, except the generation of knowledge by the professors may not trouble HEC very much.

If we look at the definition of a university, we come to grip with the idea that universities serve two purposes: the transmission of information, skills, values and attitudes and the generation of knowledge. An ordinary person takes university as a teaching institution in the sense of the first purpose. But he scholars take the generation of knowledge as the more important function of the university. Under this function, the professors not only research and share their ideas with professionals all over the world in the form of written documents, but also prepare their young colleague and senior students to do research. This kind of training to the students is different from the regular teaching of a university. But since it is treated as training hence the present paper is also concerned with this aspect of the university i.e. training the university students how to do research.

Having observed the not very productive arrangements of the universities in the training of students to do research, HEC introduced in the last few years many schemes and programs and pumped a lot of money to move the universities to get serious about producing and hiring PhD's. This effort of the commission clearly indicates that the government has realized the importance of highly qualified and skilled workers for the very complex economic, political and social situation of the world in the 21st century. In its initial years, there was a statement of HEC about its mission to get one thousand high class PhDs every year. This is certainly a very positive sign but the term high class is slightly confusing since it is not clear what HEC means by it or what the professors would do to produce high class PhDs. It will certainly be a great service to Pakistani scholars and institutions of higher education, if HEC people spell out the term high class and incorporate it in the quality initiatives taken by them because the number of operational meanings of the terms are as many as the number of advisors.

Going through the rituals and ceremonies of PhD programs, one is compelled to believe that in Pakistan the initial conception of m. Phil/PhD thesis is visual in the sense that the students see these documents as dressed up in glamorized sensual format that can be seen and appreciated without thinking. Unfortunately the desired format which may be described as the conceptual models or theoretical framework is either invisible, very odd or trivial particularly in the area of social sciences. In physical sciences, the situation is slightly better because the students employ universally accepted stereotype designs to collect and interpret data. Since the Pakistani advisors of research program feel comfortable with these designs or molds, conceived and developed by the scientists of the west, the students enjoy higher degrees as a result. But the fact is that both the physical and conceptual format that we follow in completing our PhD programs are simply the rituals and have only ceremonial values because we are in most cases the emulators of the original work done by the west. While copying or emulating other does not involve creative energy, we remain at the sensual level and take pride in our work as original research contribution despite that the characteristic feature of original researches is that the researchers have to conceive original or partially original molds, designs or instruments for their research problems. Under certain circumstances the creative use of the ready-made designs helps to come up with valid solutions of our problems. However this is not very common, in the case of original contributions. In other words we, in the course of doing research, simply collect data and process it with the help of readymade tools. Such data may be useful from practical viewpoint, but its theoretical value is very limited. This may be the reason that our researchers gather lot of empirical information and subject it to the routine type interpretations or analysis but they have not been able to conceive theories which is the hall mark of western scientists.

But the question remains what is the purpose of M.Phil. or PhD programs of the universities? Is it the dissertation or thesis

that the students produce to get their degrees or equipping the students with the skills to do research is the purpose? Most of the professors would agree that both thesis and the training are the purposes of the programs. Despite there are serious objections to this propositions, this may be considered as acceptable. In the opinion of the authors of this paper the most important purpose of the programs is the training of the students to conduct research after they are in the real world and the dissertation is a way of judging the students in this regard. Hence the importance of the dissertation is procedural. Assuming this to be true, the next question is that what kind of skills we want in students to do research. The answer to this question may get very weird. Those who are more tuned to the idea of research may say that it is the testing of hypothesis or answering questions that is referred to as research. But this is not the whole truth.

In our opinion the most important reason for the lack of quality research in the institutions of higher education is that the students are not properly trained by the institutions to write professionally sound proposals that could contribute to fill some gaps in the existing knowledge or add to it. Hence they stay confused during the process of doing research or regress to the unprofessional behaviors. The proposition is that the purpose of PhD is to develop in students the ability to conduct research. This involves training students in the formulation of problem of merit and properly and adequately delineating the steps that will be followed in collecting and analyzing the data so that he is capable of developing an acceptable research proposal which is the blue print or planning stage of research. There is general agreement between professors that planning the investigation in advance down to the finest detail, which may be termed as proposal, is what counts in research. Carrying out the plan is largely a mechanical process which requires more persistence than profundity. (Van Dalen & Deobold, 1979).

CONCLUSION

The ideas expressed in the preceding paragraphs are summarized below as standards to determine the quality of critical aspects of teaching and learning situation in the universities and other degree awarding institutions allowed by the federal or provincial governments of Pakistan to operate in the country as per law.

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