Knowledge And Perception About Quality Assurance Process In Education Among University Students

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Conflict of interest: No funding was received for this research and there are no conflicts of interest related to this study.

ABSTRACT
Objective: The objective of this study was to determine the knowledge and perception about quality assurance process in education among university students.
Methods: The study was cross-sectional in design with anonymous, structured, and close-ended questionnaire with 16 items administered to university students. The demographic information was collected including gender and level of study. The overall knowledge scores were determined and compared between genders and educational levels. Data was analysed for descriptive statistics using Statistical Package for Social Sciences 20.0 with P < 0.05 as statistically significant.
Results: The questionnaire was given to 500 university students and 419 responded with an overall response rate of 83.8%. Of these 419 participants, 65.4% (n=274) were males and 34.6% (n=145) were females. 46.77% (n=196), 36.51% (n=153), 16.72% (n=70) were pursuing undergraduate programs, postgraduate programs and other programs respectively. Only 54.25% (n=227) of university students had adequate knowledge about the quality assurance process. There was no statistically significant difference in the knowledge score between males and females and also between the undergraduate students, postgraduate students and other program students.
Conclusion: The findings of our study indicate the limited knowledge and participation of university students in quality assurance process. In order to achieve quality in education, polices should be implemented to encourage the students for their active participation in the quality assurance activities and to provide adequate training to enhance their knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

Quality assurance is a holistic approach covering all the processes in a higher educational institution and programs, in order to serve the students and other stake holders in expected quality standards.[1] Quality Assurance and accreditation ensures the quality and standard in education and its provisions through continuous developments and individual and group accountability and responsibility. Quality Assurance can be defined as 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.[2] 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.[3] However, in the education sector, especially in higher education, stakeholders, educational institutions, and students hold different conceptions of "quality": as posited, "quality is in the eye of the beholder".[4,5]

Stakeholder engagement has become a norm in higher education governance, particularly in the area of quality assurance. And diverse expectations and experiences of various stakeholder groups are expected to contribute to a more effective and comprehensive quality assurance system.[6] A stakeholder can be any person or a group of people that can influence the process of achieving the aims of a given organization – an academic institution.[7] Stakeholder can be internal such as students, teaching staff and other faculty and external such as graduates, employers and government bodies. Students form a crucial part of quality assurance system as internal stakeholders and observers, thereby contribute to development of a program and/or institution. Hence, a need emerges for students' understanding and knowledge about the quality assurance activities. However, there is total lack of researches pertaining to the students' knowledge, participation and encouragement in the quality assurance process. Therefore, this study was aimed to determine the knowledge and perception about quality assurance process in education among university students.

METHODS

The study involved students of Qassim University between the ages of 18 to 26 years. An anonymous, self-administered, close ended questionnaire with 16 items was utilized. Study protocol was in ethical compliance and approved by institutional ethical committee. All the study participants were explained about the study protocol at the beginning of the questionnaire. The demographic information was collected including gender and level of study. Voluntary response sampling method was used and Cochran's formula was used for sample size estimation at a 95% confidence interval. The overall knowledge scores were determined and compared between genders and

educational levels. Data was analysed for descriptive statistics using Statistical Package for Social Sciences 20.0 with $P < 0.05$ as statistically significant.

RESULTS

The questionnaire was given to 500 university students and 419 responded with an overall response rate of 83.8%. Of these 419 participants, 65.4% (n=274) were males and 34.6% (n=145) were females. 46.77% (n=196), 36.51% (n=153), 16.72% (n=70) were pursuing undergraduate programs, postgraduate programs and other programs respectively. Only 54.25% (n=227) of university students had adequate knowledge about the quality assurance process. The details on responses to each question item is presented in table-1. The comparison of knowledge score with gender and educational levels is shown in table-2. There was no statistically significant difference in the knowledge score between males and females and also between the undergraduate students, postgraduate students and other program students.

Table-1: Response of the subjects to the questions regarding the quality assurance process.

Question Items	Yes	No	p-value
Are quality assurance system and policies important for an academic program/institution?	87.2% (n=365)	12.8% (n=44)	0.000
Does quality assurance system provide jobs to the graduate?	48.1% (n=201)	51.9% (n=218)	0.416
Does quality assurance deals with direct management of faculty, staff and students?	67.9% (n=284)	32.1% (n=135)	0.000
Are the students' part of quality assurance system?	79.5% (n=333)	20.5% (n=86)	0.000
Do you know the role of students in quality assurance?	37% (n=155)	63% (n=264)	0.000
Does quality assurance process involve formulation of strategic plan?	82.2% (n=344)	17.8% (n=74)	0.000
Does quality assurance deals with allocation of funds to education, research and community programs?	65.2% (n=273)	34.8% (n=146)	0.000
Does quality assurances system involve evaluation of academic and administrative units/sections of an academic program?	79.3% (n=332)	20.7% (n=87)	0.000
Does quality assurance system conduct examination and facilitates display of results to students?	60.2% (n=252)	39.8% (n=167)	0.000
Have you ever participated in activities related to quality assurance?	26.2% (n=110)	73.8% (n=309)	0.000
Have you ever attended any training regarding quality assurance?	25.2 (n=105)	74.8 (n=314)	0.000
Have you ever answered questionnaires regarding your courses?	44.9 (n=188)	55.1 (n=231)	0.032
Have you ever answered questionnaires regarding evaluation of your program?	67.2% (n=281)	32.8% (n=138)	0.000
Do know who are your quality assurance managers?	33.6% (n=141)	66.4% (n=278)	0.000
Does quality assurance deals with providing assistance in curriculum development?	70.9% (n=297)	29.1% (n=122)	0.000
Does quality assurance deals with teaching and assessment methods?	76.3% (n=320)	23.7% (n=99)	0.000

Table-2: Comparison of knowledge score with gender (male-M and Female-F) and educational levels (undergraduate-U, postgraduate-P, other-O)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	P value
M	274	9.812	3.7015	.3647	0.592
F	145	10.756	3.5213	.3594	

U	196	11.579	3.6773	.3772	
P	153	10.868	3.6538	.4398	0.691
O	70	11.028	3.1945	.5399	

DISCUSSION

Quality assurance in education is important for any academic program to achieve its mission and goals by satisfying needs of organizations, students, or faculty for quality education. Student participation currently constitutes a relatively consensual and well-defined dimension in Quality Assurance (QA) system.[8] The role and contribution of students to quality processes in universities is an area of increasing interest across the academic community.[9] Student engagement beyond individual student learning can be classified in structure/process at a subject level through student representation: as consultants or as observers; as representatives; or as members of committees at course, departmental, faculty or institutional level.[10] Recognizing the role of students in quality assurance process, this study was undertaken to determine the knowledge of university students about quality assurance process. Research questionnaires or surveys are vital tools used to gather information on individual perspectives in a large cohort.[11] Hence, in our study we utilized structured questionnaire to assess the perception of university students about quality assurance.

Findings of our study demonstrated lower level of knowledge among university students with no significant difference between males and females and undergraduate, postgraduate and other program students. As this is the first study that attempted to assess the knowledge of students about quality assurance process, no other studies or literature exists to compare and analysis our study findings.

Majority of our study participants believed that the quality assurance system and policies are important for an academic program and institution and students are part of them. Nonetheless, they lacked the awareness about their role in the QA process and also weren't aware about the roles and responsibilities of QA system and personnel involved in it. This could be due to the inadequate encouragement and training needed for active participation of students in QA process as indicated by our study findings. A study by Merabishvili et al., conducted in two Georgian and one Spanish universities among students and representatives of education quality management department showed that the most of respondents have the wish to increase the students' engagement level and the students name the less feedback from university, and the representatives of the Education Quality Assurance Department highlighting the problem of students' less knowledge and awareness.[12] A literature review by Zane Taurina concluded that students' motivation is a very significant factor in achieving the learning outcomes and is influenced by different factors such as positive environment, students' and teachers' interrelations and perception.[13] According to Trowler, who conducted an extensive literature review on student engagement, there is a substantial, robust body of evidence to support assertions that individual student engagement in educationally purposive activities leads to positive outcomes of student success and development.[14] Though our study findings highlight the importance of knowledge and participation of students in quality assurance process, relative smaller sample size is the limitation of our study. Further, multicentre and longitudinal studies are needed to support the findings of our study.

CONCLUSION

The findings of our study indicate the limited knowledge and participation of university students in quality assurance process. In order to achieve quality in education, polices should be implemented to encourage the students for their active participation in the quality assurance activities and to provide adequate training to enhance their knowledge.

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