



## Quality in Higher Education : A Conceptual Study

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### Abstract

*Quality, now-a-days, has become a key word of any system due to emergence of the issues liberalization, privatization, and globalization; where everybody has got the scope to show his/her own wealth. The research in the field of quality in education is done with various perspectives. The present study is with respect to teacher education. In the field of teacher education, the major quality indicators namely curriculum design; curriculum transaction; evaluation system; research and development; infrastructure and learning resources; student support and progression; organization and management etc. have been identified by researchers. The present work is an attempt to understand the concept of quality in the parameters stated above.*

**Keywords:** *Quality, Higher Education*

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### Introduction

'Quality' is highly debatable theme. It is the goal of an eternal quest through the corridor of human history, the driving force for the entire human endeavour. According to oxford English dictionary (Yadav, et al, 2011) the notion of 'quality' includes all the essential attributes of an individual or object indicating its value and acceptability to the other. The British Standards Institution, 1991 (Mukhopadhyay, 2007) defines 'quality' as the totality of features of characteristics of a product or service that bear upon its ability to satisfy the stated or the implied needs. In the modern context of globalization, the term quality emphasizes on meeting customer expectations. Customer can be external or internal. External customers are the recipients of an output, but are not part of the organization supplying it; whereas internal customers are the recipients of another person's or department's output within an organization (Bayer, 1997).

In the field of education: students, faculty members, administrative staff, management, etc. are the internal customers; and the community, government etc. are the external customers. Stake holders include both internal and external customers, to whom quality is ultimately meaningful. Assurance of quality and standards of higher education is now widely recognized as a fundamental pre-requisite criterion. In view of the importance of quality there is an urgent need in the country towards the development of knowledge and understanding of the practice of quality assurance in higher education (Dahiya, 2001).

In fact quality in education is a matter of global quest. In order to succeed in this and to attend global standards in local settings, it is necessary for Indian educational institutions to improve and sustain the quality. Quality in the present era has proved to be a decisive factor in determining the success or failure of any service (Singh, 2008).

To ensure quality in education (as well as in teacher education particularly), is a massive challenge since it deals with the most sensitive creation of earth i.e., the human resources (Rogers, 1995). Industrial products are finished goods. Nothing can be done once they are finished. One can look for a better quality only in next time. Therefore, the concept of quality in industry has an objective basis and is less critical. But in education, including teacher education also, there is no such finished product. Human resources, whom it deals with, are always on the way 'to be'; they continue to learn and evolve (Rogers, 1995). Education in general, facilitates this continuous evolution of an individual. Therefore, the quality criterion in this context is multi-

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dimensional, more subjective, and critical, as well. Teacher education is responsible for producing quality teachers, where identification of quality norms and the process of their operationalization are extremely complex (Yadav, et al, 2011). In the context of teacher education, quality refers to pursuit of excellence, consistency of fairness, satisfaction of client needs, and appropriate identification, utilization of various resources and also further generation of resources leading to achievement of institutional goals (Arya, 2006).

Quality has various aspects which need to be integrated coherently and also to be implemented in order to achieve the expected goal (Singh, 2008). Here lies the role of an effective program of quality management. Deming's have identified four major pillars of quality management viz. to Plan, to Do, to check and to Act again (PDCA model (Yadav, et al, 2011). Synergic relationship, continuous improvement, self-evaluation, leadership etc. are the essential components of it. Quality management is a process of value addition, conformance of education output to planned goal, specifications and requirements, as unique opportunity to respond to global challenges in achieving an expected outcome and to serve better for their stakeholders (Mukhopadhyay, 2002).

In the field of teacher education, the major quality indicators namely- curriculum design; curriculum transaction; evaluation system; research and development; infrastructure and learning resources; student support and progression; organization and management etc. have been identified by researchers. Special emphasis is also given on internship program, though it is considered under the broad category of curriculum. Few among these indicators are explained in details in the following sections.

### Curriculum design

Curriculum in teacher education consists of two major components theory and the practicum. Though teacher education is mostly a skill based program but conceptual understanding of skill oriented activities might be a major concern of a teacher, (teacher trainee). Therefore theory and practicum should have a justified proportion in the curriculum. Historical, Philosophical, Psychological, and Sociological aspects of education are four essential theoretical components. In addition, various contemporary issues and challenges emerging in the field of modern education should also be included there (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). The various concepts should be incorporated following the integrated approach in order to facilitate a comprehensive learning of the students. Various socio-cultural ethos and traditional features of Indian society, along with the discussion on different aspects of modern pedagogical developments might also be included. Particularly, the present status of teacher education in the context of liberalization, globalization, privatization, WTO-outsourcing will have to be considered essential also (Khanka, 2002). Simulated lesson, field survey, case studies, community outreach activities etc. should be included in practicum. Teacher education program in India should be designed also with due concern to Indian traditional value system, as well. The curriculum of teacher education at all stages has to emphasize this traditional identity. The influence of different racial, religious, social, linguistic and regional groups in developing India's composite culture and nationhood need to be clearly discussed in this program of teacher education (NCTE, 2004). There should also be the provision of curricular evaluation following a systematic and scientific approach. While revising, opinion from experts as well as different stakeholders should be utilized properly. New emerging social aspirations need also to be recognized. New experiences should be incorporated in the new curriculum in view of all these essential considerations (Arya, 2006).

### Curriculum Transaction

Not only curricular development, major emphasis should also be given on effective transaction of curriculum in teacher education program. Presently, responsibility of the curriculum transaction is laid on the teacher educators who by and large use lecture method for this purpose. The prospective teachers (teacher *Quality in Teacher Education – Various Parameters*



and Effective Quality Management www.iosrjournals.org 68, Page trainees) are academically quite mature and can share the burden of their own study; therefore, the teacher educators should emphasize on self and independent study of the trainees, group learning and group discussion methods, peer group tutoring, learning through field trips and excursion, problem solving and preparation of projects (Singh, 2008). They should learn to prepare tests and evaluation tools. Learning by community participation and observation, workshops and seminar mode of teaching, teaching through radio counselling and teleconferencing technique etc. may also be practiced.

Preparation of various self-learning packages using technology for the teacher trainees (preparation by the joint collaboration of teacher educators and technical experts) should also be encouraged. In case of teaching the laboratory practical, emphasis even now-a-days is being laid on mere experimentation only, what is usually practiced by school learners. But the underlying spirit of conducting experimentations in laboratory by a school student and a teacher trainee should not be identical. Instead of experimenting practical only, teacher trainees should also be acquainted with various ways of practicing the techniques of demonstrating those activities to their peer members using various skills of simulated lessons. An exhaustive microteaching program may be followed using various cycles for improvement of the lessons practiced by the trainee teachers (where there will be the provision of repetitive video-recording of trainee teachers' performance) before starting the formal teaching practical program (Kapoor, 2009).

In addition, in view of multicultural nature of Indian society- teacher education program, in Indian context, should address diverse issues related to cultural lives of students in India. In this regard, the need of transacting curriculum through a multicultural mode is effective. Trainee teachers should be provided various cultural materials, and also the opportunity to understand and appreciate other cultures, and information about the characteristics and learning styles of various groups and individuals (Banks, 1997). In addition, students (trainee teachers) are taught various procedures by which they can gain information about the communities represented in their class rooms (Zeichner, 1996). They should also be taught how to assess the relationships between the methods they use in the classroom and the preferred learning and interaction styles in their students' homes and communities, how to use various instructional strategies sensitive to cultural and linguistic variations and how to adapt classroom instruction to accommodate the cultural resources that their students bring to school (Hixson, 1991). Judicious use of technology might provide teachers as well as their educators to facilitate learning through such a multicultural mode (Banks, 1997).

## Evaluation

Evaluation of student-teacher at this stage need to be comprehensive and continuous (Ahmand, 2008). Due importance should be given to the opinions of supervisors and school teachers who will maintain the record of the progress of student teachers. The capacity to organize thoughts and express them coherently, taking notes from reading materials and using teaching aids and ICT carefully at the appropriate moment need to be the major concerns of evaluation (Singh, 1990). Latest evaluation techniques as peer group evaluation of trainee teachers, self-assessment, evaluation in terms of teacher educators' opinion using rating scale etc. may be introduced. Formative as well as summative mode of evaluation both are essential. The semester-end examination should be accompanied by continuous evaluation also, on the basis of which feedback may be provided to the students. Continuous evaluation should be practiced throughout the entire course of the academic program. Evaluation should be made on the basis of grades and not on marks. Emphasis should be given on the internal examination, rather external one (Mukhopadhyay, 2007). That internal examination should also ensure its strong reliability minimizing the possibility of various mal-practices. Highly credible Semester



based credit system should also be encouraged to ensure a better student friendly and credible evaluation system in teacher education. Criterion referenced system of evaluation may also be introduced in order to ensure a quality evaluation.

## Research in teacher education

During the last five decades a large number of researches, surveys, etc. have been conducted in teacher education. Characteristics of effective teaching, curriculum evaluation, organizational climate and its impact on teachers' performance, the criterion for admission of prospective teachers and administration of education/teacher education have found to catch the attention of researchers. But planned and purposive approach has been found to be neglected. In a few universities only, teacher educators conducting/supervising researchers in various areas of education/teacher education are found (Ahmand, 2008). Majority of the researches conducted have been found to be ill-conceived, not connected with real problems of teacher education, and even done in extremely haphazard ways. Systematic approach and continuity are found to be lacking (Singh, 1990). Researchers working in this field often viewed teacher education in relation to some isolated concepts. Researches were found mostly skewed toward quantitative analysis only. Modern qualitative approach, which are becoming more popular in advanced countries, are not being used much in India (Singh, 2008). Researches do not have even much credibility among its intended clients, teacher educators and administrators working in this field. The courses of research methodology are weak. Researchers over emphasize certain areas and neglect others (Mukhopadhyay, 2007). Various subjects are taught as a compulsory component of teacher education curriculum, but with the exception of psychology and sociology of education, methods of study/research in most of the other fields do not attract the attention of teachers. Anthropology, history, philosophy, management, financing, planning and comparative education etc. are those extremely neglected areas (NCTE, 2004).

There is the need for recasting the whole program/curriculum of research methodology and use of statistics in it. Statistical jargons are used without understanding their meaning and relevance. Foreign tools are used mostly without due concern to its applicability in our context (Dahiya, 2001). Many of the researches in this particular field even are found to serve neither the utilitarian purpose nor do they cater the need of academic excellence. Research reports are not going through critical peer-group scrutiny. Review has become mostly a casual and non-serious exercise (Yadav et al, 2011). Researchers are found giving more emphasis only to the ultimate findings neglecting the conceptual framework of the study. Research papers usually are found to be prepared from PhD theses already submitted in universities and therefore these research papers are going to be mere replica of the original thesis. Once the thesis is submitted, authors are not taking proper care to update it before presenting or publishing further papers with reference to the same original thesis (Khanka, 2002).

Arbitrariness in research has been recognized as one among the major problems (Dave, 2007) in research in the field of teacher education. Arbitrariness means lack of meaningful relation among studies. Any research should be based on previous research for its assumptions, hypotheses and theoretical background. Only then, a hierarchical growth in the discipline is possible. Therefore it is important to establish proper linkage of teacher educators among themselves and also with various stakeholders working in this field in order to develop a coherent understanding of various related issues and concerns. This will help in identifying suitable research problems, avoids duplication in research and enhances the possibility that all aspects and variables involved are being attended to properly.

Thus it is important to have long term plans for research, a proper networking and collaboration among the teacher education institutions, availability of resources in terms of grants as well as effective guidance from expert research guide etc. may result in a quality outcome.

## Internship program



Internship program is the core component of teacher education. There are wide variations in this program from institutions to institution. Not only that, there is a common practice to consider this program in the form of mere teaching practical- by delivering lectures only on the method subjects. Some problems have been identified by Mukhopadhyay (2007), which are as follows.

In most of the cases under the instruction of NCTE, trainee teachers practice thirty five to forty lessons on the same format without verifying the optimum number of lessons required by an average teacher trainee to achieve the peak of his teaching competence in that particular method. Lesson plans also only emphasize on Herbartian steps (Mukhopadhyay, 2007). General apathy of teacher trainee towards this program, as well as the same of the teacher educators to supervise the practice lesson are common problems. Following measures may be adopted in this case to ensure quality:

NCTE recommendation of 35-40 lessons needs to be verified with empirical evidence. Besides Herbartian styles of planning lessons, practice lessons in other forms of instruction like individualized instruction, group interaction, and problem solving through project or even media aided instructions may be practiced. Teacher educators should be adequately equipped to guide the trainee teachers in innovative instructional techniques (Kapoor, 2009). Exhaustive rating of practice teaching lessons (involving the essential skills) should be encouraged employing standardized tools and techniques. Besides teaching only the trainee teachers should also be acquainted with various other activities performed by teachers as maintaining records, organizing and assisting various co-curricular activities, student counselling, parent contacting, organizing examinations in order to acquire a holistic experience of a true internee.

#### Quality Management in Teacher Education

To maintain and enrich an overall quality of institution, all the separate quality components, as referred, need to be integrated by designing proper policy, systems, and processes. Here lies the role of an effective quality management.

Though the concept of quality management has been introduced mostly to improve the quality of industrial product, its relevance in the field of academic institutions has also been realized by educators. Particularly in the field of teacher education, its effective implementation might ensure a better possibility of increased involvement of various stake holders, more team work, the process of redesign, competitive benchmarking, constant measurement of the outcomes, long range vision, team based problem solving, and closer relationship with community (Kaun, 1996). Various essential necessary criterion and steps to be taken for an effective quality management program in teacher education has been suggested by Singh, G (2009, in Yadav et. al., 2011). These are as follows-

i. Commitment of management and governing body: Only profit making approach of management and governing body of a teacher education institute is a major cause of qualitative downfall of teacher education. Management should be accountable and committed to their service, have adequate concern of various quality aspects and norms in the field of teacher education.

ii. Identification of Quality areas: Areas to which quality improvement is required are necessary to identify. Teacher education institutions may consult various parameters identified by apex bodies like NAAC (namely curriculum design and planning, curriculum transaction and evaluation, research-development-extension, infrastructure and learning resources, support system and progression, and, organization and management; NAAC: 2005) in this regard.

iii. Appointment of Quality Assurance Cells: Teacher education institutions should have its own internal quality assurance cell. It consists of a number of faculty members and the management personnel in order to monitor various functions of the institution and suggest for the necessary improvements.



iv. Establishment of various steering committees: Identification of quality areas will lead to the subsequent identification of various tasks and to analyze those in view of their priority. Various committees may be formed in this regard and the tasks may be distributed among them.

v. Design of Process and Objectives: Objectives of each steering committee need to be formulated and operationalized in terms of achievable outcomes. Depending upon this, process of functioning of each committee may be decided.

vi. SWOT analysis: It is one of the most essential functions of various steering committees to identify strength-weakness-opportunity-threat in the related fields and to prepare the necessary plan of action in this regard.

vii. Aware quality aspect : Assurance of quality is a team work. It is not possible without adequate awareness and involvement of all the concerned persons. Therefore all the stakeholders should be well informed about the quality criterion and various efforts planned and acted upon by the management to raise the quality standard of institution.

All the steps as discussed are the major concerns in the pre-active stage, eg. before starting the actual operations. Next is the stage of implementing all the proposed plans and suggestions into actions; and also the steps necessary for monitoring and reviewing the entire process as post-operative considerations. The implication of quality management in this way may help an institution to achieve quality in various fields by ensuring customer satisfaction, accountability, credibility, and thus to maintain a certain standard of excellence.

#### Octet of Quality in Higher Education: Framework for Quality

The need for addressing the issue of Quality in higher education is confronted time and again when teaching and testing, while admitting and passing out students, in carrying out academic and administrative activities whether general or professional university in the public or private sector. The need to enhance the quality of higher education is strongly felt when the students are seen struggling in the global workforce market, professions and technical fields operating with compromised professionalism and excellence resulting in creating obstacles to national growth and prosperity. The study attempts to present a framework that identifies core factors that induce quality in higher education. These factors are seen as contributing towards quality assurance of an academia. Analysis of the research findings on quality in education in quality assurance as well as best practices formulate the bases for identifying important parameters which constitute the notion of quality. This quality framework sees eight key components responsible for driving the quality attribute of an academic institution.

Quality indicators are “generic statements made in such a way that they ensure comprehensive coverage of the most relevant domains of the quality of teacher education institution” (National Assessment and Accreditation Council [NAAC], 2007, p.3). Yackulic and Noonan (2001) hold that indicators in teacher education reflect the important components of teacher education programme. Indicators may perform several roles such as describing current situation, quantifying pre-determined objectives, providing continuous feedback about advancement towards achievement of objectives, and identifying factors that contributed to results achievement (European Commission, 2001). Chande (2006) believes that performance indicators may be of three types: quantitative, narrative (subjective) and combination of quantitative and narrative. Several research studies have been undertaken either to identify indicators of education quality or to assess quality of education in the context of indicators. Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) has identified three major quality indicators that include learner engagement, employer satisfaction, and competency completion (AQTF, 2007). The indicators of education quality suggested by Thaug (2008) include learners, teachers, content, teaching-learning processes, learning environments, and outcomes.

According to Moosa (2006), quality issues may be grouped into six basic educational processes including teacher, curricula, assessment, research, communication and students. Out of 33



quality indicators identified for Scottish schools, Her Majesty Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) has selected seven important indicators for evaluation of enterprise in education. They include courses and programmes, overall quality of attainment, pupils' learning experiences, meeting pupils' needs, personal and social development, curricular and vocational guidance, and planning for improvement (HMIE, 2004).

Working Committee on Quality Indicators has identified sixteen indicators of school education in four main areas: attainment; success and transition; monitoring of education; and resources and structures (European Commission, 2001). On the other hand, another Working Group has pointed out fifteen indicators of lifelong learning in four broad areas: skills, competencies and attitudes; access and participation; resources for lifelong learning; and strategies and systems (European Commission, 2002). National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition (NASSET) has identified separately quality standards and indicators in five areas: schooling; career preparatory experiences; youth development and youth leadership; family involvement; and connecting activities (NASSET, 2005). In the context of engineering education in Pakistan, Jahanzaib and Akhtar (2005) has suggested following core indicators: "leadership; quality of faculty; 404 *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences Vol. 30, No. 2* quality of students; infrastructure facilities; research; learning environment; governance; strategic planning; assessment procedure; and market force" (p.2). With reference to Indian higher education, Chande (2006) has surveyed teachers' opinions about 28 performance indicators in six areas including students, teachers, institution, research, higher education outcomes and syllabus.

Some studies have also been conducted to identify quality indicators for teacher education. Yackulic and Noonan (2001) have pointed out 34 quality indicators for teacher training in Canada, which were rated by different groups of respondents. In India, an important work was undertaken by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) to identify 75 quality indicators for teacher education in six key areas namely curriculum design and planning; curriculum transaction and evaluation; research, development and extension; infrastructure and learning resources; student support and progression; and organization and management (NAAC, 2007). In five major areas, the researchers also delineated 25 quality aspects which were covered by the quality indicators. The authors believe that the suggested indicators may be used as tools for assessing present processes and outcomes, and for monitoring the ongoing activities. The assessment function may be focused on one practice/ aspect, the whole programme or overall functioning of the institution (NAAC, 2007).

The components and characteristics of effective teacher education programmes may be considered for identification of quality indicators in teacher education. A typical pre service teacher education programme consists of content knowledge, foundation courses, pedagogical courses, and teaching practice (Buchberger et al. 2000; UNESCO, 2000).

The scope of these components may vary across the countries. Several researchers and organizations (e.g. National Association for State Boards of Education [NASBE], 2000; Scannell, 2002; Sultana, 2007) have reviewed different teacher education programmes and have come up with some characteristics/factors that ensure effectiveness of programmes. The significant characteristics of effective teacher education programmes may include: futuristic nature of teacher education programmes; well-defined set of professional standards; carefully designed rigorous curriculum; strong relationships and partnerships with local schools; comprehensive and continuously assessment of learning outcomes; theory coupled with practice; rigorous entrance process for the students; problem-based methods of learning; appropriately extended field experiences; alignment with the structure and organization of the school system; collaboration with all the important stakeholders; deliberative and thoughtful conceptual framework; and continuous professional development and support for the faculty members.



The quality indicators may also be examined in view of quality assurance systems that are being increasingly used throughout the world for assuring quality of academic programmes. Quality assurance refers to “the systems and procedures designed and implemented by an organization to ensure that its products and services of a consistent standard and are being continuously improved” (Knight & Nestor, 2000, p.33). The European Commission considers quality assurance “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 programmes” (Eurydice, 2006, p.74). The broad purposes of quality assurance may include quality control, accountability and improvement which are manifested in *Muhammad Dilshad*, *Hafiz Muhammad Iqbal* 405 licensing, accreditation and audit activities respectively. If seen on one continuum, quality control is based more on external review whereas self-assessment is more important for improvement (Lemaitre, 2006). Under the direction and guidance of HEC, universities in Pakistan are implementing quality assurance practices to upgrade quality of their academic programmes. For successful implementation of quality initiatives, it is essential to consider the views of people who are at the helm of academic affairs. This study investigated the perceptions of faculty members about the quality indicators in teacher education programmes.

#### Quality indicators rated most important by teachers

##### Indicators Mean Std. Deviation Rank

1. Teachers' professional development 3.57 .676 1
2. Partnership with schools for conducting effective practice teaching 3.54 .653 2
3. University management's commitment to quality 3.49 .706 3
4. Establishing academic standards/ performance indicators 3.48 .666 4
5. Long-term planning 3.48 .761 5
6. Teachers' satisfaction with working conditions 3.45 .685 6
7. Participative decision making 3.44 1.706 7
8. Self assessment of academic programmes 3.42 .753 8
9. Uniform procedures for curriculum development, teaching, research etc. 3.41 .708 9
10. Accreditation of academic programmes 3.41 .741 10
11. Leadership at department level 3.37 .727 11
12. Student-centred approach to teaching and learning 3.34 .721 12
13. Continuous improvement of academic and administrative activities 3.33 .752 13
14. Proper documentation of information 3.31 .770 14
15. Provision of physical resources 3.31 .853 15
16. Getting feedback from stakeholders 3.30 .795 16
17. Social responsibility

#### Quality indicators rated moderately important by teachers

##### Indicators Mean Std. Deviation Rank

1. Students' satisfaction with academic and administrative services 3.24 .839 18
2. Linkage with international teacher education institutions 3.22 .851 19
3. Good professional relations of teachers/ staff 2.99 .809 20
4. Linkage with other local teacher education institutions 2.98 .881 21
5. Clear vision and mission of the department 2.96 1.014 22
6. Clearly defined goals 2.92 1.020 23
7. Performance appraisal of teachers 2.91 .872 24
8. Objectivity in teachers'/ staff's recruitment process 2.89 .961 25
9. Team work 2.77 .921 26
10. Accreditation of teacher education institution/department 2.70 .888 27
11. Academic freedom of teachers 2.63 1.062 28



## 12. External assessment of academic programmes

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