Sci.Int.(Lahore),28(4),183-188,2016 ISSN 1013-5316;CODEN: SINTE 8

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ABOUT EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE MEASURES APPLIED IN UNIVERSITIES OF THE PUNJAB PROVINCE, PAKISTAN.

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ABSTRACT: *The quality assurance mechanism is composed of many phases and dimensions. The present study was designed to investigate the Students' Perception about Educational Quality Assurance Measures Applied in Universities inthe Province of Punjab, Pakistan. The present research article differentiates and evaluates quality assurance measures applied at university level in Punjab (Pakistan) through students (respondents). One thousand (1000) students participated in this study. A Questionnaire was developed to collect and analyze the responses from the respondents by using statistical software SPSS version 21. A greatmajority of the respondents agreed that teachers use related examples to explain concepts, encourage students for classroom participation, while the prevalent university instructional system earned the lowest mean score value. The study concluded that teaching method should be made effective by taking the measures such as gender indiscrimination between students, proper counseling of students to identify innate potential,and providing requisite library-cum-facilities in order to enhance and sustain the standard of higher education in universities of Pakistan for the achievement of ever growing quality indicators at global level.*

Keywords: Quality Assurance Measures, Higher Education, Students, Universities,Punjab.

1. INTRODUCTION

Quality of education is an important issue for all stakeholdersincluding students, teachers, parents, employers, and governments. Quality assurance can be helpful in ensuring that advanced planning can meet the quality needs through capacity building, better merchandise designs, procedure and effective organizing the processes and exciting community[1]. As explained by [2] that quality assurance procedures emphasize on compliance, accountabilities, reliability, credibility, development and efficiency. According to [3],students differ from each other in intelligence, learning styles, motivation to learn, growth, and achievements. Higher Education in Pakistan cannot be isolated from the rest of the world. Education, especially in the higher education, is necessary for reducing poverty and enhancing social development. Quality in Higher Education is important for positive reforms in the country. HEC has formulated Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) aiming at building the capacity by conducting trainings, seminars and workshops in order to enable the institutions of higher learning to meet the challenges of quality assurance. To begin with, HEC in Pakistan has launched Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs) in thirty public sector universities. After that, twenty more QECs were established in various universities to introduce quality assurance procedures over there. After threadbare evaluation of the performance of these QECs and difficulties faced by them, [4]Usman(2014)proposed that it is better if we enhance and introduce the procedure of realizing quality step by step for gaining success in quality assurance.

Many studies provoke the need of merit in students' admission,staff recruitments, faculty development programs, research practices,and development of physical infrastructure like classrooms, laboratories and libraries[5]. There is a dire need to investigate the quality assurance measures which were adopted at university level in improving the education standards in Pakistan. Higher education is interpreted differently by external and internal stakeholders. The stakeholders are more inclined towards the nature of programs, fee structure and venue of the higher educational institutions. Presently the stakeholders are conscious regarding educational programs and curricula. Moreover, they are also paying more attention towards faculty selection, facilities(both physical and non-physical) and locality where an institution is situated [6] (Quraishi *et al*, 2010). Physical facilitiesmeans the art of buildings, quality equipment, labs etc., while by the term non-physical facility mean both local and globalrecognition of the given syllabus, programs.

In Pakistan quality assurance is a new phenomenon in higher education sector. This is least explored but is of great importance. Less attention has been paid to the quality assurance. There is a need to investigate and evaluate different measures applied in universities for improving quality education. The present study deals with the quality assurance measures applied at university level in Pakistan.

2.METHODOLOGY

Descriptive Survey was adopted for present investigation. A sample of 1000 students was selected randomly from 20 universities located in the Punjab province, Pakistan.A questionnaire was developed to acquire information/ opinions of the students from the universities. Five points Likert Rating Scale was used to collect the data. The questionnaire was composed of two parts: the first part was about demographical information of the students and the second part comprised 30 closed - ended and 1 (one) open –ended questions relating to their opinions. The researcher personally visited all the 20 universities and collected requisite information on the questionnaire.The data were analyzed using statistical software SPSS version 21. For quantitative data, mean, standard deviation and standard error were worked out and for qualitative data, frequency with

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3.DATA ANALYSES AND DESCRIPTION

Table1: Distribution of respondents' opinions regarding statements of the questionnaire

	SDA		DA		UNC		A		SA	
	n	%	N	%	n	%	N	%	N	%
Statement8 Teachers understand the feelings and problems of the students	45	4.5	98	9.8	121	12.1	496	49.6	240	24.0
Statement9 Teachers are fair in their dealing with the students	32	3.2	95	9.5	158	15.8	492	49.2	223	22.3
Statement10 Teachers encourage students for classroom participation	19	1.9	55	5.5	91	9.1	451	45.1	384	38.4
Statement11 Teachers state lesson objectives before starting of every lesson	45	4.5	124	12.4	197	19.7	457	45.7	177	17.7
Statement12 Teachers facilitate the students when they are trying to answer the question	19	1.9	50	5.0	125	12.5	536	53.6	270	27.0
Statement13 Teachers help students in studies difficulty	30	3.0	47	4.7	148	14.8	468	46.8	307	30.7
Statement14 Teachers are always optimistic about their student's performance	29	2.9	80	8.0	214	21.4	498	49.8	179	17.9
Statement15 Teachers use related examples to explain concepts	16	1.6	36	3.6	87	8.7	493	49.3	368	36.8
Statement16 Teachers adapt (changes his/her teaching strategies according) to students' needs	46	4.6	128	12.8	175	17.5	449	44.9	202	20.2
Statement17 Teacher is able to explain material clearly	23	2.3	56	5.6	115	11.5	545	54.5	261	26.1
Statement18 Teachers communicate the subject matter effectively	8	0.8	61	6.1	164	16.4	545	54.5	222	22.2
Statement19 Teachers know which student is attentive and which is not during class	11	1.1	61	6.1	142	14.2	415	41.5	371	37.1
Statement20 Teacher's behavior is caring and nice.	20	2.0	65	6.5	147	14.7	487	48.7	281	28.1
Statement21 Teachers have concerned about students learning	27	2.7	75	7.5	187	18.7	501	50.1	210	21.0
Statement22 Teachers make it clear what students are expected to do and not to do	34	3.4	97	9.7	243	24.3	433	43.3	193	19.3
Statement23 Teachers try his best to resolve student's academic problems	39	3.9	108	10.8	167	16.7	449	44.9	237	23.7
Statement24 Teachers know what every student is doing in the class	23	2.3	76	7.6	170	17.0	456	45.6	275	27.5
Statement25 Teachers keep students attentive throughout the class time	18	1.8	98	9.8	175	17.5	462	46.2	247	24.7
Statement26 Teachers involve students in establishment of classroom management and procedures	21	2.1	105	10.5	194	19.4	483	48.3	197	19.7
Statement27 Teachers are competent in their subject areas	14	1.4	74	7.4	182	18.2	458	45.8	272	27.2
Statement28 Teachers are well prepared for each class	27	2.7	84	8.4	185	18.5	430	43.0	274	27.4
Statement29 Teachers care if students do not understand something	29	2.9	111	11.1	187	18.7	452	45.2	221	22.1
Statement30 Teachers accept differences of opinions	25	2.5	79	7.9	191	19.1	494	49.4	211	21.1
Statement31 Teachers keep the students attentive through their lecture	23	2.3	71	7.1	174	17.4	458	45.8	274	27.4
Statement32 Teachers need training on how to train the students	30	3.0	86	8.6	153	15.3	407	40.7	324	32.4
Statement33 Students feel happy with the instructional system of the University	78	7.8	133	13.3	219	21.9	377	37.7	193	19.3
Statement34 Students are punctual in the class	55	5.5	134	13.4	215	21.5	392	39.2	204	20.4
Statement35 Teachers help the students for preparation of final exams	51	5.1	91	9.1	175	17.5	451	45.1	232	23.2
Statement36 Teachers motivate the students towards studies	25	2.5	34	3.4	130	13.0	514	51.4	297	29.7
Statement37 Library facility is provided to the students	98	9.8	93	9.3	122	12.2	390	39.0	297	29.7
Statement38 Students like the evaluation system of the University	76	7.6	92	9.2	149	14.9	434	43.4	249	24.9

SDA= Strongly disagreed; DA= Disagreed; UNC= Uncertain; A= Agreed; SA= Strongly agreed; n=Number

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percentage was calculated. Weight scores were allocated for ranking the statements. Descriptive coding was employed to analyze the qualitative data obtained through open - ended question from the respondents

Table 1 depicts the statement wise frequency distribution with percentage values of the opinions of the 1000 respondents (students). The respondents opinion regarding statement 8 showed that 73.6% agreed (49.6% agreed and 24.0% strongly agreed) 26.4% rejected (4.50% strongly disagreed, 9.8% disagreed, and 12.1% uncertain). The respondents view regarding statement 9 showedthat mostly 71.5% numbers were in support (49.2 % agreed and 22.3 % strongly agreed) and 28.5 % discarded (3.2 % strongly disagreed, 9.5 % disagreed and 15.8% uncertain).The students expressed their responses to statement 10 as 83.5 % were in favor (45.1 % agreed and 38.4 % strongly agreed) and remaining 16.5 % showed disagreement (1.9 % strongly disagreed, 5.5 % disagreed, and 9.1% uncertain). As regarded the opinions of the respondents to statement 11, there were 63.4% in support (45.7 % agreed and 17.7 % strongly agreed) and 36.6 % did not support (4.5 % strongly disagreed, 12.4% disagreed, and 19.7% uncertain).The response of students agreement towards statement 12 was 80.6% (53.6 % agreed and 27.0 % strongly agreed), while 19.4% opposed(1.9% strongly disagreed 5.0% disagreed and 12.5% uncertain).The opinion of the respondents to statement 13 had split response as 77.5% were in favor (46.8% agreed and 30.7% strongly agreed) and 22.5% was against (3.0% strongly disagreed, 4.7% disagreed, and 14.8% uncertain). The response of students to the statement 14 was computed as 67.7% were in favor (49.8% agreed and 17.9% strongly agreed) and 32.3% were in favor (2.9% strongly disagreed, 8.0 % disagreed and 21.4 % wereuncertain). The respondents view regarding statement 15 showed that mostly 86.1% were in prop up (49.3% agreed and 36.8% strongly agreed) and 13.9% discarded (1.6% strongly disagreed, 3.6% disagreed, and 8.7% uncertain).

The students view about statement 16 was that 65.1% were in prop up (44.9% agreed and 20.2% strongly agreed), while 34.9% were in disagreement (4.6 % strongly disagreed 12.8% disagreed and 17.5% uncertain). Regarding statement 17, the students gave their opinion as 80.6% were in support (54.5% agreed and 26.1% strongly agreed) and only 19.4% were not in favor (2.3% strongly disagreed, 5.6% disagreed and 11.5% uncertain).The respondents view regarding statement 18 was that 80.6% were in prop up (54.5% agreed and 26.1% strongly agreed) and only 23.3% were not in conformity (0.8% strongly disagreed, 6.1% disagreed and 16.4% uncertain). The respondents perception to statement showed that 78.6% students were in prop up (41.5% agreed and 37.1% strongly agreed) and only 21.4% were not in favor (1.1% strongly disagreed, 6.1% disagreed and 14.2% uncertain). The respondents response pertaining to statement 20 was as 76.8% were in line with (48.7% agreed and 28.1% strongly agreed) and 23.2% were against (2.0% strongly disagreed, 6.5% agreed, and 14.7% uncertain). The statement 21received the divided response of the students as 70.1% were in prop up (50.1% agreed and 21.0% strongly agreed) and 28.9% were disagreement (2.7% strongly disagreed, 7.5% disagreed and 18.7% uncertain). The respondents opinions to the statement 22 showed that 62.6% were in prop up (43.3% agreed and 19.3% strongly agreed) and 37.4% were not in favor (3.4% strongly disagreed, 9.7% disagreed and 24.3 % uncertain). The students showed their view point regarding statement 23 as 68.6% were in conformity (44.9% agreed and 23.7 % strongly agreed) and only 31.4% discarded the statement (3.9% strongly disagreed, 10.8% disagreed and 16.7 % uncertain). The respondents opinion to statement 24 indicated that 73.1% were in favor (45.6% agreed and 27.5% strongly agreed) and only 26.9% in disfavor (2.3% strongly disagreed, 7.6% disagreed and 17.0% uncertain). The respondents came up with their view regarding the statement 25 as 70.9% were in support (46.2% agreed and 24.7% strongly agreed) and 29.1% students discarded the statement (1.8% strongly disagreed,9.8% disagreed and 17.5% uncertain). The respondents response towards statement 26 revealedthat 68% were in prop up (48.3% agreed and 19.7% strongly agreed) and only 32% were against (2.1% strongly disagreed, 10.5 disagreed, and 19.4% uncertain). The breakup of respondents view regarding statement 27 depicted that mostly 73% were in favor (45.8 % agreed and 27.2 % strongly agreed) and 27 % were not in favor 1.4% strongly disagreed, 7.4% disagreed and 18.2% uncertain). The students gave their opinion to statement 28 as 70.4% were in prop up (43.0% agreed and 27.4 % strongly agreed) and only 29.6% were against (2.7% strongly disagreed, 8.4% disagreed and 18.5% uncertain). The respondents view point regarding statement 29 portrayed that 67.3% were in favor (45.2% agreed and 22.1% strongly agreed) and 32.7% were not in favor (2.9% strongly disagreed, 11.1% disagreed and 18.7% uncertain). The statement 30 gained the split response from the students as 70.5% were in support (49.4% agreed and 21.1% strongly agreed) and 29.5% were against the statement (2.5% strongly disagreed, 7.9% disagreed, and 19.1% uncertain). The statement 31 received 73.2% positive response (45.8% agreed and 27.4% strongly agreed)while26.8% were not in favor (2.3% strongly disagreed, 7.1% disagreed and 17.4 % uncertain). The statement 32 had the level of agreement 73.1% (40.7% agreed and 32.4 strongly agreed) and the level of disagreement 26.9% (3.0% strongly disagreed, 8.6 % Disagreement, and 15.3 % uncertain) from the students. Regarding the statement 33, the respondents opinion was worked out that 57.0 % students showed agreement (37.7% agreed and 19.3 % strongly agreed) while 43.0 % were against (7.8 % strongly disagreed, 13.3% disagreed, and 21.9 uncertain). The responses of students to the statement 34 were computed as 59.6% were in prop up (39.2% agreed and 20.4% strongly agreed) while 40.4% disagreed the statement (5.5% strongly disagreed, 13.4 disagreed and 21.5% uncertain). Statement 35 had responses from the students as 68.3% were in favor (45.1% agreed and 23.2% strongly agreed) and the rest 31.7% were in disagreement (5.1% strongly disagreed, 9.1% disagreed and 17.5% uncertain). The responses of students towards statement 36 were found as 81.1 % were in prop up (51.4% agreed and 29.7% strongly

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agreed) and 19.8% were not in favor (2.5% strongly disagreed, 3.4% disagreed and 13.0% uncertain). The respondents expressed their opinion in response to statement 37 that 68.7% (39.0% agreed and 29.7% strongly agreed) were in favor, while 31.3% disfavored (9.8 % strongly disagreed, 9.3% disagreed, and 12.2% uncertain). The respondents view regarding the statement 38 showed that 68.3% (43.4% agreed and 24.9% strongly agreed) were in prop up (43.4% agreed and 24.9% strongly agreed) while the remaining 31.7% students were against (7.6% strongly disagreed, 9.2% disagreed, and 14.9% uncertain) the statement.

Table 2: Statement wise ranking of respondents' opinions based on mean, standard deviation and weight score values

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	weight scores	Rank
8 Teachers understand the feelings and problems of the students	3.79	1.06	3788	17
9 Teachers are fair in their dealing with the students	3.78	1.00	3779	19
10 Teachers encourage students for classroom participation	4.13	0.92	4126	2
11 Teachers state lesson objectives before starting of every lesson	3.60	1.06	3597	29
12 Teachers facilitate the students when they are trying to answer the question	3.99	0.88	3988	5
13 Teachers help students in studies difficulty	3.98	0.96	3975	6
14 Teachers are always optimistic about their student's performance	3.72	0.95	3718	24
15 Teachers use related examples to explain concepts	4.16	0.85	4161	1
16 Teachers adapt (changes his/her teaching strategies according) to students' needs	3.63	1.08	3633	28
17 Teacher is able to explain material clearly	3.97	0.9	3965	7
18 Teachers communicate the subject matter effectively	3.91	0.83	3912	9
19 Teachers know which student is attentive and which is not during class	4.07	0.92	4074	3
20 Teacher's behavior is caring and nice	3.94	0.93	3944	8
21 Teachers have concerned about students learning	3.79	0.95	3792	16
22 Teachers make it clear what students are expected to do and not to do	3.65	1.01	3654	27
23 Teachers try his best to resolve student's academic problems	3.74	1.06	3737	20
24 Teachers know what every student is doing in the class	3.88	0.97	3884	13
25 Teachers keep students attentive throughout the class time	3.82	0.97	3822	15
26 Teachers involve students in establishment of classroom management and procedures	3.73	0.96	3730	21
27 Teachers are competent in their subject areas	3.90	0.93	3900	11
28 Teachers are well prepared for each class	3.84	1.01	3840	14
29 Teachers care if students do not understand something	3.73	1.02	3725	22
30 Teachers accept differences of opinions	3.79	0.95	3787	18
31 Teachers keep the students attentive through their lecture	3.89	0.96	3889	12
32 Teachers need training on how to train the students	3.91	1.04	3909	10
33 Students feel happy with the instructional system of the University	3.47	1.17	3474	31
34 Students are punctual in the class	3.56	1.12	3556	30
35 Teachers help the students for preparation of final exams	3.72	1.07	3722	23
36 Teachers motivate the students towards studies	4.02	0.89	4024	4
37 Library facility is provided to the students	3.70	1.26	3695	25
38 Students like the evaluation system of the University	3.69	1.16	3688	26

Statement wise mean values(± SD), weight scores and ranking positions of students responses are reflected in Table 2.The statement15 had maximum mean values 4.16 ±0.85 and weight scores 4161. The statement 10 achieved the second mean value of 4.13 ±0.02 and weight scores 4126. The statements 19 and 36 attained the third and fourth ranking positions at mean values 4.07±0.89 and 4.02±0.92,and weight scores 4074 and 4024, respectively. The fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth positions in ranking order were achieved by the statements 12,13,17,20, and18 with mean values (3.99± 0.88, 3.98± 0.96, 3.97± 0.90, 3.94± 0.93 and 3.91± 0.83), and weight scores (3988, 3975, 3965, 3944 and 3912), respectively.The statements 32, 27, 31, 24, 28 and 25came up with the tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth ranking positions with mean values as 3.91± 1.04, 3.90±0.93, 3.89±0.96, 3.88±0.97, 3.84±1.01 and 3.82±0.97, and weight scores as 3909, 3900, 3889, 3884, 3840 and 3822, respectively.The sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth ranking positions were earned by the statements 21, 8, 18, 9 and 20

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with mean values 3.79± 0.95, 3.79± 1.06, 3.79± 0.95, 3.78±1.00 and 3.74± 1.06), and weight scores (3792, 3788,3787,3779 and 3737) respectively.The statements 26, 29,35, 14, and 25 gained the twenty first, twenty second, twenty third, twenty fourth and twenty fifth positions in ranking order having mean values (± SD) as 3.73± 0.96, 3.73± 1.02,3.72± 1.07, 3.72± 0.95 and 3.82± 0.97) and weight score such as 3730,3725,3722,3718 and 3822, respectively. The statements 38,22, 16, 11, 34, and 33appeared with the twenty sixth, twenty seventh, twenty eighth, twenty ninth, thirteenth and thirty first ranking positions under the mean values of 3.69± 1.16, 3.65± 1.01, 3.63± 1.08, 3.60±1.06, 3.56±1.12, and 3.47±1.17, and weight scores as 3688, 3688, 3633, 3597, 3556 and 3474, respectively.

4. FINDINGS

1. Students response towards31statements showed that 73.2% were in agreement and while 26.8% disfavored(Table 1).
2. It was evident through statement 9 that 71.5% students were in support and 28.5% were against (Table 1).
3. The breakup of respondents responses was as 49.4% agreed and 21.1% strongly agreed, 2.5% strongly disagreed, 7.9% disagreed, and 19.1% uncertain towards statement 30 (Table 1).
4. The students view regarding statement 10 was computed as 83.5% were in prop up, and remaining 16.5% showed disagreement (Table 1).
5. The opinions of the respondents for statement 11 that there were 45.7% agreed and 17.7 % strongly agreed4.5% strongly disagreed, 12.4% disagreed, and 19.7% uncertain (Table 1).
6. The respondents opinion for statement 20 showed that 76.8% were in line with (48.7% agreed and 28.1% strongly agreed) and 23.2% were against (2.0% strongly disagreed, 6.5% agreed, and 14.7% uncertain (Table 1).
7. The 62.6% respondents were in favor while only 37.4% showed disagreement with statement of the statement 22 (Table 1).
8. The respondents regarding statement 32, came up with their opinion as 40.7% agreed and 32.4 strongly agreed and 3.0% strongly disagreed, 8.6% disagreed, and 15.3% remained uncertain (Table 1).
9. The statement 33 attained the response percentage from students as 57.0% shared their agreement while, 43.0% were against the statement (Table 1).
10. The highest ranking order was attained by statement 15 with mean value (±SD) 4.16 ± 0.85 and weight scores 4116 (Table 2).
11. The second ranking position was gained by statement 10 with mean value (±SD) 4.13±0.92 (Table 2).
12. The third ranking order was achieved in favor of statement 19 through mean value (±SD) 4.07±0.92 with weight scores 4074(Table 2).
13. Teachers motivate the students towards studies (statement 36), had taken the fourth position in ranking order having mean value (±SD) 4.02 ± 0.89(Table 2).
14. The twelfth ranking position had mean value 3.89± 0.96 for the statement 31, teachers keep the students attentive through their lecture (Table 2).
15. The eighteenth ranking order of the opinion with mean value (±SD) 3.79 ±0.95, and weight scores 3787 for the statement 30 that teachers accept differences of opinions (Table 2).
16. The opinion of the respondents was depicted mean value (±SD) as 3.69 ± 1.19 from the statement 38, came up withthe twenty sixth positions(Table 2).
17. The twenty seventh ranking position was attained by the statement 22 having mean value of respondents opinion as 3.65 ± 1.01 (Table 2).

5. DISCUSSION

It is well-accepted fact that education is a main vehicle for social and economic development for any country in this world [7]. The half of Pakistani population comprises youth and it is very important to give special attention on higher education. Pakistan realized this situation and there was a rapid development in the last decade. There were 59 degree awarding institutes in Pakistan in 2000, and this number increased to 127 in 2007, and there were 157 degree awarding institutes in 2013 in Pakistan, which shows the strong commitment of Pakistan towards higher education [8].The increasing number of higher education institutions demands a system, which provides help to monitor and reviews quality assurance practices at university level. Quality always remains important for students, parents, employees and employers [9]. Higher Education Commission (HEC) in Pakistan has already taken steps and initiatives in this regards by establishing Quality Assurance Cells (QACs) in each university, so that quality assurance practices can be ensured. These steps were recognized in this study and also observed and acknowledged by other researchers as well [10].

Educational program and curricula offered in universalities play a vital role in improving knowledge and skills among students, and for quality it is also important and should be offered in time and also reviewed with the passage of time. The findings of this study are such that in majority of universities, course material is gradually updated according to community demand, academic program are evaluated according to HEC prescribed criteria, faculty members are involved in course review process, course content stimulates through intellectually curiosity of the students, and course integrates the theoretical concepts with real life application also support the findings of [6] that the stakeholders are more conscious regarding educational programs and curricula. The present study also found that majority of teachers encouraged student participation in the class activities and was fair in evaluation. The above mentioned findings also corroborate the findings of [11] that the assessment helps to improve standard in institutions.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Majority of the respondents (students) agreed that teachers understand their feelings and academic problems, use related

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examples to explain concepts, adpot different teaching strategies according to needs of the students,communicate the subject matter effectively, and arecompetent in their subjects areas. However, the most respondents emphasizedon teachers training in modern and innovative teaching methods, provision of adequate library-cum –laboratory facilities in all fields of studies in order to improve quality in higher education.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

There should be a functional process of counseling for students and a system to monitor teacher's behavior during academic activities.Universities should improve the library facilities such as provision of computers, the latest edition of relevant books, updated scientific and social journals in accordance with the prescribed curricula and research areas.Training and refresher courses for teaching practice should be considered mandatory for all university teachers.

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