

Quality Processes in Higher Education in Pakistan and the UK: A comparative perspective

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Introduction

- Pakistan + UK = interesting comparative case study for quality management because
 - Very different in terms of achievements and performance on range of quality measures
 - Pakistan's HE system is modelled on UK system
- Comparison of quality management systems in UK and Pakistan to:
 - Look afresh at current issues of leading and managing quality improvement at national and institutional levels
 - Examine how policies and structures impact on practice and understandings of quality and standards

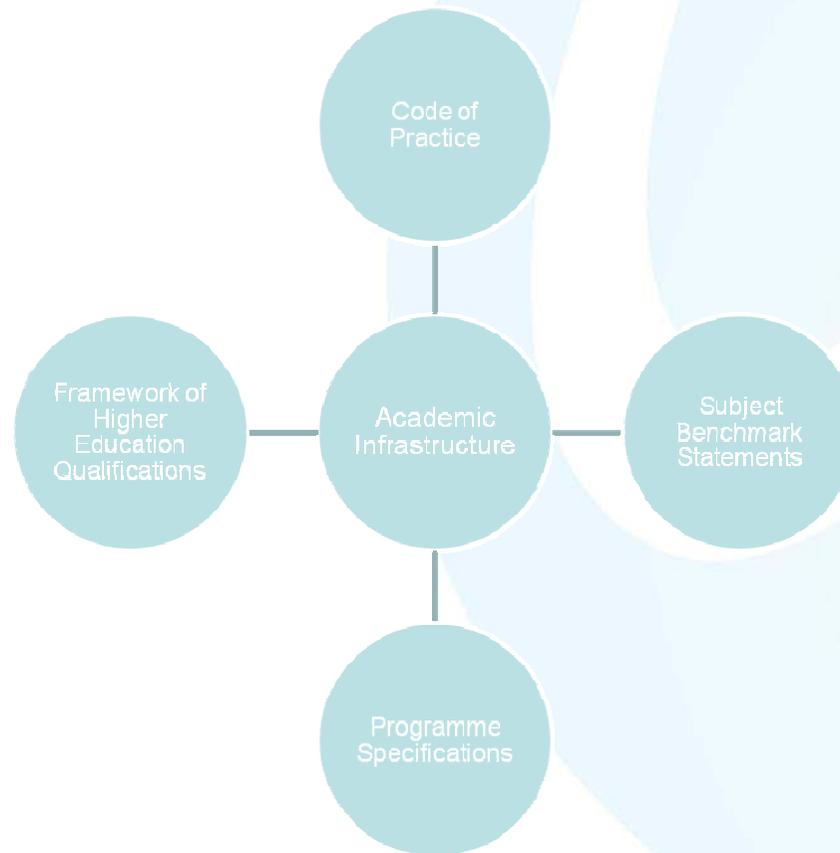
Development of Quality Management in the UK

- Before 1992 academic standards and quality assured through external examiner system
- Former polytechnic sector subject to external regulation via CNAA
- 1992 Act introduced 4 funding councils, with statutory responsibility for assessment of quality in HE
- Dual quality assurance regime:
 - Quality audit by HEQC
 - Quality assessment (TQA) at subject level
- 1997 new framework bringing together assessment and audit by QAA
- 2001 ending cycle of subject review

Key Characteristics of the UK Quality Management System

- Institutional autonomy and accountability
- Embedded quality assurance processes at institutional level
- Promoting confidence through publication of information (including NSS results)
- External examining/peer review
- Student engagement in quality management
- Capacity building for quality enhancement by HEA
- Use of Academic Infrastructure

Academic Infrastructure



Development of Quality Management in Pakistan

- Before 2002 implicit standards and quality - no formal QA
- HEC established 2002 to evaluate performance of HEIs, formulate policies, provide funds etc.
- HEC Medium Term Development Framework 2005-9 identified key challenges: access, quality and relevance
- HEC established QAA to develop policy and guidance on QA at national level and provides technical support for Quality Enhancement Cells at each HEI

Key Characteristics of the Pakistan Quality Management System

- Autonomous self-regulating HEIs, but proposed arrangements for accreditation (of HEIs and programmes)
- Curriculum developed at HEC by subject experts
- Programme specifications, curriculum and syllabi by respective HEI
- Policy guidelines, minimum criteria for MPhil and PhD, eligibility criteria for appointment of faculty, self-assessment manual, quality assurance for HE , plagiarism policy, affiliation criteria, guidelines on semester system of Exams
- Self-assessment manual as reference point for programme quality assessment to make explicit quality assurance and feedback for quality enhancement

Key Features of Programme Assessment

Eight criteria:

- Assessing programme quality through survey of graduating students, alumni survey, employers survey
- Coverage of knowledge, skills through major and minor area courses and credit hour requirement
- Provision of Lab facilities
- Student support and advising mechanisms
- Process management and control system
- Faculty (full time, part time) survey of job satisfaction
- Institutional infra-structure to support teaching , learning and research activities
- Institutional financial resources

Key differences and similarities

- Institutional autonomy
- Principles and mechanisms for programme evaluation very similar
- Pakistan: explicit QA Manual; UK: explicit academic infrastructure
- Pakistan: engagement with QAA voluntary; UK: engagement with QAA required for publicly funded HEIs
- UK: mature, embedded, 'well respected QA'; Pakistan: developing QA, and 'multidimensional' approach to quality
- Student engagement in quality management more developed in UK, although student feedback important in both
- Student assessment – norm referenced in Pakistan; criterion referenced in UK
- External examiners – 'keystone' for academic standards in UK; no such system in Pakistan

Conclusions 1

- UK: from quality assessment to quality audit – emphasis on externality and maintaining academic standards
- Pakistan: quality assessment within overall framework of ‘quality enhancement’ – emphasis on building institutional capacity for quality improvement
- UK: clear distinction between academic quality and academic standards and how they are measured/assessed; not case in Pakistan, where emphasis currently is on establishing *quality standards* for the integration of QA into University processes
- Relationship between quality assessment and quality enhancement is non-problematic for Pakistan: in order to achieve quality enhancement need to establish QA processes
- For UK, relationship is more problematic: is emphasis on QE the outcome of a mature QA system, or has QE always been the goal with QA as means of identifying good practice and scope for improvements?

Conclusions 2

- Bottom-up approach alongside developing external accountability and assessment is vital for Pakistan to achieve comparability in terms of international standards
- For UK, current concerns about slipping standards, weak regulation etc may mean that the shift towards 'lighter touch', and new emphasis on QE is replaced with stronger emphasis on accountability, regulation and quality assurance – strengthening of a 'top-down' approach
- Better understanding of what we mean by and how we measure academic quality and academic standards is important in both contexts

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