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Student Voice in Quality Assurance, From Feedback to Action

Muneer Hussain

Lecturer, Department of Management Science, BUITEMS, Quetta.

Email: muneer.hussain@buitms.edu.pk, muneerhussain7672@gmail.com

Mir Hassan

Lecturer, Department of Public Administration, FMS

Email: mir.hassan@buitms.edu.pk

Jaffar Khan

Assistant Director, Directorate of Human Resource Management, BUITEMS, Quetta.

Email: jaffar.khan@buitms.edu.pk

Haroon Khan

Deputy Director, Balochistan Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education

Email: haroonkhann888@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

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Corresponding Author:

Muneer Hussain

Email:

muneer.hussain@buitms.edu.pk

The importance of student voice is well-established in quality assurance (QA) in higher education because universities have started considering students not only passive receivers but also active participants in the process of improving educational activities. However, in the public sector universities of Pakistan, especially in Balochistan, there is a gap between gathering student opinions and making tangible changes. The research aims at analyzing the perception of students about the role of QA process and how faculty and university management use the student feedback to improve the quality of education. Using qualitative design with phenomenological approach, data was gathered from 10 final year undergraduates and faculty members from three public sector universities in Quetta city. Purposive sampling technique was used to recruit participants who have been through the process of QA. The data was collected through focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically by using Notebook LM software. Three major themes have been identified, namely: (1) Obstacles to effective student participation, which include fears of reprisals, culture, and procedure; (2) Effective feedback techniques, including collective advocacy, communication, and transparency of outcomes; and (3) Strategies for improvement, which include anonymous feedback systems, closure of the feedback loop, structural involvement, and culture-specific engagement techniques. Despite some positive outcomes being described, such as better facilities, improved scheduling and teaching, most of the respondents' demonstrated lack of confidence in the process because of the absence of follow-up and concrete actions. The results show that meaningful student engagement in quality assurance requires institutional changes that will secure implementation of feedback, student involvement in governance, and cultural adaptation of procedures.

Introduction

Background of Study

In the past few years, the worldwide issue of quality assurance (QA) in higher education has become a prominent one due to the attempts of the institutions to make themselves more accountable and transparent and continue to evolve. In this model, the student is not simply provided with his/her education, he/she becomes an important part of the learning process by contributing to the design of the course he/she is to study. Such approach to the QA system has sparked interest in the “student voice” that is the set of roles the student plays in relation to the decisions made about his/her education.

According to various organizations, such as the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education ENQA and UNESCO, for the QA system to be efficient, all parties involved should be included, especially the students who are the key element of the learning process. Listening to what students have to say is no longer considered a meaningless procedure aimed at satisfying them but a significant element that is to shape the curricula or the way they are delivered and more importantly, the way of learning (Harvey, 2001; Trowler, 2010).

Nevertheless, the set-in policies concerning student evaluation forms, surveys, representation on committees related to quality, and even student governance systems have been unable to solve the issue of the feedback gap, which remains unbridgeable despite all attempts. It is the perception among the students that no effort has been made to take their input into consideration. There is fear that they are unheard or that any response to them is patronizing. Such scenarios adversely affect relations between students and academic institutions, but more importantly, trust in quality assurance systems is rendered overly simplistic and pessimistic.

Although many Pakistani universities have implemented QA cells and feedback mechanisms as per HEC’s suggestions, the closure of the feedback loop informing learners how their feedback motivated enhancements remains inadequately addressed.

Moreover, the accompanying cultural setting within Pakistan adds obstacles to genuine student engagement. This regard, traditional scholarly settings do not permit students to evaluate faculty and administrative policies openly. Even where feedback systems exist, frank communication is likely inhibited by the student-teacher power dynamics. Institutional actors, for instance, may be inadequately trained or motivated to meaningfully analyze student data employing a suggested change framework. So, the expectation that feedback is gathered is contrasted with the expectation that it is acted upon and how it is interpreted by institutional stakeholders is evaluated.

Our grasp of the social, organizational, and cultural dimensions that these systems is profoundly lacking due to the absence of qualitative research on the exercise of student voice within the QA frameworks in higher education in Pakistan. Many of the current researches use surveys that focus on gathering quantitative information about the students' satisfaction but do not go deeper into the qualitative side of life experienced by the participants.

Thus, this research aims to fill this gap by looking into how feedback is actualized in a thorough, qualitative manner. It will assess the perceptions, experiences, and institutional norms that shape the extent to which student participation truly impacts quality assurance processes. With this approach, the study aims to expand the knowledge base about students' participation in higher education governance and quality assurance in Pakistan and enrich academic discussions, while simultaneously furnishing evidence-based solutions for enhanced governance participation frameworks.

Research Questions

1. How do students view their participation and influence in quality assurance activities?
2. In what ways do faculty and administrators act upon student feedback to improve quality in higher education?

Research Objectives

1. To explore how students perceive their role in institutional quality assurance processes.
2. To examine how universities respond to student feedback in quality assurance decision-making.

Significance of study

This research is particularly relevant for the public sector universities in Balochistan, which are struggling with several challenges regarding higher education such as insufficient resources, minor role of student in governance, and inadequate quality assurance mechanisms. With student evaluations of the quality of instruction and courses, feedback is frequently requested from students, but too often there is a disconnect between collection and use for the improvement of educational programs, teaching support, teaching quality, and services on campus.

In a province like Balochistan, where a great number of students are from underrepresented and marginalized groups, an empowered student voice could lead towards more inclusive, transparent and responsive education systems. This study can help to identify obstacles, for example, in terms of administrative delay, follow-up or tokenism with regard to how students are currently perceived and responded to.

Problem Statement

Although universities are used to canvassing student opinions within their quality assurance (QA) work, more and more concern has been expressed that such opinions too frequently are not utilized constructively nor heeded. Students typically feel that whilst frequently asked to complete surveys or make comments, their opinions never lead to meaningful change. Institutions pay greater attention to numerical facts (such as scores and rankings), while qualitative views of the students (for example, their individual experiences and written comments) are largely ignored and not evaluated systematically.

As a consequence, there is a disconnect between the statements of students and actions undertaken by institutions. Indeed, students may view the whole process of giving feedback with suspicion, while universities will fail to gain any useful information that could improve the quality of teaching. Even though some methods for involving students have been developed, it is not clear to what extent student views are used in the decision and policy-making process.

Literature Review

The importance of Quality Assurance (QA) in Higher Education has become a matter of global concern in the past few years, which has resulted in institutions all over the world attempting to ensure better accountability, transparency and continuous improvement. The repositioning of students from being passive receivers of education to active participants and drivers of quality in their educational experience has happened in this background.

This shift in paradigm has generated an increasing interest on the notion of student voice, with this term entailing the actual engagement of students in the decision-making that shapes their learning and general educational experience. Gathering student feedback has been a long standing practice in universities; and such feedback has become an integral part of the national and institutional Quality Assurance (QA) mechanisms currently in place.

Higher education institutions commonly utilize student comments to gauge their experience on teaching quality dimensions, quality of the curriculum, assessment practice, student services, and physical infrastructure on campus. In the past decade, most institutions have put the data online using websites like Australia's QILT (Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching) and the UK's Unistats, putting up feedback that has been obtained through national surveys. More universities now have the analytical power to make sense of this qualitative feedback using state-of-the-art business intelligence software, so that reporting at multiple organizational levels such as institutional, departmental, course, and instructor levels is now feasible (Brockx et al., 2012; Wongsurawat, 2011).

Although considerable work has been done on the analysis and application of quantitative student feedback, much work is still lacking on systematic qualitative feedback analysis. A typical large university, for example, is likely to collect around 300,000 qualitative comments each year using end-of-semester course evaluations. These kinds of data, however, often end up under-analyzed or underreported (Brockx et al., 2012; Wongsurawat, 2011).

Quantitative national survey results are frequently used by university leadership to benchmark institutional performance against peer universities (Buckley, 2012) and are even used in university rankings (Canning, 2015; Turner, 2005). Such results are also used by academic leaders to identify areas of strength and areas of concern and make strategic decisions about curricular refinements, teaching practices, assessment improvements, and technology adoption (Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014; Hoon et al., 2015). In some institutions, academic units utilize student feedback triangulated with academic performance results

and complaint records to identify underlying issues. Student feedback results are even used to inform faculty performance evaluations and promotion and tenure (Hoon et al., 2015; Kember et al., 2002; Shah & Nair, 2012).

Qualitative feedback is particularly valuable in gaining insights that are not readily available with numeric ratings. Teachers have been known to draw on students' open-ended comments to fine-tune their courses, tests, and teaching methodologies (Lewis, 2001; Moore & Kuol, 2005; Shah, 2013). Feedback is also invaluable in assessing the teaching performance of casual or sessional staff and making decisions on their subsequent appointments.

Almost universal is the understanding that student surveys, particularly qualitative ones, are a legitimate measure of teaching quality and teaching effectiveness (Greenwald, 2002; Spooren et al., 2013). They not only reveal teaching strengths but also reflect areas where more attention is needed. For example, qualitative surveys are crucial to understand why some particular quantitative measures (e.g., on tests) consistently have low levels. Grebennikov and Shah (2017) established that courses with low quantitative scores have more qualitative comments to account for, thereby justifying the value of exploring both kinds of data jointly.

The richness of qualitative data makes depth of understanding of student experience possible (Gonyea & Gangi, 2012; Halloran et al., 2014; Hendry et al., 2007; Jackson & Trochim, 2002). Such feedback, noted Appleton (2018), includes students' real areas of concern, those areas students value most, such as library services. Students are generally eager to have their voice counted, shown by the number of comments obtained through institutional surveys. Student voice, Fielding (2004) argued, includes students' thoughts, lived experiences, and aspirations on a whole range of educational matters.

Qualitative feedback also enables teachers to assess the emotional tone both positive and negative of student comments and to interpret differences between qualitative and quantitative feedback (Oliver & Pegden, 2009; Symons, 2006). Open-ended questions, more specifically, invite more open-ended replies and are themselves favored by students to voice their opinions (Davison & Price, 2009; Erickson & Kaplan, 2000).

Steyn et al. (2018) discovered that qualitative comments provide context-dependent insights that are more valuable in boosting learning and teaching. In a similar vein, Scott (2005) suggested that open-ended comments be categorized into "best aspects" and "needs improvement" to ease the process of analysis. Grebennikov and Shah (2013) stressed that multiple forms of qualitative data be triangulated to get a rounded view of the student experience.

Qualitative feedback, valuable as it is, also has analytical drawbacks. Researchers have emphasized the necessity of more funds and qualified staff to handle and make sense of extensive qualitative data (Richardson, 2005; Santhanam et al., 2018). Coding remains manual and time-consuming and labor-intensive (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). In addition, students are now more likely to post feedback on public social media sites, making institutional attempts to regulate and respond to such comments more difficult.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The current study employs qualitative phenomenological research that seeks to understand students' experience and view on their engagement with the quality assurance processes within universities. An emphasis has been placed on learning about students' voices, their comments, and whether their opinions help to enhance quality within higher learning institutions.

Research Approach

The phenomenological method is applied to study students' lived experiences. Through this method, the researcher is able to make insightful observations on students' feelings about their responsibility to influence quality teaching, assessment, and student services through provision of feedback mechanisms.

Study Setting and Participants

It will be conducted at Three Public Sector Universities of Quetta (so that variation is achieved within institutional context. Participants will include:

- 10 to 15 undergraduate students final year students, who have participated in official feedback or quality assurance-related activities

Sampling Method

The purposive sampling method will be employed to sample those with practical experience in the field of student feedback system such as course evaluations.

Data Collection Methods

Focus group discussions and one to one interviews will be conducted to gain data.

Data Analysis

Data will be analyzed using Thematic Analysis through Note Book LM software

Ethical Considerations

- There will be informed consent from all respondents.
- The study is entirely voluntary and anonymous.
- Audio recordings and transcripts will be kept safely.

Data Collection

Research Questions based on Literature

Q1. What does "student voice" mean to you in the context of your university experience?

Q2. How have you been engaged in quality assurance processes at your institution (e.g., through course evaluations, feedback sessions, committee participation)?

Q3. Do you feel your feedback is listened to and acted upon by faculty or administration? Why or why not?

Q4. Can you share an example where student feedback led to a change in teaching, curriculum, or student services?

Q5. What challenges or barriers do you face when trying to express your opinions or give feedback to your institution?

Q6. In what ways would you prefer to be more involved in the decision-making and QA processes of your university?

Participant 1, Male, UNIVERSITY 1

Q1.

"In terms of me, student voice implies letting students express their opinions about the way teachers are teaching, working conditions, or subjects being studied, not just assessing the work done, but being really listened to."

Q2.

"Most of it is via feedback forms on LMS after each semester, but besides that, I haven't been actually invited to any meetings."

Q3

"Anyway, I think they don't really listen to us. We never receive any information about what happened to our feedback."

Q4.

"No, I complained some time ago about the internet in laboratories, but nothing has changed."

Q5.

"I feel uncomfortable passing opinions about teachers since it is such a small department and everybody knows each other."

Q6.

"I would like students to be allowed to participate in the sessions of the Department and tell what should be corrected."

Participant 2, Female, UNIVERSITY 2

Q1.

"In my opinion, it means to be able to communicate with teachers and administration about our problems and ideas related to university improvement."

Q2.

"Our department once conducted a survey among students about their opinion towards teachers and course material used."

Q3.

"I think they listened a little, but a teacher later asked which students complained meaning some of us were uncomfortable."

Q4.

"Class timings were modified to satisfy the requests of the students since many girls replied positively to the question."

Q5.

"We hear that our marks may go down if the professors know what we think."

Q6.

"I would like all surveys to be anonymous and followed by an email to let students know what they achieved."

Participant 3, Male, University 3

Q1.

"In my opinion, student voice involves only completing forms after each semester. This is my experience."

Q2.

"We do receive feedback forms and give our comments but that's all."

Q3.

"I do not believe anything is done with the feedback since we never get any reply."

Q4.

"I'm unable to provide any examples since we have been requesting improved seating in classrooms."

Q5.

"Most students do not know any issues to which these forms can be applied."

Q6.

"We need a meeting explaining how the feedback is used and why it is important."

Participant 4, Female, UNIVERSITY 1

Q1.

"It appears to me that we can help to improve things by sharing our experiences."

Q2.

"Once my group was invited to a meeting with a QEC officer in order to communicate problems we have."

Q3.

"It seemed they took our matters seriously and after some time we were provided with new lab equipment."

Q4.

"Indeed, the old lab kits were replaced after our complaints."

Q5.

"Most of students doubt that feedback can be significant, so they do not speak up."

Q6.

"I think that organizing meetings with QA staff and teachers can help us transparently discuss difficulties we face."

Participant 5, Male, University 3

Q1.

"I believe that student voice entails students raising their voices with regard to what's taught and where it's taught."

Q2.

"All that we do is fill out questionnaires once every semester, nothing more."

Q3.

"I don't believe I am heard because there's no change at all even when I lodge complaints."

Q4.

"We've requested an extra lecture for a difficult subject, but we haven't seen any results."

Q5.

"There are some students who are not good at writing in English; therefore, they skip feedback."

Q6.

"We could communicate our problems better if we could do so in our own language."

Participant 6, Female, UNIVERSITY 2

Q1.

"I believe that I represent my class and act on their behalf to resolve issues."

Q2.

"Because I am a class representative, I sometimes talk to teachers directly."

Q3.

"Women educators tend to listen to their opinions more than men but not usually formally."

Q4.

"I requested to have a woman sports trainer, and the request has been granted."

Q5.

"Meeting with college administration and faculty is often challenging."

Q6.

"I think student quality councils are needed in each department."

Participant 7, Male, UNIVERSITY 1

Q1.

"This means that students are supposed to engage in the decision-making process regarding quality issues."

Q2.

"I had a meeting with the quality assurance committee during one quality circle."

Q3.

"They understood our concerns and even submitted a report to us afterward."

Q4.

"We thought that teachers should be trained to use more projectors, and the process has started."

Q5.

"Some students are too shy to share their opinions."

Q6.

"I believe scheduling meetings via WhatsApp would be the easiest way to gather opinions."

Participant 8, Female, UNIVERSITY 1

Q1.

"It entails providing honest views regarding lessons, dormitory, and everything else."

Q2.

"We receive feedback forms at the end of each test, but not everyone fills and submits them."

Q3.

"I believe that the authorities do not pay attention to the feedback forms since no one acts on them."

Q4.

"Cleaning of toilets improved soon after some complaints were made."

Q5.

"Lots of women feel awkward to make a critical review openly."

Q6.

"Anonymous interviews on a one to one basis would be a more appropriate solution."

Participant 9, Male, UNIVERSITY 1

Q1.

"It is not just about filling in forms; it is about being involved in important decisions."

Q2.

"We do not get to take part in any committee; only forms are filled in."

Q3.

"Feedback does not reach us, making it all appear pointless."

Q4.

"I do not observe anything changing based on our writing."

Q5.

"Student do not believe that anything will change, therefore they see no point in taking any action."

Q6.

"Each active participant should receive a small gift or certificate."

Participant 10, Female, UNIVERSITY 2

Q1.

"It implies that the perceptions of learners influence the learning programs and amenities offered by the institution."

Q2.

"We had a single focus group with quality assurance personnel."

Q3.

"Yes, they recorded the points we made and sent an email showing what action had been taken."

Q4.

"Following that meeting, library hours were extended."

Q5.

"Many students do not have a clue as to when these meetings are held."

Q6.

"They ought to provide the summaries on the notice boards for people to know about it."

Participant 1, Professor, Faculty of Management Sciences

Q1.

"In my understanding, student voice is hearing from the students not merely as the source of feedback but as partners who play a role in designing courses and assessing university policies."

Q2.

"At UNIVERSITY 1, end-of-semester course evaluations are collected, and sometimes QEC arranges focus group discussions. There are also class representatives who share students' problems with the faculty."

Q3.

"Yes, in part. Some of the departments do take feedback seriously and discuss it in departmental meetings, while other departments may do it in a more formal manner without follow-up."

Q4.

"We changed our course calendar last year as a response to repeated student complaints of assignment overload."

Q5.

"They think that nothing will be done as a result of their feedback, therefore, they do not provide any feedback. Plus, cultural respect towards teachers discourages students from criticizing teachers."

Q6.

"I believe we need to have mid-term feedback, involvement of students in curriculum review committee and meetings where the faculty explains the action taken as a result of students' feedback."

Participant 2, Lecturer, Faculty of Management Sciences

Q1.

"For me, student voice is all about students putting forward their views on instructional practices, course design, and university facilities in order to enhance the learning environment."

Q2.

"It is generally done using feedback forms online after each semester ends. At times, departments hold informal sessions with the class representatives as well."

Q3.

"In my opinion, it works quite well in certain instances where there are some tangible suggestions. For example, the issue of lab equipment is relatively easy to implement. However, suggestions like 'make your teaching interesting' are difficult to implement."

Q4.

"Students had suggested more practical examples in programming lessons. Therefore, we included new tutorials and projects for them."

Q5.

"Firstly, not many students respond to forms and put forward some constructive suggestions. Secondly, teachers worry about how comments might affect their annual evaluation process."

Q6.

"We can provide the summaries of the feedback received to the students. This will ensure that they participate in future feedback processes."

Participant 3, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences

Q1.

"Student voice means students having an effect, not checking a box. It is the essence of participatory governance within education."

Q2.
"We do structured course evaluations, quality circles, and sometimes QEC invites students for thematic discussions."

Q3.
"Yes and no. Sometimes feedback is considered seriously, for instance adjusting the pace of teaching. However, when it comes to systematic issues, for example, the syllabus changes, it takes time."

Q4.
"Some students in one course asked for more cases of local context instead of purely international ones, and we adjusted our lecture materials."

Q5.
"Some students are afraid of offending the faculty. Some students don't know how their feedback fits into QA process. Moreover, not all faculty consider student voice valuable, but rather consider it criticism."

Q6.
"I would suggest conducting training of both students and faculty in providing feedback and involving students in departmental review meetings."

Participant	University	Role	Key Quotes & Observations
P1 (M)	UNIVERSITY 1	Student	<i>"Students should have the right to speak up... but we never get messages about feedback actions."</i> Fear of criticizing teachers in small departments.
P2 (F)	UNIVERSITY 2 Women's	Student	<i>"They asked who complained"</i> → Fear of retaliation. Praised successful timing changes via collective feedback. Requests anonymous surveys + follow-ups.
P3 (M)	Alhamd	Student	<i>"Student voice is just filling forms"</i> → No visible impact. Suggests feedback explanation sessions.
P4 (F)	UNIVERSITY 1	Student	Positive lab equipment change after feedback. Notes: <i>"Most students don't trust feedback matters."</i> Requests open QA meetings.
P5 (M)	Alhamd	Student	<i>"Nothing changes after complaints."</i> Highlights language barrier: <i>"Some can't write English feedback."</i> Suggests verbal local-language options.
P6 (F)	UNIVERSITY 2 Women's	Student (CR)	Successfully advocated for female sports instructor. <i>"Hard to meet department heads."</i> Proposes departmental student QA committees.
P7 (M)	UNIVERSITY 1	Student	Positive change: projectors adopted after feedback. <i>"Students feel shy/unimportant."</i> Suggests WhatsApp feedback groups.
P8 (F)	UNIVERSITY 1	Student	Restroom cleaning improved after complaints. <i>"No follow-up on forms."</i> Recommends 1:1 anonymous interviews.
P9 (M)	UNIVERSITY 1	Student	<i>"Feels useless without feedback."</i> Proposes rewards/certificates for participation.
P10 (F)	UNIVERSITY 2 Women's	Student	Library timings extended after focus group. <i>"Students unaware of QA meetings."</i> Suggests public summaries on notice boards.

F1 (Prof)	UNIVERSITY 1	Faculty	<i>"Students are partners, not just feedback providers."</i> Acknowledges partial listening. Notes cultural respect barriers.
F2 (Lect)	UNIVERSITY 1	Faculty	Praises concrete feedback (e.g., programming examples added). Concerned about <i>"low response rates and teacher anxiety."</i>
F3 (AsstP)	UNIVERSITY 1	Faculty	<i>"Systemic issues take longer."</i> Revised local case studies after feedback. Suggests feedback training for students/faculty.

Data Transcription Summary

Interpretation: Data show common patterns of student participation in QA processes three universities (UNIVERSITY 1, UNIVERSITY 2 Women's University, University 3) The survey reported that positive change resulted from giving feedback, yet the more general sense was of low trust, fear of negative consequences and lack of visible action subsequent to feedback.

Fear of Retaliation and Cultural Barriers

Many respondents (P1, P2,P6) with whom we spoke acknowledged feeling afraid to critique faculty, also noted that in smaller divisions it may be hard to conceal one's identity. One UNIVERSITY 2 Women's University participant said 'they asked who complained', which reflects a fear of potential retribution. (P2). Faculty also referred to the social norms of cultural respect which makes it rude to openly criticize (F1). In this way, the voices of students can be silenced in QA processes something that Seale (2010) also identifies as an issue.

Lack of Feedback Loops and Visible Impact

Students at all three universities questioned whether their input drives anything of substance. For example, while P3 opined that "student voice is just filling forms," P5 believed that "nothing changes after complaints." The findings are aligned with those reported by Bovill et al. As a result, they can perceive the QA process in which they participated to be tokenistic and not collaborative (Cramer et al., 2011).

Positive Outcomes from Targeted Feedback

While generally skeptical about the effectiveness of the process, there were some few instances of effectiveness, which included renovation of lab equipment (P4), use of projectors (P7), clean toilet facilities (P8), long hours in the library, and provision of female sports instructors (P6). This supports the views of Lizzio and Wilson (2009) that material commitment increases the confidence of the students in the QA process.

Suggestions for Improvement

Participants offered several practical recommendations:

- Anonymous surveys and follow up sessions (P2, P8)
- Student level QA committee at departmental level (P6)
- Feedback explanation sessions (P3)
- Local language verbal feedback options (P5)
- Public summaries of QA meeting outcomes (P10)
- Rewards for active participation (P9)

These recommendations reflect those of Cook-Sather (2014) who argued that true partnership as opposed to consultation needs structures that support student agency, communication, and accountability.

Faculty Perspectives on Student Voice

The members of the faculty (F1-F3) generally supported student involvement in QA processes, considering students as partners. Some weaknesses like the low level of response (F2) or slow development of reforms (F3) were recognized. These observations agree with the findings of Bryson and Hand (2007), who maintain the importance of faculty acceptance despite institutional barriers when implementing reform measures.

Thematic Analysis & Coding Framework

Codebook: The material was summarized with the help of inductive coding and deductive research questions.

Theme 1: Barriers to Effective Student Voice

Code	Frequency	Example Quotes	Participants
Fear of Retaliation	8	"Scared to criticize teachers" (P1); "Worry marks affected" (P2); "Fear offending faculty" (F3)	P1,P2,P4,P5,P8,F1,F3
Lack of Trust	7	"Don't trust feedback matters" (P4); "Why bother?" (P9); "Students feel no real change" (F1)	P3,P4,P5,P8,P9,F1,F2
Procedural Gaps	6	"No follow-up messages" (P1); "Generic forms skipped" (P5); "Low response rates" (F2)*	P1,P3,P5,P7,P8,F2
Cultural Barriers	5	"Cultural respect for teachers" (F1); "Shy to criticize openly" (P8); "Shy/unimportant" (P7)*	P4,P7,P8,F1,F3
Language/Access	3	"Can't write English feedback" (P5); "Unaware of meetings" (P10); "Hard to meet dept heads" (P6)	P5,P6,P10

Interpretation: Fear of Retaliation

Fear of repercussions academically or interpersonally proved to be the most commonly cited barrier (frequency = 8). The students' reluctance to critique faculty was based on worries about repercussions related to grading and departmental relations: "Scared to criticize teachers" (P1); "They asked who complained" (P2). Faculty members agreed on this, saying that the "fear of offending faculty" could hinder honest discussion (F3). This is consistent with Seale (2010), whose work shows that hierarchical structure in higher education institutions stifles.

Lack of Trust in the QA Process

The feeling of mistrust that the feedback process brings about any changes was mentioned by 7 interviewees. Statements such as "Don't trust feedback matters" (P4) and "Why bother?" (P9) demonstrate that students felt tokenism in the process. Faculty members also mentioned this in their feedback, saying that the students could "feel no real change" even after they shared their views (F1). Bovill et al. (2011) also point out the erosion of trust caused by the failure of institutions.

Procedural Gaps

Procedural issues that affect QA engagement include lack of follow-up communication ("No followup messages", P1) and use of impersonal surveys ("Generic forms skipped", P5). Low survey response rates were raised by the faculty as well (F2). The above problems align with those raised by Lizzio and Wilson (2009) in relation to their impact on student motivation to engage in QA.

Cultural Barriers

The issue of cultural norms regarding respect for the teacher was cited as a constraint by five respondents. In particular, F1 faculty member said that "cultural respect for teachers" might discourage students from voicing any concerns. In turn, students

indicated being “shy/unimportant” (P7) or hesitant to criticize (P8). CookSather (2014) mentions that sociocultural issues need a specific strategy to ensure respect and safety for students.

Language and Access Constraints

Issues of language proficiency and logistics of QA procedures (frequency = 3) were less prominent, but still relevant. For example, some students “can't write English feedback” (P5), while some are unaware about QA sessions (P10) or find it “hard to meet department heads” (P6). Trowler and Trowler (2010) note the barriers to access to QA related to linguistic, informational or procedural issues.

Theme 2: Successful Feedback Practices

Code	Frequency	Example Quotes	Participants
Collective Advocacy	4	<i>"Many girls gave same suggestion → timings changed" (P2); "Repeated complaints → assignment overload fixed" (F1)</i>	P2,P6,F1,F3
Direct Channels	3	<i>"As class rep, talked to teachers" (P6); "Met QEC officer → new lab equipment" (P4)</i>	P4,P6,F1
Transparent Outcomes	2	<i>"Emailed action taken" (P10); "Sent summary report" (P7)</i>	P7,P10

Interpretation: Collective Advocacy

The power of collective student action when it comes to making changes on the institutional level was mentioned by four participants. P2 cited the example that “many girls gave same suggestion → timings changed,” while F1 remarked that “repeated complaints → assignment overload fixed.” This confirms the findings of Trowler & Trowler (2010), who say that many voices are able to make one voice important. Faculty (F3) saw group representation as more credible and important than individual efforts.

Direct Channels

The success of three participants relies on direct communication routes to decision-makers. P6, being a class representative, said: “As class rep, talked to teachers”. P4 shared an experience about meeting with a Quality Enhancement Cell personnel, which resulted in “new lab equipment”. Both instances represent observations made by Bovill et al. (2011) in their work, who highlighted that face-to-face discussions between students and quality control personnel can help avoid delays in processes and achieve mutual understanding.

Transparent Outcomes

Although it occurs less frequently (frequency = 2), communicating the follow-up actions improves students' trust in QA. P10 shared that he received an “emailed action taken” news; whereas P7 mentioned that there was a “summary report”. Cook-Sather (2014) pointed out that showing immediate and documented responses helps in closing the feedback loop and establishing credibility for students' voices.

Theme 3: Improvement Strategies

Code	Frequency	Example Quotes	Participants
Anonymous Mechanisms	5	<i>"Anonymous surveys" (P2); "1:1 anonymous interviews" (P8); "Avoid teacher anxiety" (F2)</i>	P2,P5,P8,F2,F3
Feedback Loop Closure	7	<i>*"Follow-up emails" (P2); "Summaries on notice boards" (P10); "Share action reports" (F2)*</i>	P2,P6,P7,P10,F1,F2,F3

Structural Inclusion	6	*"Join departmental meetings" (P1); "Student QA committees" (P6); "Mid-semester feedback" (F1)*	QA P1,P4,P6,F1,F3
Culturally Adapted Methods	4	"Verbal feedback in local language" (P5); "Training on constructive feedback" (F3); "WhatsApp groups" (P7)	P5,P7,F1,F3

Interpretation: Anonymous Mechanisms

Five participants raised the idea of anonymity to address fear of retaliation and teacher anxiety, including "anonymous surveys" (P2), "1:1 anonymous interviews" (P8), and faculty desire for methods that "avoid teacher anxiety" (F2). This correlates with research by Seale (2010) that indicated confidential feedback methods resulted in more direct student replies, particularly among those within the hierarchical and social structure of the academe. Seven of the seven reported suggestions came under this theme.

Feedback Loop Closure

The act of visibly closing the feedback loop is routinely mentioned as a critical practice (Bovill et al. 2011, CookSather2014). visible follow-up not only fosters trust, validates student engagement and "prevents students from feeling their feedback is treated as merely symbolic and not in genuine consideration for practice change" (CookSather2014 213).

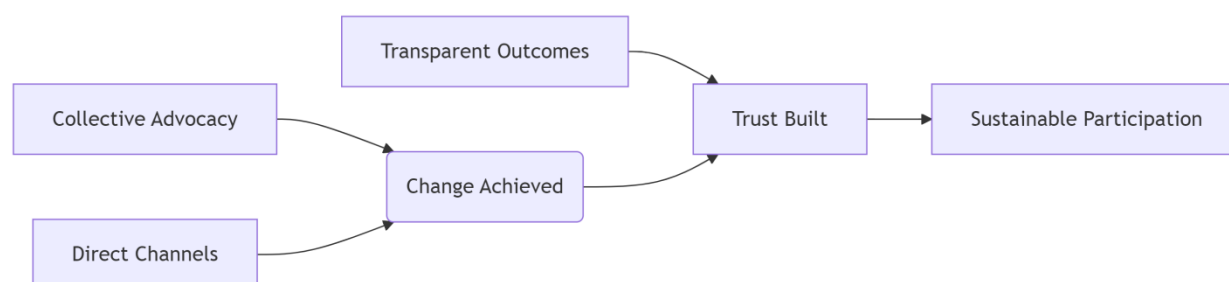
Structural Inclusion

Six respondents proposed that the incorporation of student voice should be done into governance structures of their organizations. For instance, statement participants proposed "attend departmental meetings," "student QA committees," or "mid semester feedback" opportunities. This corresponds with Healey, Flint and Harrington's (2014) partnership paradigm and their suggestion that students are engaged in leadership positions in the governance of the university.

Culturally Adapted Methods

Four participants underscored culturally adaptive engagement methods, from "verbal feedback in local language" (P5) to "training on constructive feedback" (F3) and use of platforms such as "WhatsApp groups" (P7). This mirrors Trowler and Trowler's (2010) position that modifying feedback methods to correspond with locally appropriate language, social practices and technologies improves inclusivity

Figure: Success Factor Mapping



Interpretation: Figure above: Success Factor Mapping The Success Factor Mapping identifies the series of interconnected pathways that allow for quality and meaningful student engagement in quality assurance (QA) to occur over time. There are two major drivers of engagement, Collective Advocacy and Direct Channels. These two types of engagement trigger real changes to institutional practice.

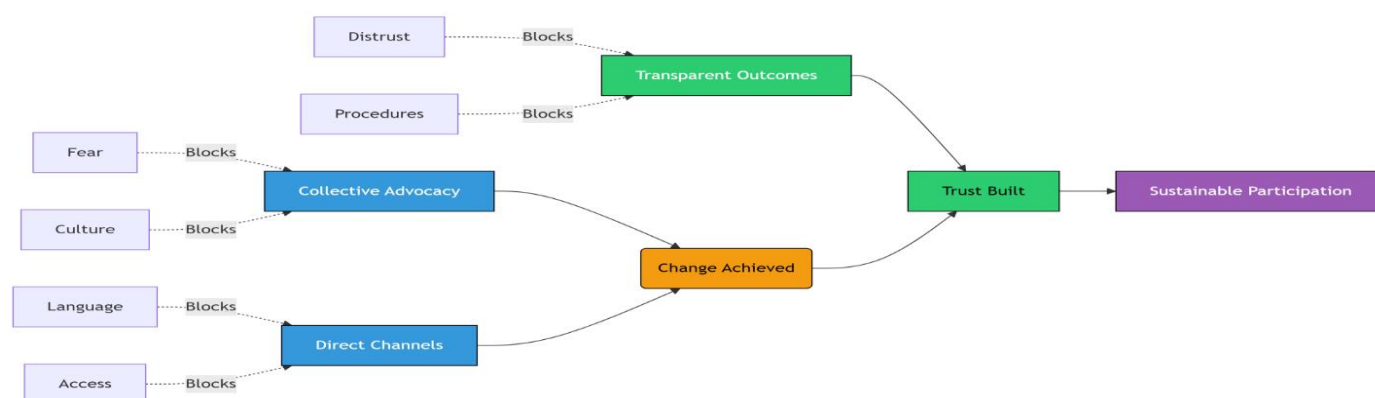
When the changes made are transparent, this build trust between students and the institution.

Transparent Outcomes then act as a reinforcement, students seeing evidence of that their feedback makes a difference builds trust in the institution. This builds trust that enable sustainable long term student engagement in the QA process (CookSather, 2014; Healey et al., 2014). Without this trust students can become performative in their engagement. The model is, in this sense clearly in line with Trowler and Trowler (2010), who assert that engagement is not an ends in itself but a selfreinforcing cycle.

It is in this context of the modelling work the result are consistent with Bovill et al. (2011), who emphasize the need to create structural flexibility in ways in which the institution ensures that feedback responsiveness is built in to the institution so that every cycle of involvement merely strengthens students commitment to continuing to be engaged.

Figure: Feedback Impact Pathway

How successful feedback leads to institutional change



Interpretation: The Feedback Impact Pathway shows this occurring in an educational setting – the different possibilities for effective feedback processes working in concert to initiate a change at institutional level. The model suggests that reliably collected data is analyzed constructively with the institution and used visibly, resulting in palpable improvements in policies, practices and pedagogic approaches, and learning cultures.

It commences with the input of students (usually obtained through surveys, focus groups and informal interactions); this aligns with students' voices being significant drivers in HE quality assurance (Bovill, 2020; Lizzio & Wilson, 2009). If student concerns or suggestions are voiced as a collective; class representatives, feedback etc, they will be prioritised and brought up within the institution.

The second involves sifting and ranking feedback, which implies there must also be institutional embrace of a conversation with stakeholders. Responsive feedback is one of the most important factors in building student trust and motivation (Carless, 2019). Within the pathway, this phase advances collaborative problem solving between students and academic staff to support the principle of cocreation in educational enhancement (CookSather et al., 2014).

Third, the model highlights transparency in terms of what is visible and invisible action through both reporting on decisions made (as opposed to protocols) and making change implemented reports publicly available. In addition to completing the feedback loop, transparency also enhances the perceived credibility of an institution's quality enhancement processes (Brennan & Shah and Brennan et al. The effective communication of feedback results creates a feeling of worth for the students. The offering of feedback establishes a series of communication processes making students feel they are an essential part of the learning process (Ryan & Henderson 2018).

Feedback Impact Pathway emphasizes the need to approach feedback not as a cycle of events but rather as a sequence of actions and responsibilities. The approach suggests consistent adherence to the best international practices in quality assurance (Harvey, 2011).

Conclusion

The research indicates that formal quality assurance structures at public universities in Balochistan mostly fail to translate student feedback into real improvements. Issues such as students' fear of retaliation, respect for authority as a cultural norm, and procedural problems hinder student engagement processes and limit their effectiveness. However, some successful examples demonstrate how constructive and timely feedback provides results, such as construction improvements and changes in schedules. Nevertheless, despite the willingness of the faculty members to collaborate, they face numerous systemic challenges. Trust, the involvement of people, and proper accountability systems contribute to successful developments in quality assurance.

Recommendations

Universities interested in upgrading student involvement in QA need to implement mid-semester feedback systems that allow quick replies to academic and administrative issues instead of waiting until end-semester assessments. Departments would have student QA Committees that would ensure regular communication links between students and professors thus introducing participatory decision-making into everyday practice. Accessibility of feedback channels is a must which would mean not only creating channels that are inclusive culturally and linguistically but also giving students an option to provide feedback verbally in their languages. The universities should also introduce the "you said, we did" principle of doing business at the policy level which assumes colleges are committed to informing public about their decisions. Investments in training of professors on how to make the best of student feedback are also necessary. Future studies need to concern longitudinal influence of feedback-based processes and comparative studies of private and provincial institutions' models.

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