

ISSUES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN PHD IN ENGLISH IN PAKISTAN

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The study investigates the issues and problems of PhD degree in English in Pakistan. Although HEC has been allocating enough budget to ensure the quality of the indigenous PhD programs since its inception yet there are some serious issues regarding PhD degree and its quality assurance. It is hypothesized that the factors which may influence the quality of PhD degree are competent indigenous and overseas faculty to supervise the research scholars, adequate learning resources over all disciplines, research culture, indigenous journals of international standard; faculty and students exchange program and motivation to accomplish the tasks successfully. Total 1980 responses taken from 60 MS leading to PhD scholars in English were analyzed to address the research questions a) what are the current issues and problems in PhD degree, and b) how to enhance the quality of PhD degree in Pakistan. The data show that the less number of supervisors, lack of overseas faculty and collaboration with foreign universities, inadequate learning resources, non availability of HEC recognized journals in English, bureaucracy in the institutions and disharmony between the needs and wants are the obstacles of PhD degree in Pakistan. The data have shown some highly significant results at .05 p value. The study suggests that these discrepancies should be addressed to ensure quality PhD degree in English in Pakistan.

Introduction

The significance of PhD English degree cannot be denied in the present time. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has given much emphasis on the production of more PhDs. New opportunities in the form of foreign and indigenous scholarships are becoming increasingly available. More funds for research projects have been specified and research grants have also been offered to present papers in the international conferences. As a result of these initiatives a large number of students are entering into the PhD programs. Many universities are endorsing PhD programs in Natural Sciences, Applied Science and Humanities. Although the objectives of the PhD programs are commendable yet in the absence of proper planning and resources, these prominent PhD programs risk losing their potential effectiveness. In order to ensure quality in the PhD degree, HEC has introduced many reform plans to up grade PhD to international level.

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HEC policy to ensure quality in PhD degree has led to number of problems, such as less number of qualified faculty members, less number of supervisors, lack of well equipped libraries and computer labs, lack of foreign subject specialists, inadequate collaboration with foreign universities, and unnecessary delay in research work. The present study aims to look into these problems to suggest remedial measures to enhance the quality of PhD programs with special reference to Pakistan.

Research Questions

- a) What are the current issues and problems in PhD degree?
- b) How to enhance the quality of PhD degree in Pakistan?

Literature Review

Universities around the globe have realized the need to restrict their PhD degrees so that they may prepare themselves to compete globally (Knight and De Wit, 1997; Scott, 1998; Marginson, 2001). All the routine activities of the universities including teaching, research, skill development, knowledge enhancement and management need a revamp to face the new challenges of the world. The PhD degree with all its claims of sophisticated study and mature research methodology to convert raw knowledge into value added product is on the apex of the academic achievements.

The high pedestal of PhD is in question due to various factors including dwindling number of candidates, limited economic benefits, insecure future of academic research in the market and the weak bond between material benefits for career building and the academic research (Royal Academy of Engineering, 2002). All these factors demand a review of the traditional role of PhD program as it has to meet the standards of training in research, authenticity in supervision and of quality learning.

The relevance of PhD degree has long been debated almost all over the world. The issues concerning PhD program have been surfacing in the advanced countries intermittently. Cude (1987) criticized many of the North American doctoral programs for their inflexibility, overburden and inefficiency. He further commented that, "Doctoral programs have become traps for the candidates and sinkholes for intellectual resources" (Cude, 2001). The present research aims to investigate the problems and issues in PhD degree with special reference to Pakistan.

Methodology

A sample of 60 scholars; 30 each from public and private universities was taken for the execution of the questionnaire. Knowing the nature and reality of the problems faced by the scholars doing PhD in English, a questionnaire consisted of 11 items was distributed among them at three different times during their PhD program. Total 1980 responses (60 scholars x 11 x 11 x 11 items) were analyzed for the research. The questionnaire aimed to identify the subjects' perception about PhD degree issues and problems. The respondents of the questionnaire were representing different colleges and universities in Pakistan. The underlying purpose of the questionnaire was to find out the problems, which were creating difficulties for the scholars in PhD quality assurance. Quantitative and qualitative methods were applied for the analysis of the data. Any results in which the value of p is less than .05 is taken as significant.

Finding and Data Analysis

Table and Figure below indicate the perceptions of 60 MS leading to PhD scholars about problems and issues in PhD in English degree.

Table-1: %age of Problems and Issues in PhD in English

Question	Problems and Issues	Positive Response		
		Count	Percentage	Count
1.	Less number of departments to run PhD in English program	90	85.5	94.5
2.	Lack of well-equipped libraries to support PhD program	64	60.8	67.2
3.	Lack of digital resources libraries to support PhD program	37.35	35	38.85
4.	Lack of research culture at PhD	87	82.65	91
5.	Lack of proper guidance to accomplish the research work	67	63	70.35
6.	Lack of learning opportunities through conferences	83	79	87.15
7.	Lack of HEC Approved Supervisors in PhD in English	78.85	74	81.90
8.	HEC Approved Supervisors are over-loaded with theses	67	63	70.35
9.	HEC Approved Supervisors feel reluctant to supervise Non-HEC scholars	84	80	88
10.	Restrictions for HEC scholars to work during their study	57.12	54	59.85
11.	Delay in research work demotivate the scholars to leave the PhD program	65	61.75	68

One-Way Analysis of Variance

Analysis of Variance for C2

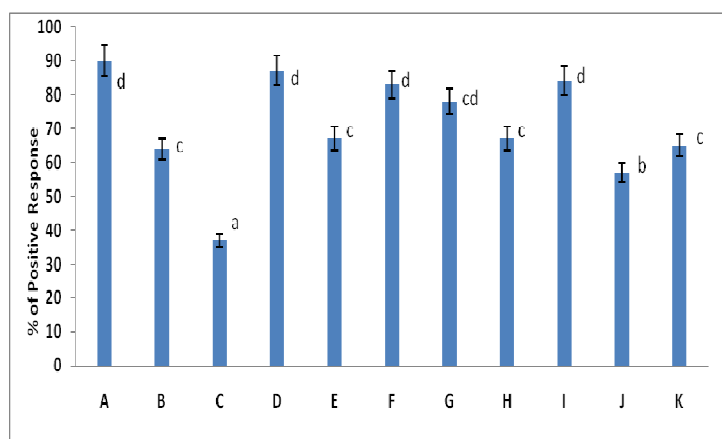
Source	DF	SS	MS	F	P
C1	10	7342.9	734.3	56.08	0.000
Error	22	288.1	13.1		
Total	32	7631.0			

Individual 95% CIs For Mean
Based on Pooled StDev

Level	N	Mean	StDev	CI Lower	CI Upper
Less num	3	90.000	4.500	83.627	96.373
Lack of	3	64.000	3.200	59.200	68.800
Lack of	3	37.000	1.850	35.150	38.850
Lack of	3	87.000	4.350	82.650	91.350
Lack of	3	67.000	3.350	63.650	70.350
Lack of	3	83.000	4.150	78.850	87.150
lack of	3	78.000	3.900	74.100	81.900
HEC Appr	3	67.000	3.350	63.650	70.350
HEC Appr	3	84.000	4.200	79.800	88.200
Restrict	3	57.000	2.850	54.150	59.850

Delay in 3 65.000 3.250 (---*)
 Pooled StDev = 3.619 40 60 80 100

Table-2: %age of Problems and Issues in PhD in English



11 items asked

Key

- A** Less number of departments to run PhD in English Program
- B** Lack of well-equipped libraries to support PhD program
- C** Lack of digital resources libraries to support PhD program
- D** Lack of research culture at PhD level
- E** Lack of proper guidance to accomplish the research work
- F** Lack of learning opportunities through conferences
- G** Lack of HEC Approved Supervisors in PhD in English
- H** HEC Approved Supervisors are over-loaded with theses
- I** HEC Approved Supervisors are reluctant to supervise Non-HEC scholars
- J** Restriction for HEC scholars to work during their study
- K** Delay in the research work causes demotivation among the scholars to abandon the PhD program

Note: Different small letters above the bars in graph represent significant difference among treatments.

Figure 2 showed the % of reasons of Problems and Issues in PhD in English. The significant differences among different reasons are shown by different letters above the bars. Less number of departments to run PhD in English program, lack of research culture at PhD, lack of learning opportunities through conferences and HEC approved supervisors feel reluctant to supervisor non-HEC scholars were the major reasons that

depicted significantly high % positive response. Statistical analysis showed that there was no significant difference among these questions/reasons. Whereas, lack of digital resources libraries to support PhD program showed the minimum % response that is significantly less ($P < 0.05$) than other reasons. Lack of well-equipped libraries to support PhD program, lack of proper guidance to accomplish the research work, HEC Approved Supervisor are over-loaded with theses and delay in research work demotivate the scholars to leave the PhD program were also other reasons that gave significantly higher responses. On the other hand, restriction for HEC scholars to work during their study is poor reason that is significantly ($P < 0.05$) lower than above mentioned reasons.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Looking at the results of this study, it is obvious that research scholars face a lot of problems in their PhD programs. The PhD in English program seems to be the most affected one in all of the disciplines of humanities due to certain reasons such as non-availability of approved supervisors, non-cooperation of supervisors because of their busy schedule, lack of research culture, books, research journals etc which addresses immediate remedial action. This remedial action must be taken not only to host the problems within the universities, but to outline a number of the issues and problems also which the present research has indicated within the PhD program in English in Pakistan. At present, some universities in Pakistan are producing a large number of MPhil degree holders with a very low caliber and profile which is spoiling the over all image of PhD degrees. The concept of the traditional PhD or foreign earned PhD is changing rapidly and losing its focus of quality. These changes are afoot to make it worse if not addressed seriously. Although, Higher Education Commission is taking every possible step to upgrade the indigenous PhD programs, it is time for all the universities and academia to bring a change in their vision to promote the culture of quality in these programs. There is a need that the Universities should adopt the standards set by HEC for a marked quality assurance in PhD program.

Delimitations

The study encompasses only on the PhD scholars' data about the problems and issues faced by them during their studies and research

work. The problems of universities and teachers are not included in the study, which may be considered for further research.

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