Performance Evaluation of Higher Education Institutes as an integrative tool for quality management. A content analysis

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Abstract

This paper investigates how higher education institute's processes, structural levels, and principles of quality management are incorporated into higher education institutes' performance evaluation criteria. This research uses institutional performance evaluation standards of the higher education commission Pakistan to explore the phenomena of interest. Directed content analysis has been used to examine the integration of quality management practices in an organization's system through institutional performance evaluation standards. The findings indicate that there are still some gaps in policy even though IPE standards provide comprehensive guidelines to universities. Further, standards focus more on teaching, learning, and support services. The third mission, research and scholarship, and several quality management principles are not adequately addressed. The regulatory bodies can update the standards in light of the findings of this paper. It can play an important role in improving the performance evaluation criteria of the higher education system by incorporating the missing elements. The current research investigates the IPE standards in the framework of quality management integration. It also discussed IPE standards from the lens of Educational Organization Management Systems established by ISO.

***Keywords*:** Quality Management, directed content analysis, IPE standards, Higher Education.

Introduction

Universities are facing unprecedented challenges to excel in multiple areas at once due to rising levels of competition, marketization, the politicization of higher education, and the recognition of the economic impact of higher education

(Taylor & Baines, 2012). To improve the efficacy of their internal management systems, educational institutions are increasingly adopting frameworks and models from the industry. Numerous frameworks/models have emerged and been adopted by industries and educational institutions over the past years. Taylor & Baines (2012) identified balanced scorecards, the European Quality Framework Model and the aggregated key performance indicators as some of the highly used frameworks in performance measurement of public sector organizations, particularly higher education institutes. Several authors have used the balanced scorecard for organizational analysis in higher education sector (Ahmad & Soon, 2015; Binden, Mziu & Suhaimi, 2014; Camilleri, 2021; Reda, 2017; Taylor & Baines, 2012), and some have examined the implementation of MBNQA & EFQM (Badri et al., 2006; Hides, Davies & Jackson, 2004; Laurett & Mendes, 2019) Balance scorecard and all other models require significant intellect to be adopted in individual higher education institutes context (Taylor & Baines, 2012).

Different researchers have proposed a framework to measure the performance of higher education institutes by using various tools/approaches (Binden, Mziu & Suhaimi, 2014; Khan et al., 2020; Camilleri, 2021) The focus was to include all subjective and objective measures that played a role in institutional performance. The literature in higher education shows a trend toward integrating quality management in the overall system (Janssens et al., 2022; Anwar et al., 2020; Manatos, Sarrico & Rosa, 2017). In the business sector, Quality management models like ISO 9000, EFQM, and MBNQA have played a fundamental role in organizational excellence and development (Al-Majali & Almhirat, 2018; Khattak & Ilyas, 2015; Srivastav, 2010). Various regions have developed their models and standards for evaluating the quality of higher education, such as the European Standard Guidelines (ESG) in the context of higher education in Europe. In view of Manatos, Rosa & Sarrico (2018)ESG is as relevant to universities as the ISO standards have been to business organizations. The standards played the role of a "facilitator" required to diffuse quality management practices.

This research study used Institutional performance evaluation standards prepared by the higher education commission, Pakistan as a reference model. The standards provide guidelines to higher education institutes to implement their internal quality assurance systems to meet the requirements of external bodies. These standards aim to promote quality education followed by an improvement in the regional and international rankings of Higher Education Institutes. The current study aims to understand whether or not these performance evaluation standards are a source of quality management integration in higher education institutes. The higher education commission in Pakistan defines a total of eleven standards. The IPE standards provide a broader framework to higher education institutes for quality enhancement and improvement. The paper aims to explore whether the IPE standards cover the main processes of higher education as defined in the literature, various organizational levels, and quality management principle discussed in ISO 21001 2018.

Role of IPE in the Higher Education Sector

The higher education commission does not provide certification based on IPE standards, but universities are bound to meet the minimum requirement to be recognized. IPE standards and ISO both positively achieved performance excellence in their particular context, resulting from a global phenomenon of diffusion of quality management practices in systems. Both play the role of a granter to the suppliers and customers. The IPE standards aim to ensure the quality in processes of higher education institutes for all stakeholders.

The benefits derived from ISO-certified companies are widely acknowledged in the literature. Companies achieved competitiveness and external visibility even if they got the certification because of the only available option. In higher education, some accreditation councils have already accredited internal quality management system of universities on the basis of their compliance with IPEs. The Accreditation Councils are established to ascertain the high-quality programs at the institutional level. Currently, eleven accreditation councils are working, nine of them are independent, and five of them are established under HEC. The goal was to guide universities to ascertain the quality provision of education in the respective fields within the framework of IPE. Therefore, the IPE standards can play a similar role in higher education as ISO standards play globally.

IPE and quality management integration.

The literature proposed an integrative version of the quality management systems/models (Becket & Brookes, 2008; Bhatti et al., 2018; Manatos, Sarrico & Rosa, 2017b; Rosa & Amaral, 2007). In this context, management cannot isolate a quality management system in any organization. A quality management system must be embedded in all organizational processes and levels to deliver excellence (Andreeva et al., 2018; Mosadeghrad, 2012). Likewise, universities are on the way to integrating their main processes into a broader management system as practiced in other sectors (Neema-Aboki, 2006). Moreover, from the literature, we can infer that the practice of developing holistic quality management models has been transferred from industry to academia (Da Rosa, Saraiva & Diz, 2003; Da Rosa, Saraiva & Diz, 2001). Quality assurance frameworks (Local & international levels), networks (PNQANA, INQANE), and accreditation councils (Local & foreign) at the national and international levels are also following the same trend.

The societal pressure for accountability forced governments and HEIs to introduce an organized quality assurance system in Pakistan. It became the major motivator of quality assurance in Pakistan and resulted in the formulation of the Quality Assurance Agency in 2005. The Quality Assurance Agency systematically implemented quality enhancement procedures/criteria to improve institutional compatibility and competitiveness. The quality assurance agency works collaboratively with the Quality Assurance division of the higher education commission. Higher education commission introduced Institutional Performance

Evaluation standards to ensure the minimum requirements for an HEC-recognized institution. Total eleven standards are developed, and each covers a distinctive dimension of institute's quality (www.hec.gov.pk). The goal of developing the standards was to create a common frame of reference to be used by higher education institutes.

The IPE standards are a reference model, providing guidelines to implement quality management practices in the higher education institutes. These standards also serve the purpose of a facilitating tool for the evaluation agencies. Thus, IPE standards claim to be a holistic approach for quality assurance aiming at the broader spectrum by bringing quality to the governance system and involving all the stakeholders (Irshad, Shoaib & Rafiq, 2017).

Theoretical Framework.

A framework has been constructed to determine the inclusion of quality management principles in all organizational processes and at all levels in institutional performance evaluation standards. Three classes have been included, widely used in higher education literature. It will also help to observe the integration of quality management practices in higher education institutes. Table I summarizes the nature of IPE standards, and Table II presents the theoretical framework derived from the higher education literature.

Table 1: IPE standards

Standards	**Description**
IPE Standard 1: Mission Statement and Goals.	Focused on developing institutional mission and subsequent goals through the involvement of the institution's community.
IPE Standard 2: Planning and evaluation	Focused on systematic planning and evaluation to ensure its effectiveness and conformity with the institution's mission.
IPE Standard 3: Governance and organization	Focused on facilitation by ensuring optimum resource use and defining the governing body's structure to develop core organizational activities.
IPE Standard 4: Integrity	Focused on adherence to high ethical standards and values.
IPE Standard 5: Faculty	Focused on the provision of competitive faculty members and their development.

IPE Standard 6: Students	Focused on students whose academic interests are compatible with the organization's mission and to retain them through best previsions.
IPE Standard 7: Institutional Resources	Focused on accessible and appropriate provision of tangible and intangible resources.
IPE Standard 8: Academic Programs and Curricula	Focused on adequate provision of academic programs consistent with organizational mission.
IPE Standard 9: Public Disclosure and Transparency	Focused on the provision of accurate and adequate information to all stakeholders.
IPE Standard 10: Assessment and Quality Assurance	Focused on self-appraisal and internal quality assurance process.
IPE Standard 11: Student Support Services.	Focused on adequate and efficient student support services.

Table 2: Theoretical framework partially from (Manatos, Sarrico & Rosa, 2017a)

Analysis levels	**Dimensions**
Process	Teaching & learning
	Research
	Third mission
	Support services
Organizational	Program
	Department level
	Institution.
The quality management principle	Focus on Learner, Visionary leadership, People Engagement, Process approach, evidence-based decision, improvement, relationship management, Social responsibility, accessibility and equity, Ethical conduct, and data security.

The role of universities has evolved from teaching and learning organizations to the backbone of knowledge economies. (Pinheiro, Benneworth & Jones, 2012) state that higher education accommodated new responsibilities beyond teaching and learning during evolution. The rise of knowledge economies,

globalization, and resource scarcity are the factors that extended higher education missions to the second and third levels (Rubens et al., 2017). The demand for rethinking the higher education role in meeting societal & economic challenges leads toward the acceptance of research and scholarship as another core activity, followed by the beginning of a third mission (Pinheiro, Benneworth & Jones, 2012).

Despite having a significant role in economic and social development, no concrete definition or framework exists for the third mission (Bonollo, Lazzini & Occhipinti, 2022). However, it can be defined as a bridge between higher education institutes and stakeholders outside the academic world (Compagnucci & Spigarell, 2020). Activities related to knowledge generation, usage, application, and exploitation in a non-academic environment are included in the third mission (Calcagnini et al, 2016; Razzaq et al., 2020; Secundo et al., 2017). It is the economic utilization of research activities and can be considered the collaboration between academia and society to contribute toward sustainable development goals.

To execute the above higher education missions, the importance of support services ranging from administrative issues to IT support cannot be undermined. Consequently, a fourth process is added along with the three above, support services (Yeo & Li, 2013; Manzoor et al., 2022). The three organizational levels considered in this research are program, department, and institution. Studying the phenomena through the holistic perspective has become the norm in literature (Manatos, Rosa & Sarrico, 2018; Samiullah et al., 2021; Papadimitriou, 2010). Lastly, quality management principles derived from ISO 21001 Management system for educational organizations are discussed. It provides a model to improve learner satisfaction, educational processes and ensure conformity to regulatory requirements (Sony, Kochu & Neeta, 2020; Manzoor et al., 2021) The first principle of focusing on the learner and other beneficiaries states the organization's role to actively engage the learner in learning while considering the needs of different stakeholders, the institution's mission, and program objectives. Visionary leadership relates to the role of governing bodies in evolving and implementing organizational missions by creating a quality culture. Engagement of people refers to facilitating empowerment and engagement of all the people involved in the various organizational process. The process approach defines that activities are carried out as interdependent tasks to form a coherent system. Improvement states the continuous efforts in pursuit of excellence. Evidence-based decision advocates that decisions should always be backed up with proper data analysis and evaluation. Relationship management is a prerequisite for sustainable success. Social responsibility refers to the outcomes of the institute's activities on society, the economy, and the environment. Accessibility and equity are related to the provision of resources to learners in an equitable manner, along with access to educational content. Ethical conduct in education deals with integrity and transparency in dealing with all interested parties. Data security and protection imply that higher education institutes will ensure the confidentiality of data to

make it invulnerable by mitigating the threats (ISO 2018).

Methodology

Qualitative content analysis is an approach to analyze text data that unfolds the implicit meaning of the content or contextual meaning of the text rather than its surface features (Budd, Thorp & Donohew, 1967; Ullah et al., 2018; McTavish & Pirro, 1990). Qualitative content analysis can range from impressionistic, intuitive, and interpretive analyses to systematic, rigid textual analyses (Rosengren, 1981). According to Hsieh & Shannon (2005), qualitative content analysis is a technique for the subjective interpretation of text data through systematically coding and identifying themes or patterns. Researchers' preferences for a particular content analysis method depend on their theoretical and substantive interests and the nature of the problem they are attempting to solve (Weber, 1990). Hsieh & Shannon (2005) discussed three different approaches to qualitative content analysis: conventional, directed, and summative. All of these approaches interpret text data from a predominately naturalistic paradigm.

The authors have selected directed content analysis as the purpose is to confirm a pre-developed theoretical framework. Existing theory or research can be a source to focus the research question. The existing framework or theory can predict the variables of interests, relationships among variables, providing a basis to decide the coding scheme at the initial level. It has been called deductive category application (Mayring, 2004; Usmani et al., 2019; Selvi, 2019). The researchers have developed a content analysis of eleven IPE standards based on the analysis framework. Directed content analysis has been used as the researcher aims to explore the phenomena in the context of a developed framework (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Directed content analysis is a structured process that uses prior research to identify the categories. Key concepts and variables are derived from literature to be used as an initial coding scheme, mentioned by (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). The content analysis was validated through "investigator triangulation"(Bryman, 2016). The coding process of IPE standards was completed, compared, and discussed by the researchers till the creation of a consensus.

Because the results of directed qualitative content analysis cannot be interpreted meaningfully using statistical tests, rank order comparisons of the code's frequency can be used (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Hence, in current study, directed content analysis was conducted to find out the inclusion ratio of three levels and their dimensions in Institution performance evaluation standards according to the following scale: Highly addressed (HA), moderately addressed (MA), slightly addressed (SA) and not addressed (NA). Lastly, an accumulated analysis was made to depict the presence of various dimensions in IPE standards. It is a way to report the percentage of supportive vs. non-supportive codes for the studied sample/document (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). It was required to create an overall perspective to explore the extent of the inclusion of analysis framework in

IPE standards. It is crucial as it highlights the approach of central regulatory authority toward integrating QM practices in higher education institutes.

Analysis

Table III depicts the IPE standards addressed several organizational processes, levels, and principles.

Process level

The process of teaching and learning is focused mostly in IPE standards. The IPE standard 1 represents the development of the institution's mission and the subsequent goals through the involvement of the institution's community. Teaching and learning are moderately addressed in this standard. In contrast, research, third mission, and support services are discussed slightly. All four processes are included as "mission drives institutional activities" (IPES, 2010, p.13), and alignment with the mission statement ensures the achievement of the required outcomes. IPE standard 2 states the planning and evaluation criteria of the institute; hence all four processes are slightly addressed in defining planning and evaluation criteria for higher education institutes. The standard states to practice a process of planning and evaluation to fulfil the mission.

IPE standard 3 addresses the organization and governance of higher education institutes. It slightly addressed the teaching and learning process, research, and support services. The third mission has not been at all focused on this standard. IPE standard 4 addresses the integrity and slightly addresses all four processes as it states that higher education institute will adhere to high ethical standards during the conduct of its programs and while dealing with all internal and external stakeholders (IPES, 2010). IPE standard five deals with hiring, retention, and development of faculty compatible with the organizational mission. The teaching and learning process is highly addressed in this standard, while research is moderately addressed. The third mission process of industry-academia linkages and support services was not focused on this standard. IPE standard 6 focused on student goals, interests, and compatibility with the organization's mission. The process of teaching, learning, and student support services are highly addressed, while research and scholarship are slightly addressed. The third mission has not been discussed in this standard. Standards are defined for "admission and retention of students" (IPES, 2010, p.30). IPE standard 7 explains the role of tangible (human, physical, financial) and intangible (technological, information) resources in realizing its mission (IPES, 2010). The first two are slightly addressed among the four processes, whereas support processes are mainly discussed. It emphasized that effective utilization of institutional resources should be linked with reliable financial plan to acquire and develop the resources. (IPES, 2010).

The third mission is not discussed in the standard of institutional resources. IPE standard eight covers academic programs and curricula and mainly focuses on teaching and learning aspects. It clearly states that the "Primary goal of an

educational institution is teaching and learning" (IPES, 2010, p.38). This section moderately focuses on support services. The third mission is not discussed; research and scholarship are slightly discussed in IPE standard 8. IPE standard nine slightly discussed the teaching and learning process, but the other three are not discussed. It covers the accuracy and accessibility of information for different stakeholders. IPE standard ten slightly discussed research and scholarship and support services and moderately discussed the teaching and learning process. In IPE standard 11 third mission and research and scholarship were not focused on, whereas student support is discussed as the central theme. Teaching and learning were slightly addressed in this standard. An overall analysis of the standards depicts that teaching, learning, and support services are highly addressed processes whereas the third mission is the most ignorant process. Research and scholarship were not significantly discussed in the standards.

Organizational Level

Most IPE standards cover the macro and micro levels, whereas the meso levels have been discussed insufficiently. The mission statement of institution levels drives the activities of all other subsequent levels regarding organizational processes. The Programme level has been comprehensively addressed as it is the execution level for all institutional-level policies. It is also important because a program/ degree is a primary source to accomplish the fundamental mission of HEI and the students who are there to earn a degree.

IPE standard 1 defines the organizational mission and covers the macro level. However, the other two levels are also addressed as IPE considers that institute is responsible to translate the mission through well-articulated goals throughout the academic body (IPES, 2010). IPE standard 3 addressed all levels "Institutional structure and governance system clearly defines the roles of different tiers of an institution in policy development," as stated in the standard of Organization and Governance (IPES 2010, p.19).

Table 3: Analysis

Major Categories	**Sub Categories**	**PS1**	**PS2**	**PS3**	**PS4**	**PS 5**	**PS 6**	**PS 7**	**PS 8**	**PS9**	**PS10**	**PS 11**	**Overall**
Process	Teaching & Learning Process	MA	SA	SA	SA	HA	HA	SA	HA	SA	MA	SA	HA
	Research and Scholarship	SA	SA	SA	SA	MA	SA	SA	SA	NA	SA	NA	MA
	Third Mission	SA	SA	NA	SA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	ANA

	Support Services	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	HA	MA	MA	NA	SA	MA	HA
Organization Level	Macro Level (Institute)	HA	MA	HA	MA	SA	SA	HA	SA	NA	HA	SA	HA
	Meso Level (Department)	SA	SA	SA	SA	NA	NA	NA	SA	SA	NA	NA	ANA
	Micro Level (Program)	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	HA	SA	HA	NA	HA
EOMS Principles	Focus on Learner	NA	NA	SA	MA	SA	HA	SA	HA	SA	SA	HA	HA
	Visionary Leadership	SA	SA	MA	SA	NA	SA	SA	SA	NA	SA	SA	MA
	Engagement of People	SA	SA	MA	NA	SA	NA	SA	NA	NA	SA	NA	SA
	Process approach	MA	HA	MA	SA	SA	MA	HA	MA	SA	HA	SA	HA
	Improvement	SA	HA	SA	SA	MA	SA	SA	SA	NA	MA	SA	MA
	Evidence-based decision	SA	MA	SA	MA	MA	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	MA
	Relationship Management	NA	SA	SA	SA	NA	NA	NA	NA	SA	SA	NA	SA
	Social Responsibilities	NA	SA	SA	SA	NA	NA	NA	SA	SA	MA	NA	SA
	Accessibility & Equity	SA	MA	SA	MA	SA	SA	MA	SA	MA	NA	NA	MA
	Ethical Conduct	NA	NA	SA	HA	SA	SA	NA	SA	SA	NA	NA	MA
	Data Security	NA	NA	NA	SA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	ANA

The macro level of organization is comprehensively addressed in IPE standards 3, 7, and 10, whereas it is moderately addressed in IPE standards 2 and 4. In the rest of the standards, the macro level is slightly addressed. Meso level has not been discussed in standards 5, 6, 7, 10, and 11. These standards provide guidelines under their respective domains. In standard five, faculty selection

criteria and development are considered the institution's responsibility. According to IPE standard 5, the higher education institute will be responsible to retain and develop the faculty required to accomplish organization mission (IPES, 2010, p. 25). IPE standard 6 of student's state that institutes need to ensure the compatibility between the endeavors of potential students and their mission. Standard seven slightly addressed the micro level and provided a broader road map for institutional resources. The macro level is comprehensively addressed when states that institution will ensure effective and efficient utilization and development of the resources (IPES, 2010).

Institution micro level are highly addressed in IPE standard eight Academic programs and Curricula and in standard ten Assessment and Quality Assurance. According to IPE standard 10, universities are supposed to develop self-assessment manual at program level in addition to University Quality Standard and Assessment model at macro level to facilitate HEIs. Further standard 10 emphasized that Universities are required to formally adopt the internal quality assurance practices (IPES, 2010). While looking at the aggregate picture, it is concluded that IPE standards highly reflect the role of higher education institutes at the macro level. The messo level (department or unit) is insufficiently reflected in IPE standards. The micro level is also sufficiently reflected in IPE standards.

Quality Management Principal Level

The process approach is one of the principles widely discussed in the IPE standards. This approach is highly reflected principle in all the standards except standard 9. IPE standard 11 recommended an integrated student support system to achieve the educational goals. (IPES, 2010). IPE standard 10 Assessment & Quality Assurance focuses on the process approach, which integrates the assessment results of all fundamental elements into a holistic manner to provide evidence of collective efforts to realize the mission (IPES, 2010). In IPE standard 8 Academic programs and curriculum, process approach is required as "association among the design of specific curricula, program, learning activities, articulated programs goals and overall mission of the institution" (IPES, 2010, p.39). In IPE standard 7 Institutional resources, the process approach is discussed in terms of an extensive master plan and life cycle management plan covering all the facilities. According to standard 7, in addition to decision making guidelines regarding resource allocation, plans should embed the review and monitoring process of support services (IPES, 2010). In standard 6 Students, harmony between admission policies and organizational mission was ensured (IPES, 2010, p.30). Process approach is recommended in IPE standard 5 Faculty emphasized on creating alignment between faculty job specification and required education standards and mission(IPES, 2010). Process approach was moderately addressed by IPE standard 1, 3 and 4 whereas in standard 2 this approach is highly reflected. According to IPE standard 2 planning is required to create constancy of purpose at all organizational levels while maximizing resource allocation (IPES, 2010).

Being learner focused is the second principle which is highly addressed in all IPE standards except IPE 1 and IPE 2. The focus on the learner has been slightly discussed in IPE standards 3, 5, 7, 9, and 10. This principle is highly reflected in standards 6,8 and 11 by stating "students are the prime beneficiaries of the HEIs", "designing learning experiences to provide opportunities to students," and "efficient student support service program is responsive to student needs and supportive to student learning objectives and easily accessible" (IPES, 2010, p.30,39,55) respectively. The principle widely discussed after "focus on learner" is accessibility and equity. It has been discussed in all the standards except IPE standards 10 and 11. However, none of the standards have highly reflected it; relatively, standards 1, 3, 5,6, and 8 slightly addressed it, whereas standards 2, 4, and 7 discussed accessibility and equity moderately. Improvement and evidence-based decisions are the next two principles in line, respectively. All IPE standards discuss both principles from a slight to a moderate level. IPE standard 2 makes a solid reference to the improvement. Planning and evaluation are recommended to be derived from institution mission, future engagements and evaluation result(IPES, 2010). Improvement is focused on each IPE standard by assessing the effectiveness of the relevant process periodically for the sake of growth and development.

The principle of Visionary leadership is discussed in all IPE standards except standards 5 & 9. But none of the standards highly reflected this principle. Next is ethical conduct, which is not significantly discussed by any IPE standard except standard 4 of integrity. This standard highly discussed the ethical code of conduct required to maintain the institute's integrity. The standard discussed the areas "in management of its affairs, the conduct of programs, dealing with students, faculty, governing bodies & external agencies" where the "institution adheres to high ethical standards" (IPES, 2010, p.22). IPE standards address social responsibility, people engagement, and relationship management slightly to moderately. None of the standards specifically discussed any of the above principles in detail. However, people's engagement was moderately discussed in IPE Standard 1 and Standard 3. Social responsibility was highly reflected in IPE standard ten by stating "compliance with national or international practices", "awareness with changing needs of the society," and "develop and foster the advancement of society" (IPES, 2010, p.49,50). The last principle of data security was only addressed once in IPE standard 4 when recommended: "practices of safeguarding intellectual property rights" (IPES, 2010, p.23).

Conclusion and Discussion

The literature shows a trend toward integrating quality management practices in higher education institutes but partially depicted in internal quality management systems (Brookes & Becket, 2007; Manatos, Sarrico & Rosa, 2017a; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2004). Institutional performance evaluation standards assist universities in implementing their internal quality management systems(IPES, 2010). In this paper, we explored the level of integration in IPE standards based on four main university processes, organizational levels, and EOMS principles. While

assessing IPE standards according to the framework mentioned earlier, some gaps have been observed in various categories. The analysis at the process level depicts that IPE standards are focused on the teaching and learning process. Although research, scholarship, and support services are moderately addressed, the third mission is not sufficiently covered by IPE standards. The standards recognized the degree programs mainly based on providing the teaching and learning process. However, to cater to the third mission office of Research, Innovation, and Commercialization has been established in each university, but its practices are not incorporated in IPE standards. The performance standards were developed to set a minimum performance level in the higher education sector. The primary mission of higher education was teaching and learning; hence it focused more on it and less on research and scholarship.

At an organizational level, IPE standards significantly cover the micro level (program level) and macro level (institute/university level), but the meso level (Departmental level) is rarely addressed. The significant role of departments responsible for playing their role as a bridge between the institute and program is ignored, and no solid guideline is available in IPE standards to translate the institute-level policies at all levels. The analysis at the quality management principle level shows that the process approach and focus on the learner are highly addressed principles which again endorsed the focus of IPE standards on the teaching and learning process. Most principles are moderately addressed, like an improvement, evidence-based decision, accessibility, and equity. Data security and relationship management are the least addressed principles in IPE standards. Relationship management is a prerequisite to the third mission; hence it supported the ignorance of the third mission.

While summarizing, it is observed that IPE standards go beyond quality assurance as the principle of improvement and process approach are widely addressed. However, specific gaps exist as it seems to fail to integrate all four core university processes. Although HEC sorted out the other ways to deal with the third mission. The researchers believe it will continue, and an up-gradation in IPE standards would be required considering the identified gaps. IPE standards do not make a particular reference to the third mission, departmental level, and quality management principles. It seems that teaching and learning, research and scholarship, and focus on the learner and process approach remained the main focus of IPE standards along with the micro and macro level of higher education institutes.

Recommendations

According to the researchers, IPE standards must incorporate previously overlooked dimensions crucial to integrating quality management into higher education institutions' overarching governance systems. However, these standards contribute to the continuous improvement of HEIs. The emphasis on the process approach illustrates the view that quality management practices can only be

incorporated into the governance system of HEIs by selecting a systematic approach with an overall mission. To be effective, quality management practices should be embedded in the overall governance system and are the only way to reap the benefits of standards, as organizations took advantage of ISO certification by developing a solid quality management system. To accredit various degree programs requires integrating quality management practices into the governance system. The study can be extended by comparing IPE standards with other well-known regional standards. This research would be beneficial in the upgradation of IPE standards.

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