

## Factors Affecting the Quality of Research in Education: Student's Perceptions

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### Abstract

The major function of universities is to create new knowledge and preserve it for the next generation. The quality of research at higher level is not satisfactory. Quality of research may be defined in operational terms as "the research which is completed in time, having rigorous research design which is internally and externally valid, based on reliable data sources, use of appropriate analytical methods which are meaningful in practical and statistical terms. The present study focused on those factors which are directly or indirectly hampering the quality of research in education. To analyze the research student's perceptions about the direct factors regarding teachers, research course, facilities and supervisors. An exploratory research with cross-sectional study design was conducted with a study population of ninety research students at PhD and M.Phil level of International Islamic University, Islamabad. Whole population was treated as sample. Data was collected through self-administered three-point Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed through percentages. The major findings were that students were not satisfied with the teaching and the course content. Although the facilities were satisfactory but the system of supervision was not satisfactory. It was recommended that by the improvement of these factors quality of research can be improved. It was also suggested that training may be imparted for the improvement of teaching.

**Keywords:** Factors, Quality of research, Research Student's perceptions

### 1. Introduction

The word research is composed of two syllables, "re and search". The dictionary defines the first as a prefix meaning again, anew or over again and the second as a verb meaning to examine closely and carefully, to test and try, or to probe. Together they form a noun describing a careful and systematic investigation in some field of knowledge, undertaken to establish facts or principles. Grinnell (1993). In the continuation of describing the research Grinnell further adds: 'research is a structured inquiry that utilizes acceptable scientific methodology to solve problems and creates new knowledge that is generally applicable. (1993). Keeping in view the major characteristics of the research Ranjit coded the definition of Lundberg that: "Scientific methods consist of systematic observation, classification and interpretation of data. Now, obviously, this process is one in which nearly all are engaged. The main difference between our day-to-day generalizations and the conclusions usually recognized as scientific method lies in the degree of formality, rigorousness, verifiability and general validity of the latter" (2009, p.6).

In the same fashion research was defined by Moses that: "Research is the systematic and rigorous investigation aimed at the discovery of previously unknown phenomena, the development of explanatory theory and its application to new situations or problems and the construction of original works of significant intellectual merit, (1990, pp.354-5)

Quality is the conformance to requirements; hence the quality research is that research which bears all the characteristics which are required by its users. It may have internally and externally valid research design, reliable data sources, free from plagiarism practices, application of appropriate tools, and meaningful interpretation of results in practical and statistical terms. Fink (1998, p.36).

In operational terms the application of scientific method to inquiry is called research. Human inquiry wants to explore, explain and describe different things and phenomena, while scientific method provides it logic and justifications. As Earl (1998, p.90) points out that social research has many functions and purposes among them the major are exploration, explanation and description. An essential requirement of a research is that it meets the needs of those members of society who will actually use it. This concept of fitness for use is universal and it is known as quality of research.

Quality is the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs. In keeping view the quality concept, quality of research be defined in operational term as “the research which is completed in time, having rigorous research design which is internally and externally valid, based on reliable data sources, free from plagiarism, use of appropriate analytical methods which are meaningful in practical and statistical terms and has a practical use. The factor is some thing that contributes to or has influence on the outcome of something. The present study will focus on those factors which are directly or indirectly hampering the quality of research in education.

The main source from where the quality researches are evolved is the universities. The research is the discriminating factors for the university form other academic institutions. In the Oxford English Dictionary, the university is defined as; “the whole body of teachers and students pursuing, at a particular place, the higher branches of learning”. Reva (2005, p.400).

Research and teaching are the two continuum of university teaching. Research is an activity which is concerned primarily with knowledge acquisition on the part of the researcher, and secondarily with knowledge dissemination to academic peers, society and students, and the teaching is an activity which is primarily concerned with knowledge dissemination on the part of the teacher and with knowledge acquisition on the part of the student. These activities merge in the centre of the continuum. Reva (2005, p.393).

Research and teaching are said to go together in an essential, symbiotic way, leading to the assumption that “the good researcher is a good teacher”. Barnett (1992). The quality of teaching is strongly related to the research because active involvement in the research process directly improves the quality of teaching, during research academic work in role of learner and it helps them to learn new learning experiences. Research provides an opportunity to teachers to develop his/her knowledge within the discipline, to develop the course and supervision. Rowland’s (1996).

By the above literature it is quite obvious that the main function of universities are to do teaching and research. The quality of research is a question mark for many developing as well as developed countries. This is not the concern of Pakistan, but other developing and developed nations are also taking steps for quality research. In the research article by Soottiporn (2002) stated that the Deans of Graduates Schools of Public Universities of Thailand agreed to setup a common quality assurance system focusing on graduate studies that can be used in all Thai public universities. The quality of research includes, focus on quality of the content of the thesis, quality of the research process and quality of research management.

The quality of postgraduate supervision continues to be a critical factor in the retention and timely completion of postgraduate research students. Carole and Margare (2002, p.56). The quality of research is directly or indirectly related to the quality of the teachers, research courses, supervision of research and the facility in the university, Isani&Virk (2005).

This is also a burning question in Pakistan, because more emphasis is given on the expansion rather than the quality because of demographic pressure, escalating demand from the students, monopoly of the public sector in higher education and financial constraints. The reasons for this poor quality in research are untrained teachers, outdated curricula, shortage of facilities and non-existent interaction among the universities, R&D organizations with industry. The major issues identified regarding quality by Isani&Virk are untrained under teachers, lake of training facilities, duration of the course, low level researches, unrevised curricula, lake of research facilities and lake of incentives for research, Isani&Virk (2005).

The major function of universities is to create new knowledge and preserve it for the next generation, but due to insufficient research and development (R&D) activities it is not functioning well. The condition of research at higher level is not satisfactory as mentioned by the national Education Policy (1998-2010, p.73) that;

“Our present postgraduate study programs constitute an important means of advancing research in the universities. The quality of these programs varies, depending upon the facilities for research. Only a few institutions have postgraduate study and research programs which measure up to international standards. In social sciences and humanities, the condition is far from satisfactory...this weakness is related to the shortage of manpower, lack of library and research literature facilities. In Essence, the postgraduate study programs are neither extensive enough, nor of sufficiently high quality”.

The major function of university is the research, but there is a general feeling that quality of research is not up to the required standards. There are many fields in which the research is not present at higher level.

The Higher Education Commission has many reservations on the quality of research. The HEC, Pakistan has taken many steps for quality assurance in research. In the context of quality it describes that “the issue of quality cannot be dissociated from the quest for excellence” HEC, News and Views, (2007, p.5)

The concern of this present study was to collect the researcher’s perception about the factors by which the quality of research is suffering.

## 2. Statement of the problem:

At university level teaching and research are inseparable components. Teachers and students are acquiring knowledge through research and disseminating it through teaching. The quality of research is depended on the factor like quality of teaching, research course, supervision/guidance and the facilities for research. The intent of the present study was to collect the perception of the research students about these factors.

## 3. Objectives of the study

The following were the objectives of the study:

1. To analyze the research student’s views regarding teachers and research course.
2. To examine the research student’s perceptions regarding research facilities and supervisors

## 4. Research methodology

### 4.1 Research Population:

The population was consisted of the research students at PhD and Phil level who had studied the research course and doing there research work and practically involve in the research process. Whole population of ninety students was taken as sample of the study from International Islamic University, Islamabad from the Department of Education.

### 4.2 Design of the study

The study was an exploratory study. These types of studies are conducted when researcher wants to explore areas about which s/he has a little knowledge. It may also be considered as pilot study with cross-sectional design because participants are contacted once in study.

### 4.3 Instrument and Procedure

Instrument was prepared systematically as below:

Concept	Indicators	Variables/Factors	Working definition
Quality of Research	1. Completed in time 2. Controlled 3. Rigorous 4. Systematic 5. Valid and verifiable 6. Empirical 7. Critical	1. Teachers 2. Supervisors 3. Research course 4. facilities	1. Agree 2. Undecided 3. Disagree

Keeping in view the variables each variable was further subdivide into statements and a questionnaire was prepared on three point Likert scale. Questionnaire was refined and validated through the pilot

study. The final questionnaire was administered personally, through Email and by post. In response to that survey eighty two questionnaires were received among them two were rejected due to incomplete information. Frequencies of responses of different options under each item were obtained through tallies. Percentages of each component were worked out. The tables showing frequencies and percentage regarding each of the items of questionnaire were prepared. Data were analyzed keeping in view the research objectives.

## 5. Finding/Conclusions

Following were the findings and major conclusions:

The finding regarding the Research Teacher, the students were not satisfied with the experience, Methodology and statistical knowledge of the teacher. Which shows that teacher was not competent in his field of teaching research. By this it can be concluded that teacher is the strong factor towards the quality of research and reports of HEC also suppurating this Fact.

The perceptions of the students about the research course regarding the new methods, qualitative research design and synopsis preparation were of view that by the course they could not handle the all problems of research. These findings leads towards the conclusion that the quality of the research course is not up to the mark and this fact is pointed out by Isani &Virk, 2005 while discussing the problems of quality research in Pakistan.

The findings about the research facilities showed the all the basic requirements were available to the research students. It showed universities are providing all the basic facilities to the research students this finding contradict the fact that proper facilities were not available.

The perceptions of the students about the supervisors regarding time, experience, training and modern techniques were not in the favor of the supervisors. This showed that supervisors are a factor affecting the quality of research. Theses findings leads towards the conclusions that the research teachers are mostly th supervisors and being a teacher they are not well trained so they are also affecting the quality of research. A good researcher could be a good supervisor.

## 6. Recommendations

A On the basis of the findings and conclusions the following recommendations were made:

Findings showed that research teacher were not competent in his/her field so he/she may be given special training of the subject for the improvement of quality of research. Teachers may be motivated toward research and special incentives may be given for this research work.

Finding regarding the research course showed that the research course was not matching with the requirement of research it may be suggested that course on research may be developed keeping in view the quality of research. For this special training may be rearranged for the research teacher.

Finding about the facilities showed that they were good so it is suggested that they may be maintained as per researcher needs.

Findings regarding the supervisors showed that they are becoming a barrier in the way of quality so it is suggested that they may be provided proper training of supervision, and a system may be introduced to monitor the research activities of the students.

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Tables

Table-1 Research Teacher

Sr.No	Statement	Options		
		Agree%	Undecided %	Disagree%
1	Varying levels of qualification of the teachers is effecting the qulality of research.	85%	2%	13%
2	Quality of research is suffering due to lake of experience of teachers in research.	85%	1%	14%
3	Lake of training of the research teachers is a factor affecting the quality of research	89%	0%	11%
4	Research quality is suffering due to non-proper guidance of teachers in research.	87%	2%	11%
5	Limited knowledge about statistics of teachers is a factor towards quality of research.	90%	0%	10%

Table-2 Research Course

Sr.No	Statement	Options		
		Agree%	Undecided %	Disagree%
1	Research course is not equipped with modern methods of research	87%	5%	8%
2	Qualitative research methodologies are not fully covered in the course.	88%	8%	4%
3	Research course and practical research have gaps.	89%	5%	6%
4	Un-prescribed research course is a factor towards poor quality of research.	80%	2%	18%
5	On the bases of research course students cannot prepare the synopses.	81%	4%	15%

Table-3 Facilities

Sr.No	Statement	Options		
		Agree%	Undecided %	Disagree %
1	Internet labs are available for study to each student	95%	0%	5%
2	Different research journals are available in library	85%	1%	14%
3	SPSS software are installed on computer for statistical analyses	70%	6%	24%
4	Digital library facility is available for research students	87%	2%	11%
5	Video conferencing facility is available in the university.	69%	10%	21%

Table-4Supervisors

Sr.No	Statement	Options		
		Agree%	Undecided %	Disagree%
1	Supervisors do not provide proper time to the research students.	82%	5%	13%
2	Most of the supervisors are not well experienced in research area.	85%	5%	10%
3	Mostly supervisors have no proper training for supervision.	65%	3%	32%
4	Proper guidance at each level of research is not provided by the supervisors.	87%	4%	9%
5	Mostly supervisors have no command on modern research techniques.	69%	10%	21%

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