

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 10 : 7 July 2010

ISSN 1930-2940

Managing Editor: M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.

Editors: B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D.

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.

B. A. Sharada, Ph.D.

A. R. Fathi, Ph.D.

Lakhan Gusain, Ph.D.

K. Karunakaran, Ph.D.

Jennifer Marie Bayer, Ph.D.

S. M. Ravichandran, Ph.D.

Problems in Ph.D. English Degree Programme in Pakistan - The Issue of Quality Assurance

Umar-ud- Din, M. Kamal Khan and Shahzad Mahmood

Abstract

The present study aims at identifying the issues and problems of quality assurance in Ph.D. English degree in Pakistan. The study shows that the quality of Ph.D. English degree is highly affected by the lack of qualified faculty, limited number of approved supervisors and the absence of the collaboration between universities within the country. The data was collected from 35 students of the M.S. degree programme, in preparation for the degree of Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics. Respondents' agreement to these issues and other problems like access to digital resources, the Internet, well-equipped libraries etc., suggests that quality assurance in Ph.D. English degree programme can be guaranteed only if these issues are given urgent attention and are solved on priority basis.

Introduction

This study aims to explore issues and problems that affect quality assurance in Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) English degree programme particularly in Pakistani Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Ph.D. is the highest academic degree awarded by Pakistani HEIs. According to Chris Park (2005), "Ph.D. is a research degree awarded for demonstrating ability to carry out academic

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 7 July 2010

Umar-ud-Din, Muhammad Kamal Khan, and Shahzad Mahmood

Problems in Ph.D. English Degree Programme in Pakistan: The Issue of Quality Assurance

research and to produce new knowledge”. Recent studies have demonstrated that for developing countries, higher education can play vital role in accelerating the rate of growth towards a country’s productivity potential (Bloom, Canning, and Chan 2006).

The Ph.D. degrees offered by the universities in Pakistan (either public or private) should equip the trainee researchers with the skills such as observation, critical analysis and finding solution and designing tools to solve local problems. In Pakistan, like in many other countries of the world, most of the research is carried out in the fields of natural sciences and technical education. There is little emphasis on research in languages or humanities.

In this age of knowledge based economies, need of the hour is that effective research should be carried out in every walk of life including English (language and/or literature): the primary language of higher education and research. Unfortunately, the number of Ph.D.s in English in Pakistan is not encouraging and amongst them, only a few are engaged in research projects that can foster the economic progress of the country. The universities offering Ph.D. in English (Linguistics/Literature) are also very few. The obvious reason for this is the non-availability of the academics that can run quality research projects effectively.

Objectives

The study aims to discover:

- The issues concerned with the quality assurance of Ph.D. English degree in Pakistan.
- To suggest measures to make the Ph.D. English degree in Pakistan compatible with the international market.

Research Question

Following is the research question of the study:

How can the higher education system guarantee excellence in Ph.D. English degree in Pakistan?

Literature Review

The issue of quality assurance in higher education has been frequently discussed at conferences, in newspapers and other public media. Commenting upon the value of the doctorate programmes in the USA, Cude (2001) argues that the doctoral programme has become a trap for the candidate and a sinkhole for the intellectual resources. Even in UK, the fitness for purpose of the doctoral qualification has been questioned. Anon (2002) observes,

“For some time this single purpose qualification has no longer fitted the expectations of students and employers. Increasingly, Government, funding

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 7 July 2010

Umar-ud-Din, Muhammad Kamal Khan, and Shahzad Mahmood

Problems in Ph.D. English Degree Programme in Pakistan: The Issue of Quality Assurance

bodies and higher education institutions are questioning the nature of the Ph.D.”

Higher education systems are under great pressure to improve the quality of education they offer. Universities across the globe are redefining their goals and needful steps are being taken to their Ph.D. programmes compatible with greater global competitiveness (Scott, 1998).

The notion of quality is hard to define precisely, especially in the context of higher education where institutions have broad autonomy to decide on their own visions and missions. The definition of quality in higher education given by Hayward (in his glossary for the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) South Africa in February 2001, available at www.chea.org/international/inter_glossary01.html), refers to the “fitness for purpose” meeting or conforming to generally accepted standards as defined by an institution, quality assurance bodies and appropriate academic and professional communities.

A number of indicators used to measure the quality in HEIs are the performance indicators of teaching quality, student evaluation of the quality of the teaching and the learning environment and student satisfaction. Quality of the library and laboratories, management effectiveness, governance and leadership are some other indicators of quality measurement. Quality assurance is a planned and systematic review process of an institution or program to determine whether acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced.

For the last few years, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan is striving hard to induce and maintain the quality of higher education. Quality Assurance Agency has been established at HEC to achieve excellence in higher learning. At university level, Quality Enhancement Cells have been established with a view to creating awareness on modern theories and practices of quality assurance.

Methodology

Our research may be termed as a response to or a follow up of earlier efforts. For example, in April 2001, the Federal Minister for Education constituted a task force to review Higher Education in Pakistan and recommend measures to improve its quality.

In the research report here, in order to know about the issues and problems in Ph.D. English quality assurance in Pakistan, a questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire was based upon the observations made by the Task Force on Improvement of Higher Education in Pakistan, referred to above.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 7 July 2010

Umar-ud-Din, Muhammad Kamal Khan, and Shahzad Mahmood

Problems in Ph.D. English Degree Programme in Pakistan: The Issue of Quality Assurance

The aim of the questionnaire was to identify the Ph.D. English students' perceptions about the problems of Ph.D. English degree in Pakistan. The questionnaire consisted of eight items concerning with different issues and problems of Ph.D. English degree programme in Pakistan. The respondents were 35 students (both male and female) from M.S. leading to Ph.D. (Applied Linguistics) programme at the University of Management and Technology (UMT), Lahore. The University of Management and Technology, Lahore, accredited by HEC Pakistan, is one of the leading universities in private sector that are making effective contribution in promoting English language research of high quality.

Out of 35, 20 were HEC scholars. HEC scholars are those enrolled under HEC's 5000 Indigenous Ph.D. Scholarship Programme. They were required to tick the relevant box ranging from 1 to 5 (1 for strongly disagree, 2 for agree, 3 for undecided, 4 for agree, 5 for strongly agree) against each statement

Results and Data Analysis

Following results were obtained from the data collected from the students of M.S. leading to Ph.D. (Applied Linguistics) programme at UMT, Lahore:

Table 1. The results of the perceptions of the students about the Ph.D. English degree Programme in Pakistan.

Sr. No.	Issues and Problems	SD	D	UD	A	SA
1	Ph.D. degree in English is compatible with international standards	7	9	5	11	3
2	Lack of qualified permanent faculty results in poor quality in research	2	3	3	8	19
3	Foreign faculty hiring can improve the quality of Ph.D. (English) programme	7	8	1	13	4
4	Inter universities collaboration improves the quality of research	2	3	2	15	13
5	Well equipped libraries are key to successful research work	2	1	2	8	22
6	Access to Internet facilitates research work	0	4	0	8	23
7	Limited number of HEC approved supervisors affects Ph.D. degree in English	1	8	4	7	15
8	Monthly stipend for HEC research scholars is insufficient	1	4	2	10	18

SD→Strongly Disagree

D →Disagree

UD→Un-decided

A→Agree

SA →Strongly Agree (SA)

1. Compatibility of the Ph.D. English Degree

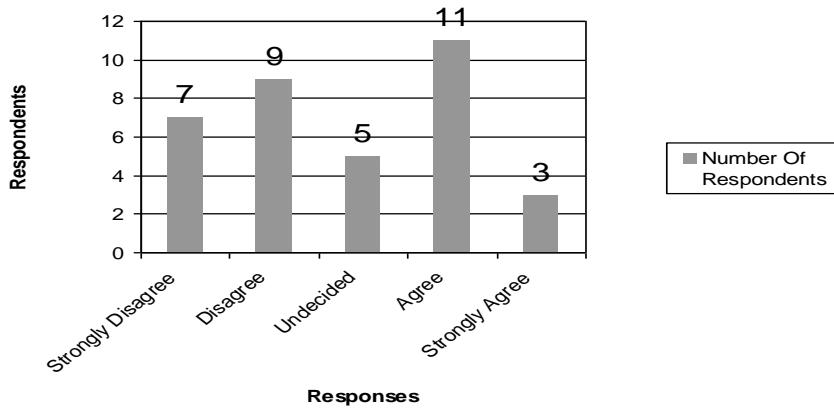
Figure 1. Ph.D. degree in English is compatible with international standards.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 7 July 2010

Umar-ud-Din, Muhammad Kamal Khan, and Shahzad Mahmood

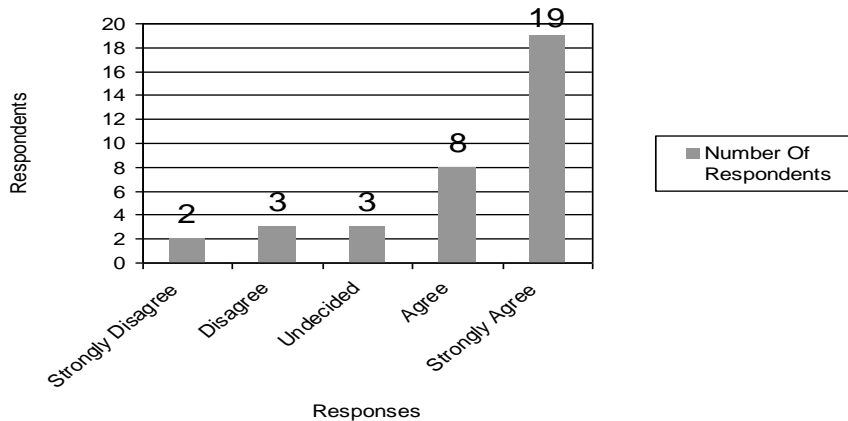
Problems in Ph.D. English Degree Programme in Pakistan: The Issue of Quality Assurance



The figure shows that 11 out of 35 research scholars of Ph.D. English programme agree that the degrees offered by Pakistani HEIs are not compatible with the international market. On the other hand, disagreement is also very high. 16 (7+9) are not ready to admit that the standard of Ph.D. English degree in Pakistan is low.

2. Qualified Permanent Faculty

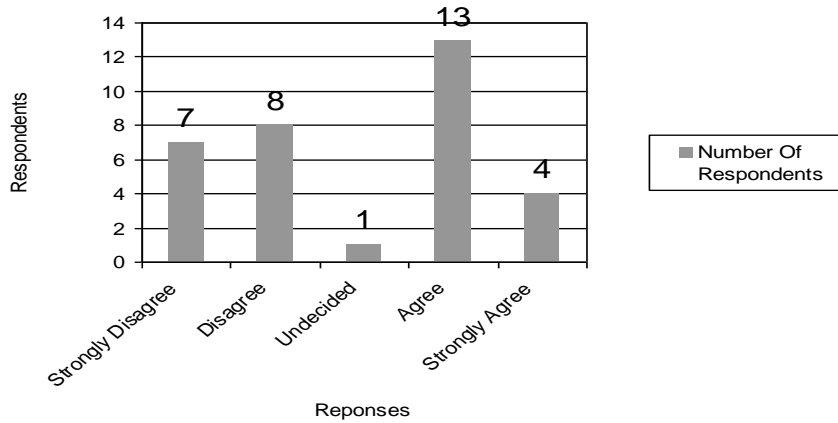
Figure 2. Lack of qualified permanent faculty results in poor quality in research.



The figure clearly shows that most of the respondents (8+19) 27 out of 35 believe that the faculty hiring should be on permanent basis. 19 respondents strongly agreed to the view that the faculty should be permanent. 5 respondents are not in favour of permanent faculty. 3 respondents were undecided on the issue.

3. Foreign Faculty Hiring

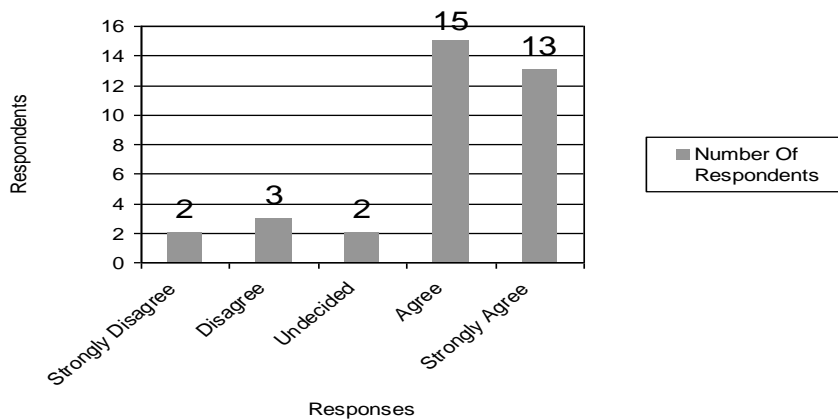
Figure 3. Foreign faculty hiring can improve the quality of Ph.D. (English) programme.



As regards the hiring of foreign faculty, the graph shows that the views about hiring or not hiring are not much different. 13 respondents agree that hiring foreign faculty can improve the quality of research work produced in Pakistan. 4 respondents show strong agreement to this view. On the other hand, (7+8) 15 respondents do not agree that the foreign faculty can improve the standard of the research work.

4. Inter Universities Collaboration

Figure 4. Inter universities collaboration improves the quality of research.



The figure 4 shows that there is strong need for inter universities collaboration to improve the quality of the research work. 28 (15+13) show their agreement to this view. Only 5 (2+3) are not in favour of inter universities collaboration.

5. Well-equipped Libraries

Figure 5. Well-equipped libraries are key to successful research work.

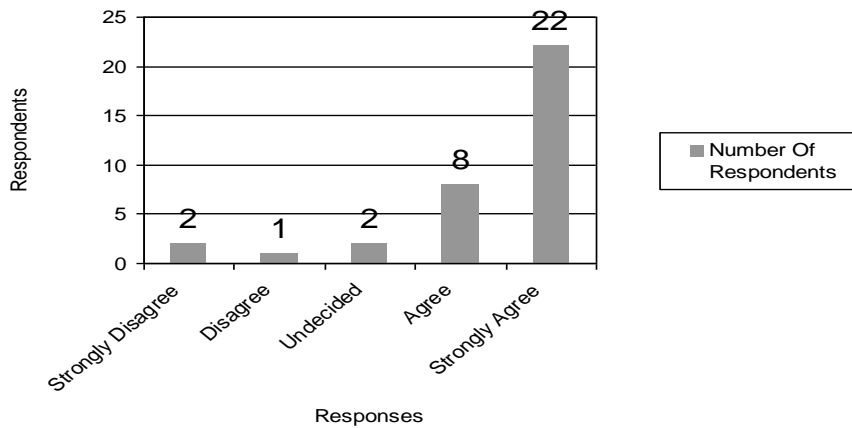
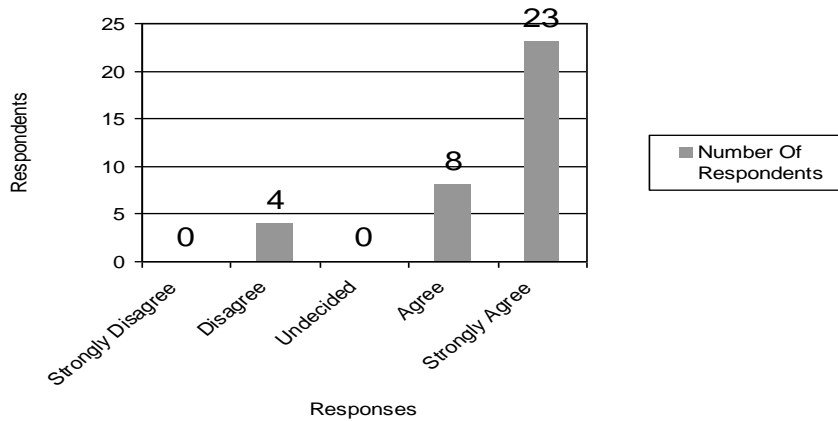


Figure 5 shows that most of the students acknowledge the importance of well-equipped libraries in the research work. 22 respondents strongly agree that libraries should be rich with resources.

6. Access to the Internet

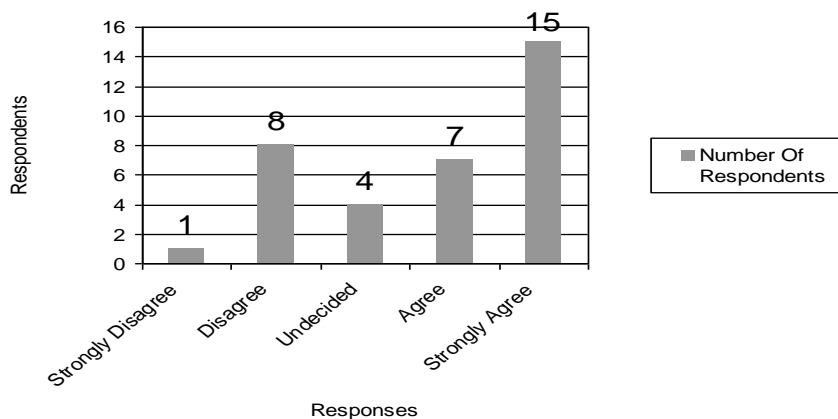
Figure 6. Access to Internet facilitates research work



Most of the students strongly agree (23) that access to Internet facilitates the research work. Only 4 students believe that access to Internet is of value to the research work.

7. Limited Number of HEC Approved Supervisors

Figure 7. Limited number of HEC approved supervisors affects Ph.D. degree in English



15 out of 35 respondents strongly agree that the availability of HEC approved supervisors affects the Ph.D. English degree programme. 7 respondents showed their agreement whereas 8 respondents believed that the availability of HEC approved supervisors is not a problem.

8. Monthly Stipend for HEC Research Scholars

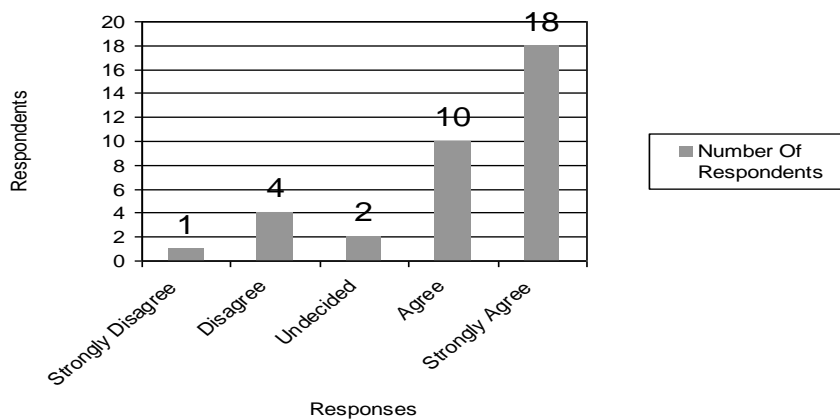
Figure 8. Monthly stipend for HEC research scholars is insufficient.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 7 July 2010

Umar-ud-Din, Muhammad Kamal Khan, and Shahzad Mahmood

Problems in Ph.D. English Degree Programme in Pakistan: The Issue of Quality Assurance



Most of the respondents strongly agreed to the view that the stipend given to the research scholars is insufficient. 28 (10+18) respondents showed their agreement to this view whereas only 4 showed their disagreement.

Discussion

The analysis of the data shows that the availability of well-equipped libraries, permanent faculty, access to the Internet inter universities collaboration play vital role in improving the standards of the research work. It has been suggested that information and communication technologies can and do play a number of roles in enhancing the quality of education. These include providing a catalyst for rethinking teaching practice; improving educational outcomes and enhancing and improving the quality of teaching and learning (Wagner, 2001; Garrison & Anderson, 2003). Using Internet enables the scholars to connect to the worldwide community of scholars and researchers.

The availability of HEC approved supervisors is also of great importance. The researchers have to strive hard to get access to the supervisors. Faculty mobility between institutions can be helpful in promoting healthy academic environment that leads to quality research work. In addition, scholarly interaction within the country is of great help to uplift the standards of research in the field of English language and literature.

The HEC should provide sufficient monthly stipend to the research scholars so that more and more talented and critical thinking scholars can be attracted to Ph.D. English programmes.

Conclusion

In the light of findings of this article, it is suggested that the present is the high time to address the quality assurance issues of Ph.D. English in Pakistan to prepare compatible Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 7 July 2010

Umar-ud-Din, Muhammad Kamal Khan, and Shahzad Mahmood

Problems in Ph.D. English Degree Programme in Pakistan: The Issue of Quality Assurance

professionals who can effectively serve the competitive market. This can be achieved only if the HEIs of Pakistan are in conformity with international compatibility and competitiveness. HEC should take effective measures to increase collaboration between local and foreign universities. This would bring the current teaching methodologies and research trends to Pakistani students who would ultimately get benefited from them. Research related to the issues of English Language Teaching should be funded by the universities on priority basis. Modern research soft-wares and instruments should be made compulsory for the students so that their research should be more valid and reliable.

It is also suggested that the authorities should also promote research trend among the faculty members. They should make compulsory for them to fix up the minimum range of publications on annual basis. Language laboratories, digital libraries and training programmes are the need of the hour. Besides, the monthly stipend awarded to the research scholars should be made sufficient enough to meet the economic constraints of the research work. Libraries should be equipped with latest resources on varied subjects. Access to Internet should be facilitated. Keeping in view the importance and place attached to English in Pakistan, it should be given maximum importance. Solid and effective measures should be taken up to improve the quality of research in the field of English language.

References

Anon. (2002). 'Profiting from Postgraduate Talent' in Park, Chris. New Variant Ph.D.: The Changing Nature of the Doctorate in the UK, *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*. July 2005.

Cude, W. (1987). 'The Ph.D. trap' in Park, Chris (2005). New Variant Ph.D.: The Changing Nature of the Doctorate in the UK, *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*: July 2005.

Park, Chris. (2005). New Variant Ph.D.: The Changing Nature of the Doctorate in the UK, *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*: July 2005.

Scott, P. (1998). *The Globalisation of Higher Education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Internet Sources

Bloom, D., Canning, D., & Chan, K. (2006). Higher education and economic development in Africa. *World Bank website*. <http://www.worldbank.org/> Available Dec 12, 2007 1600 Hrs.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
10 : 7 July 2010

Umar-ud-Din, Muhammad Kamal Khan, and Shahzad Mahmood

Problems in Ph.D. English Degree Programme in Pakistan: The Issue of Quality Assurance

Garrison, R. & Anderson, T. (2003) E-Learning in the 21st Century: A Framework for Research and Practice in Lock, Jennifer & Redmond, Petrea (2006). *International Online Collaboration: Modeling Online Learning and Teaching*:
<http://jolt.merlot.org/> Available Dec 19, 2007 1200 Hrs.

Task Force on Improvement of Higher Education in Pakistan (2002)
<http://www.tfhe.net/resources/pakistan.htm> Available Dec 15, 2007 2200 Hrs.

=====

Umar-ud-Din, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Participant (Applied Linguistics)
Department of English Language and Literature
UMT, Lahore
Punjab, Pakistan
umariqra@yahoo.com

Muhammad Kamal Khan, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Participant (Applied Linguistics)
Department of English Language and Literature
UMT, Lahore
Punjab, Pakistan
mkkamazai@hotmail.com

Shahzad Mahmood, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Participant (Applied Linguistics)
Department of English Language and Literature
UMT, Lahore
Punjab, Pakistan
thetararok@yahoo.com