

Comparison of the Obtained Scores of Core Quality Assurance Standards in Public and Private Universities/Institutions

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Abstract

Research in Afghanistan remains limited, and little is known about the comparative performance of public and private higher education institutions in terms of quality assurance. This comparative study was conducted to examine the implementation of core quality assurance standards across selected public and private universities and higher education institutions. The study utilized the official evaluation scores provided by the Ministry of Higher Education for accredited universities and institutions. The methodology involved a comparative analysis of scores in key domains, including research, library facilities, faculty performance, financial resources, and information technology infrastructure. The findings indicate that public universities and higher education institutions generally achieved higher scores in research activities, library services, and faculty qualifications compared to their private counterparts. Conversely, private universities and institutions performed better in the areas of financial management and information technology implementation, suggesting more effective application of resources in these domains. These results highlight both strengths and gaps in the quality assurance processes of Afghan higher education institutions and underscore the need for targeted improvements. In conclusion, the study demonstrates that quality assurance evaluation provides a valuable framework for assessing institutional performance and identifying areas for development. By highlighting the differences between public and private institutions, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of quality assurance practices in Afghanistan and offers evidence-based insights that can support policy-making, resource allocation, and the continuous enhancement of higher education standards in the country.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, Quality, Public University, Private University, Comparison.

Introduction

The global demand for higher education has been steadily increasing over the past decades. Karaim (2011) projected that the number of higher education students would reach approximately 263 million by 2025, representing an increase of 163 million compared to the year 2000. This rapid growth in student enrollment has simultaneously raised the demand for high-quality education capable of meeting both international and local standards (Hou, 2012; Varonism, 2014). Ensuring access to such quality education remains

a critical challenge for policymakers, educators, and institutions worldwide (OECD & World Bank, 2007).

To address these challenges, various countries have developed frameworks for quality assurance (QA) in higher education. Universities and higher education institutions implement diverse management systems to enhance and guarantee educational quality, with particular emphasis on teaching effectiveness, academic standards, and institutional accountability. Numerous studies have examined the effectiveness of faculty members in implementing QA standards, highlighting that adherence to these standards improves teaching quality and contributes to overall academic development (Wonah, 2020; Ifedili & OFA, 2016; Ziarati, 2002).

In Afghanistan, the process of quality enhancement and assurance in higher education began more than a decade ago. The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) initially developed a framework for evaluating educational quality, which has been revised and expanded over time to align with evolving quality standards and international benchmarks. Currently, the Quality Assurance Department of the MoHE evaluates universities and higher education institutions using 11 main criteria and 49 sub-criteria. Evaluations are conducted in three stages: Stage 1 requires institutions to achieve at least 65% of assigned scores for preliminary accreditation; Stage 2 requires a minimum of 75% for further evaluation; and Stage 3 requires 85% of total scores for full accreditation. The MoHE applies the same QA criteria and scoring system to both public and private universities, ensuring consistency in evaluation.

Despite these developments, gaps remain in understanding how QA standards are implemented across different types of institutions. Few studies have systematically compared the level of QA implementation between public and private universities in Afghanistan. Therefore, the current study aims to (1) compare the level of implementation of QA standards in public and private universities and higher education institutions, and (2) determine the level of compliance with the main QA criteria across these institutions.

This research provides an in-depth evaluation of QA implementation, highlights existing gaps in higher education quality monitoring, and underscores the significance of strengthening academic standards in Afghan universities. The findings aim to inform policymakers, educators, and institutional leaders on strategies for enhancing quality assurance processes and achieving sustainable educational improvements.

Material and Method

Study Area

This study was conducted on various public and private universities and higher education institutions in Afghanistan. The evaluation reports used were provided by external assessors through the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Directorate under the Ministry of Higher Education. These reports cover assessments conducted in the Hijri Shamsi years 1401, 1402, and 1403.

Data Collection

To achieve the objectives of this study, data were collected from evaluation reports of both public and private universities and higher education institutions. The reports were prepared by external assessors and obtained from the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Directorate. For this research, the total scores of the main quality assurance

criteria were used from universities and higher education institutions evaluated in the specified years (Table 1).

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Chi-square (χ^2) test to compare the application of quality assurance criteria between public and private institutions. All statistical analyses were conducted to ensure accuracy and reproducibility of the results. The Chi-square test was chosen to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the groups regarding the implementation of quality assurance standards.

Findings

To achieve the objectives of this study, the collected data were analyzed to some extent. The evaluated universities and higher education institutions were assessed, and three types of comparisons were conducted between public and private universities, for which the Chi-square test was used for statistical analysis. For this test, the scores obtained by both types of universities for each criterion were compared against the maximum possible scores set for that criterion. In other words, the test assumed that if universities fully met the criteria, their obtained scores would be compared to the maximum scores.

First stage: A total of 28 universities and higher education institutions were evaluated during the years 1401, 1402, and 1403. Among these, 12 were public universities and higher education institutions, and 16 were private universities and higher education institutions. As shown in the graph below (Graph 1), public universities and higher education institutions scored higher in the criteria assigned to research and faculty/staff. Private universities and higher education institutions performed better than public ones in the information technology criteria. The results of the Chi-square test indicate that these differences are not statistically significant.

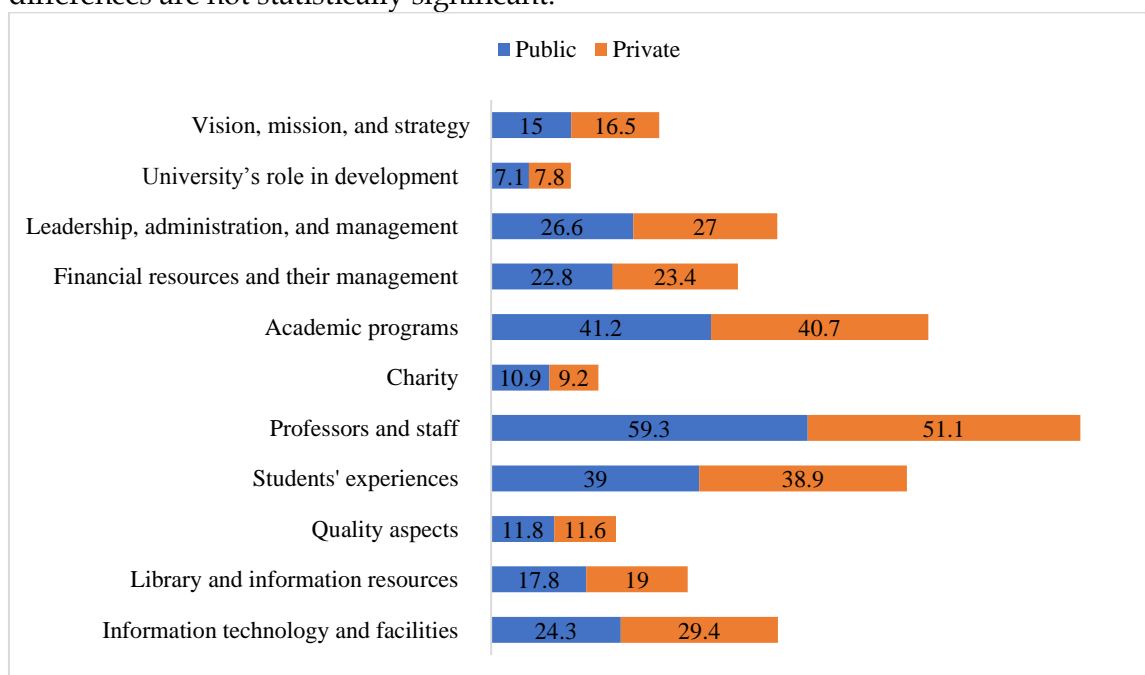


Figure 1. Comparison of 11 Criteria in the First Stage (Public vs. Private)

Second Stage: The universities and higher education institutions evaluated during the mentioned three years total six. Among them, one is a public university or higher education institution, and five are private universities or higher education institutions. As shown in the graph below (Graph 2), the scores of public universities and higher education institutions are higher in the criteria assigned to research and faculty/staff. Comparing these criteria indicates that, for the library-specific criterion, public universities and higher education institutions scored higher than private universities and higher education institutions. However, statistical tests show that this difference is not significant ($p = .647 > .05$), indicating that there are no significant differences in the scores of criteria at this stage.

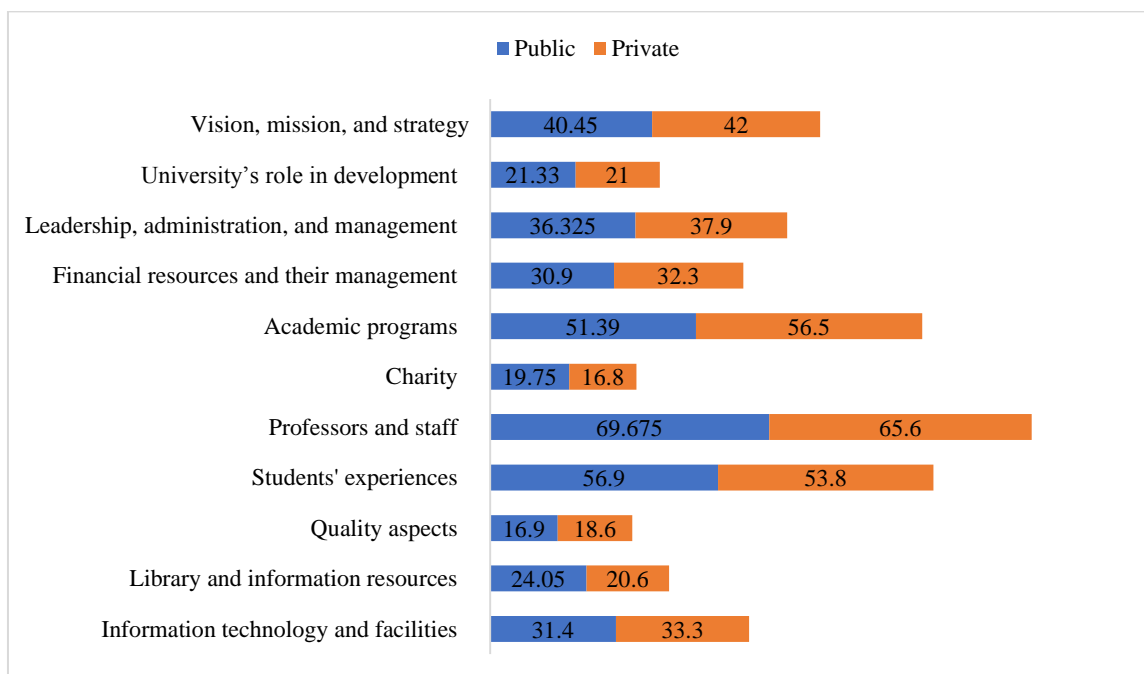


Figure 2. Comparison of the 11 Criteria in the Second Stage (Public vs. Private)

Third Stage: In this study, a total of seven universities and higher education institutions were evaluated in the third stage, of which two were public and five were private. As shown in the following graph (Figure 3), public universities and higher education institutions scored higher than private ones in the areas of library resources, research, faculty, and student experiences. In contrast, private universities and higher education institutions scored higher than public ones in academic programs, financial resources, and quality enhancement. Statistical tests indicate that these differences are not statistically significant.

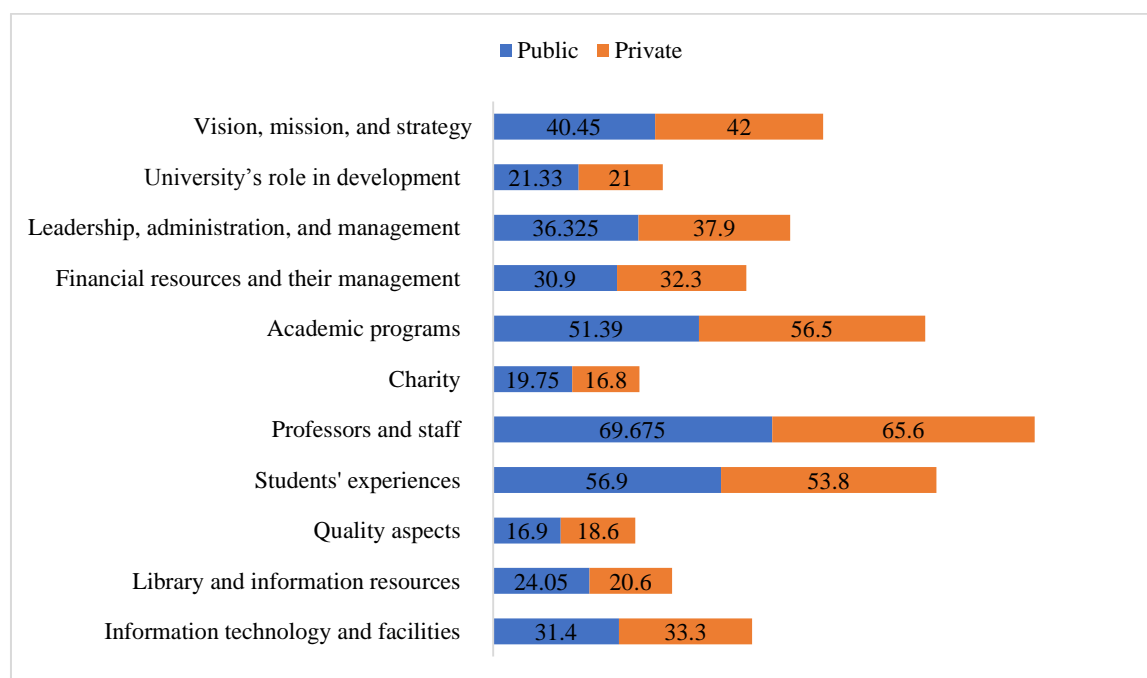


Figure 3. Comparison of the 11 Criteria in the Third Stage (Public vs. Private)

Conclusion

In Afghanistan, the formal process of quality assurance and accreditation in higher education has a relatively short history, and research in this area remains limited. To address this gap, the present comparative study examined quality assurance practices by analyzing the official evaluation scores of public and private universities and higher education institutions. Overall, public universities and institutions generally scored higher in areas related to research, library facilities, and faculty performance compared to private institutions. Conversely, private universities demonstrated better implementation of financial resources and information technology standards relative to their public counterparts. A limitation of this study is that it did not consider the sub-criteria of quality assurance in detail. To more accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses of universities and higher education institutions, future research should include analyses based on these sub-criteria. Despite this limitation, the study provides a foundational comparison of quality assurance outcomes between public and private institutions in Afghanistan, offering insights that can guide policy decisions and further improvements in higher education quality.

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Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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