



RESEARCH PAPER

Effect of Decision Making Styles of Academic Managers on Quality Assurance in Public Sector Universities of Punjab

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PAPER INFO ABSTRACT

Received:

July 13, 2020

Accepted:

September 05, 2020

Online:

September 30, 2020

Keywords:

Academic
Managers,
Decision Making
Styles,
Quality Assurance

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The study aimed to find out the effect of decision making styles of academic managers on quality assurance in public sector universities of the Punjab province of Pakistan. The sample of the study was comprised of 186 academic managers and 940 teachers teaching at university level. Multi stage random sampling technique was used to select the sample. Two instruments were used for data collection named as Decision Making Styles Questionnaire (DMSQ) and Quality Assurance Questionnaire developed by the researcher. The data were analyzed by regression analysis technique. The results of the study showed that decision making styles of academic managers on the whole and its all components significantly and positively predicted the outcome variables (quality assurance) but second and third dimensions of decision making styles of academic managers did not significantly predict the quality assurance. It is concluded that universities are functioning under the supervision, leadership, and vision of their academic managers so academic managers need the abilities to take a right decision at the right time and frame a set up of quality assurance in their real essence in universities.

Introduction

Organization is a unit of individuals that is formed and managed in order to follow the collective goals. Every organization has a management structure that decides the employees' responsibilities and distribution of resources to meet the targets and necessary power to carry out the different tasks (Sandes, 2013). Decision making is a significant activity that shapes the structure of management (Mullins, 2009).

Educational institutes are functioning under the leadership, direction and vision of their academic managers. Academic managers (heads of departments) are

continuously involved in taking decisions during planning, implementing and evaluation of routine tasks. Academic managers are not only making decisions for themselves but also for the morale and welfare of others. Decision making is embedded in the process of management, spreads overall the managerial function and covers all areas of organization. Management and decision making process go side by side in every activity performed by managers. Decision making is appropriate blend of thinking, deciding and action. It also involves the time factor such as the time taken by an academic manager to think about alternatives, collect information and wait for consensus on decision and then after making decision, monitoring it whether the decision is good or bad (Pal, 2008). Decision making process occurs when academic managers try to get better organizational performance in order to give advantage to their employees, client and other stakeholders. In an organization, it is the process in which managers take action and decisions for improving the quality of organizational goals and course of actions. A good decision outcome is always based on the selection of appropriate alternatives and course of action whereas bad decisions lead towards low performance and bad quality of an organization. Decision making takes place when managers feel and identify any important issue in the organization. This process requires an intellectual ability and always follows a specific purpose. Decision making is deeply rooted in the process of management. It covers all managerial functions and sectors of organization (Hellriegel & Stocum, 2007).

Decision making styles with alternatives are chosen by managers. Vroom-Yetton (1973) decision making styles are focused on such circumstances and conditions in which managers collaborate with others in decision making. These styles present the matter of participation of subordinates in a more complex way and also assist the managers to judge the situation and determine the style of decision making which may be currently useful to resolve issue (Chitpin & Evers, 2015). The concept of decision making is very broad and literature reveals that decision making styles of academic managers may closely link the quality assurance of an institute.

In universities the idea of quality assurance provides the bases of continuous learning and progress in education. It applies such procedures that improve the quality of education and satisfy the demands of teachers, parents, students, society and other stakeholders. This concept helps the academic managers to improve their management functions, helps in selecting the appropriate decision making styles, enhances the quality of academic programs, teaching process, meaningful learning and manage all possible ways through which the needs of the students and faculty can be best served. If universities want to get maximum return from their investment on education then they have to train and enable teachers to commit themselves personally and professionally. For such progress, the management may introduce the concept of quality assurance (QA) in higher education towards continuous improvements (Pitt, 2014).

The term quality assurance is one of the pillars of the strategic planning for the advancement and reform of higher education to improve its outcome and to take effective and timely corrective action. Quality assurance is a planned assessment of educational programs in order to make sure that adequate standards of education, scholarship, infrastructure, learning resources and support services are being maintained. It refers to as a systematic management and evaluation procedures in order to ensure achievements of a particular quality or better quality. It also enables the stakeholders to have trust on management for quality work and assists in attaining the quality (Usmani, Khatoon, Shammot & Zamil, 2012).

Higher education is the primary vital component for the development and prosperity of any country. Higher education produces trained and educated brains, intellectual capital, human resources and provides new opportunities for the country and its people. Today, in every institute the main goal is to maintain quality standards. The Higher Education Commission in higher education institutes maintain the quality of teachers, curricula, learning resources, students, assessment and student support services (Raouf, Ahmad, & Qureshi, 2009). A well developed quality assurance programme improves employment opportunities, enhances the education and training of future employees, conducive learning environment and further improves academic and intellectual landscape. The universities need to develop a mechanism for improving the internal processes of quality assurance and align it with international academic standards and practices (Owino, Ogachi, & Maureen, 2011).

Lemaitre (2008) studied the impact of quality assurance processes in higher education institutions. He found that quality assurance was effective and this was the only thing which served the need of higher education system. It was the only means of promoting and supported the ever increasing quality of programs and institutions and it is continuous process. Rana and Reid (2008) had concluded that quality assurance system at higher education needed a greater level of commitment and corporation from administrative leaders, students and teachers in order to make Pakistan prosperous and developed country. It showed that commitment led towards quality work. Hamid-Ullah (2005) assessed the quality indicators of higher education institutes in Pakistan. They concluded that for sustaining quality in higher education institutes, the Higher Education Commission had to make arrangements of foreign training for faculty members, merit based admission and ensured transparent academic audit system. Rasool (2010) investigated the quality assurance practices in public and private universities and he found a weak link between industry and universities that had decayed the quality of education. He suggested to universities to bring courses and program as par market requirements and international standards. Through training, management and faculty became aware about the importance of quality assurance in higher education.

Decision making styles can be elaborated as a learned habitual behavior pattern demonstrated by an individual while dealing with any situation. Decision

making styles usually practiced by academic managers in universities are unsuitable that directly influence quality assurance. Consequently, the selection of ineffective and unsuitable decision making styles directly influences the quality of an institute which is an ultimate loss of students as well as of institute. With this conceptual background, the present research was aimed to study the effect decision making styles of academic managers on quality assurance at university level. The purpose of conducting this study at university level is for the fact that universities are autonomous bodies and to a great extent have the authority of taking departmental level decisions about academic and management where as at school level decision making is mostly done at upper level.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The core work of the present study is embedded in the model of “decision making styles” developed by Vroom and Yetton (1973). The model was designed to facilitate the managers to select the best decision making style on the basis of problem situation which they face. This model is called as Vroom-Yetton model of decision making and is based on five decision making styles that are AI, AII, CI, CII, and G. Other relevant researches have demonstrated that decision making styles have a significant relation and effect with diversified organizational constructs. The important variable which is influenced by decision making styles is quality assurance practices of an institute. In this study, the measurement of this variable is based on the standards given by Higher Education Commission. These are eleven standards which check the institutional performance with respect to quality assurance practices.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study

- H₀₁: There is no significant effect of overall decision making styles of academic managers on quality assurance.
- H_{01.1}: There is no significant effect of autocratic I style of decision making of academic managers on quality assurance.
- H_{01.2}: There is no significant effect of autocratic II style of decision making of academic managers on quality assurance.
- H_{01.3}: There is no significant effect of consultative I style of decision making of academic managers on quality assurance.
- H_{01.4}: There is no significant effect of consultative II style of decision making of academic managers on quality assurance.

H_{01.5}: There is no significant effect of consensus style of decision making of academic managers on quality assurance.

Material and Methods

This study was quantitative in nature and causal-comparative research design was used to conduct this research.

Participants of the Study

For a present study, the universities of the Central Punjab were selected for data collection. All heads and teachers of public sector universities of the Punjab constituted the population of the study. Multi stage random sampling technique was used to select the sample. Overall 186 heads and 940 teachers from 10 public sector universities were selected as a sample of the study.

Research Instrumentations

Two Likert type instruments were used for data collection. The independent variable of the study was decision making styles. Literature regarding decision making styles was thoroughly explored and instrument was developed by the researcher on five decision making styles given by Vroom-Yetton. These five styles are recognizing as AI, AII, CI, CII, and G. Quality assurance scale was based on the standards defined by the Higher Education Commission, Pakistan. The scale on quality assurance was developed by the researcher and teachers' perception about quality assurance was measured by this scale. This scale measures the perception of teachers about university mission, planning, organization and governance, student, faculty, institution resources and student support services. A pilot study was also conducted to check the reliability of the instruments. Twenty heads and fifty teachers were taken as sample of pilot study that were exempted later on in final research study. The .89 reliability was found for questionnaire of decision making styles and .93 reliability was found for quality assurance questionnaire. The instrument validation was done by under the guidance of a panel of experts which are having specialization in educational administration and educational research.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was done by using regression analysis technique to see the effect of independent variable (decision making styles) on dependent variables (quality assurance).

Results and Discussion

In order to study the effect of overall decision making styles of academic managers on quality assurance, null hypotheses were formulated as under (at the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$).

H₀ 1: There is no significant effect of overall decision making styles of academic managers on quality assurance.

Step 1: Evaluating the model. The variance in the dependent variable (quality assurance) showed in the *Model Summary* (see Table 1 below) was explained in the model. The value .059 pointed out that the model illustrated .059% of the variance in the quality assurance. This showed a minor difference that was the adjusted value 0.054 (by comparing to R Square = 0.059). So, it was revealed by the linear regression analysis that decision making styles significantly predicted the outcome variable (quality assurance) i.e. Adjusted R Square = .068, $F = 11.577$, $p < .0005$ (Sig. = .001).

It is concluded with strong evidence that higher predictions of quality assurance are lead by decision making styles. The statistical significance is $\alpha = 0.05$, so the null hypothesis that '*There is no significant effect of overall decision making styles on quality assurance*' was rejected.

**Table 1
Model Summary (n = 186)**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	F	Sig
1	.243 ^a	.059	.054	14.53119	11.577	.001 ^a

Predictors: (Constant), Decision Making Styles_Total

Dependent Variable: QAS_Total

Step 2: Constructing the Regression Equation. The regression equation used to predict the quality assurance, shown in Table 2

**Table 2
Regression Coefficients^a (n = 186)**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	183.122	11.705		15.644	.000
Decision Making Styles	.286	.084	.243	3.403	.001

Dependent Variable: QAS_Total

The Table 2 presents the data from decision making styles necessary to predict quality assurance. It shows that decision making styles contribute significantly and positively to the model (Sig .000).The regression equation by applying the Unstandardized Coefficients Quality Assurance = 183.122 + (.286) (Decision Making Styles)

H₀ 1.1 There is no significant effect of autocratic I style of decision making of academic managers on quality assurance.

Step 1: Evaluating the model. The variance in the dependent variable (quality assurance) showed in the *Model Summary* (see Table 3 below) was explained in the model. The value 0.052 pointed out that the model illustrated 0.052% of the variance in the quality assurance. This showed a minor difference that was the adjusted value 0.047 (by comparing to R Square = 0.052). So, it was revealed by the linear regression analysis that autocratic I style of decision making significantly predicted the outcome variable (quality assurance) i.e. Adjusted R Square = .047, $F = 10.093$, $p < .0005$ (Sig. = .002).

It is concluded with strong evidence that higher predictions of quality assurance are lead by autocratic I style of decision making. The statistical significance is $\alpha = 0.05$, so the null hypothesis that 'There is no significant effect of autocratic I style of decision making on quality assurance' was rejected.

Table 3
Model Summary (n = 186)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	F	Sig
1	.228 ^a	.052	.047	14.58664	10.093	.002 ^a

Predictors: (Constant), Autocratic I_Total

Dependent Variable: Quality Assurance_Total

Step 2: Constructing the Regression Equation. The regression equation used to predict the quality assurance, shown in Table 4

Table 4
Regression Coefficients^a (n = 186)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	
(Constant)	197.473	8.039		24.565	.000
AI	.730	.230	.228	3.177	.002

Dependent Variable: Quality Assurance_Total

The Table 4 presents the data from autocratic I style of decision making necessary to predict quality assurance. It shows that autocratic I style of decision making contribute significantly and positively to the model (Sig .000).The regression equation by applying the Unstandardized Coefficients is

$$\text{Quality Assurance} = 197.473 + (.730) (\text{Autocratic I})$$

H₀ 1.2 There is no significant effect of autocratic II style of decision making of academic managers on quality assurance

Step1: Evaluating the model. The variance in the dependent variable (quality assurance) showed in the *Model Summary* (see Table 5 below) was explained in the model. The value 0.005 pointed out that the model illustrated 0.005% of the variance in the quality assurance. This showed a minor difference that was the adjusted value -.001 (by comparing to R Square = 0.005). So, it was revealed by the linear regression analysis that autocratic II style of decision making was not significantly predicted the outcome variable (quality assurance) i.e. Adjusted R Square = -.001 $F = .857, p < .0005$ (Sig. = .356).

It is concluded with strong evidence that higher predictions of quality assurance are not lead by autocratic II style of decision making. So the null hypothesis that '*There is no significant effect of autocratic II style of decision making on quality assurance*' was accepted.

**Table 5
Model Summary (n = 186)**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	F	Sig
1	.068 ^a	.005	-.001	14.94660	.857	.356 ^a

Predictors: (Constant), Autocratic II_Total

Dependent Variable: Quality Assurance_Total

Step 2: Constructing the Regression Equation. The regression equation used to predict the quality assurance, shown in Table 6:

**Table 6
Regression Coefficients^a (n = 186)**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	214.791	8.705		24.676	.000
AII	.354	.383	.068	.926	.356

Dependent Variable: QAS_Total

The Table 6 presents the data from autocratic II style of decision making not necessary to predict quality assurance. It shows that autocratic II style of decision making not contribute significantly and positively to the model (Sig .000).The regression equation by applying the Unstandardized Coefficients is

$$\text{Quality Assurance} = 214.791 + (.354) (\text{Autocratic II})$$

H₀1.3 There is no significant effect of consultative I style of decision making decision making styles of academic managers on quality assurance.

Step 1: Evaluating the model. The variance in the dependent variable (quality assurance) showed in the *Model Summary* (see Table 7 below) was explained in the model. The value 0.020 pointed out that the model illustrated 0.020% of the variance in the quality assurance. This showed a minor difference that was the adjusted value 0.015 (by comparing to R Square = 0.020). So, it was revealed by the linear regression analysis that consultative I style of decision making was not significantly predicted the outcome variable (quality assurance) i.e. Adjusted R Square = .015, $F = 3.803$, $p < .0005$ (Sig. = .053).

It is concluded with strong evidence that higher predictions of quality assurance are not lead by consultative I style of decision making. So the null hypothesis that 'There is no significant effect of consultative I style of decision making on quality assurance' was accepted.

Table 7
Model Summary (n = 186)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	F	Sig
1	.142 ^a	.020	.015	14.82890	3.803	.053 ^a

Predictors: (Constant), Consultative I_Total
Dependent Variable: QA_Total

Step 2: Constructing the Regression Equation. The regression equation used to predict the quality assurance, shown in Table 8

Table 8
Regression Coefficients^a (n = 186)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	209.076	7.113		29.393	.000
AI	.855	.438	.142	1.950	.053

Dependent Variable: QA_Total

The Table 8 presents the data from consultative I style of decision making not necessary to predict quality assurance. It shows that consultative I style of decision making not contribute significantly and positively to the model (Sig .000).The regression equation by applying the Unstandardized Coefficients is

$$\text{Quality Assurance} = 209.076 + (.855) (\text{Consultative I})$$

H₀ 1.4: There is no significant effect of consultative II style of decision making of academic managers on quality assurance

Step 1: Evaluating the model. The variance in the dependent variable (quality assurance) showed in the *Model Summary* (see Table 9 below) was explained in the model. The value 0.056 pointed out that the model illustrated 0.056% of the variance in the quality assurance. This showed a minor difference that was the adjusted value 0.051 (by comparing to R Square = 0.056). So, it was revealed by the linear regression analysis that consultative II style of decision making significantly predicted the outcome variable (quality assurance) i.e. Adjusted R Square = .051, $F = 10.848$, $p < .0005$ (Sig. = .001).

It is concluded with strong evidence that higher predictions of quality assurance are lead by consultative II style of decision making. The statistical significance is $\alpha = 0.05$, so the null hypothesis that 'There is no significant effect of consultative II style of decision making on quality assurance' was rejected.

**Table 9
Model Summary (n = 186)**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	F	Sig
1	.236 ^a	.056	.051	14.55837	10.848	.001 ^a

Predictors: (Constant), Consultative II _Total
Dependent Variable: Quality Assurance_Total

Step 2: Constructing the Regression Equation. The regression equation used to predict the quality assurance, shown in Table 10

**Table 10
Regression Coefficients^a (n = 186)**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	189.336	10.212		18.541	.000
CII	1.020	.310	.236	3.294	.001

Dependent Variable: Quality Assurance _Total

The Table 10 presents the data from consultative II style of decision making necessary to predict quality assurance. It shows that consultative II style of decision making contribute significantly and positively to the model (Sig .000). The regression equation by applying the Unstandardized Coefficients is

$$\text{Quality Assurance} = 189.336 + (1.020) (\text{Consultative II})$$

H₀1.5 There is no significant effect of Consensus style of decision making of academic managers on quality assurance.

Step 1: Evaluating the model. The variance in the dependent variable (quality assurance) showed in the *Model Summary* (see Table 11 below) was explained in the model. The value 0.030 pointed out that the model illustrated 0.030% of the variance in the quality assurance. This showed a minor difference that was the adjusted value 0.025 (by comparing to R Square = 0.030). So, it was revealed by the linear regression analysis that consensus style of decision making significantly predicted the outcome variable (quality assurance) i.e. Adjusted R Square = .025, $F = 5.688$, $p < .0005$ (Sig. = .018).

It is concluded with strong evidence that higher predictions of quality assurance are lead by consensus style of decision making. The statistical significance is $\alpha = 0.05$, so the null hypothesis that 'There is no significant effect of consensus style of decision making on quality assurance' was rejected.

Table 11
Model Summary (n = 186)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	F	Sig
1	.173 ^a	.030	.025	14.75501	5.688	.018 ^a

Predictors: (Constant), Consensus_Total

Dependent Variable: Quality Assurance_Total

Step 2: Constructing the Regression Equation. The regression equation used to predict the quality assurance, shown in Table 12

Table 12
Regression Coefficients^a (n = 186)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	200.730	9.310		21.561	.000
G	.681	.285	.173	2.385	.018

Dependent Variable: Quality Assurance_Total

The Table 12 presents the data from consensus style of decision making necessary to predict quality assurance. It shows that consensus style of decision making contribute significantly and positively to the model (Sig .000).The regression equation by applying the Unstandardized Coefficients is

$$\text{Quality Assurance} = 200.730 + (.68) (\text{Consensus})$$

Discussion

Results of the present study have highlighted the significance of decision making behavior of academic managers holding a mediator position between the faculty and upper management in any institute. The success of an institute highly depends on its management, so it is important for academic managers to understand their decision making styles and choose them properly. Quality assurance of an institute is affected by the decision making styles being practiced by the academic managers (Quick, Nelson & Khandelwal, 2013).

The findings of the previous studies have supported to present study that decision making styles with all its dimensions (AI, AII, CI, CII, G) have significant positive contribution in predicting the quality assurance (dependent variables). The data have revealed with reference to the dependent variable that three components of decision making styles significantly and positively predict the outcome variables (quality assurance). The second and third dimension of decision making styles do not significantly predict the quality assurance but as the whole decision making styles positively and significantly predict the outcome variable "quality assurance". The results endorsed the previous study by Brunetto & Farr-Wharton (2005) who stated that attitude, values and decision making actions of management personnel play a vital role in shaping the quality assurance practices in universities. It has been found that decision making styles of academic managers are important to bring improvements and implement quality assurance practices in institutes for the quality oriented universities. Higher education management enhances the strength of committed staff with a goal of updating their knowledge and to start quality exploration in university (Husain , 2007; Mohanthy, 2000).

Owino, Ogachi, and Maureen (2011) studied the role of institutional managers in quality assurance. They found that these institutional managers were responsible to offer quality teaching and quality research activities in institutes but they were not involving its stakeholders in decision making process that created a gap between institutional managers and its personnel. So they concluded that institutional managers should have improved their managerial skills that were most important for establishing quality assurance practices in universities. Jawad, Jamshaid, and Wahab (2015) investigated the quality culture in higher education institutes. Quality assurance had become crucial part of higher education institutes. For this purpose, it was necessary to develop quality culture in higher education institutes. The results of the study indicated that establishment of quality culture in higher education institutes required commitment of all its concerned stakeholders. So, they concluded that success of any institute belonged with its committed personnel.

The contribution of the present study is modest as a whole; probably it is a first study at national level which studies the decision making styles and quality assurance variables collectively. Usually, in Pakistan it is in practice to share less

information, hiding information and taking decisions without collaboration of those on which these are applied. At any level of authority, every person thinks that others responsible for information sharing. The academic managers may conduct meeting weekly, monthly or as needed and provide an opportunity to all faculty members around the table to discuss about the issues and obstacles they being faced in achieving institutions' mission to properly implement the quality assurance practices. It does not matter where a person works, their perception about the workplace makes him more committed, satisfied and effective at his job which ultimately leads towards the institute quality assurance practices.

It is concluded that universities have to make careful efforts to improve their quality assurance practices which ultimately influence quality of education. Quality education at higher level is crucial to produce intellectual and skilled work force that contributes significantly for the improvement of universities for quality education in our country and it all depends on decision making styles of academic managers.

Recommendations

On the basis of research findings and literature some recommendations were made by the researcher.

1. The universities' management should share and discuss the policies regarding quality assurance in staff meetings and with its concerned stakeholders because implementation of quality assurance in universities is a combined effort rather than an individual activity.
2. The present study concerned only the academic managers and faculty of university level so more studies can be conducted on different levels such as at college level.

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