



ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN ENSURING QUALITY EDUCATION AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: A PERSPECTIVE OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This study deals with the role of libraries ensuring quality education in higher education institutions (HEIs). Quality education is an all-encompassing and accessible system that equips students with the necessary knowledge and skills for success. Libraries play a crucial role in quality education by serving as vital resources that grant access to knowledge, facilitate research, encourage literacy, create a favourable learning atmosphere, and advocate for continuous learning among both students and educators. The role of libraries in higher education is multi-faceted and essential in shaping the academic journey of students and faculty. Libraries serve as repositories of knowledge, offering access to a vast array of resources. They provide books, journals, databases, and digital materials that support research, teaching, and learning. By curating relevant information, libraries empower students and educators alike. Libraries are hubs for research. They offer access to scholarly journals, databases, and specialized collections. Students and faculty can explore cutting-edge research, stay updated on developments in their fields, and engage in critical inquiry. Libraries foster literacy by promoting reading habits and information literacy skills. They organize workshops, book clubs, and literacy programs, encouraging lifelong learning and intellectual growth. A well-equipped library creates a conducive learning environment. It provides quiet spaces for study, collaborative areas for group work, and access to technology. Libraries enhance the overall educational experience. New knowledge is typically unearthed by referring to up-to-date and established literature. The researchers opted for subject-specific databases like Google, Google Scholar, Web of Science, and Science Direct. They employed the undermentioned keywords to gather the data: "Role of Libraries" or "Quality Education" or "Libraries" or "Role of Librarians" or "Education". This study may enable the librarian and information professionals in university libraries of Pakistan to step up to the roles and responsibilities, knowledge and skills using required resources and service and strengthen quality education.

Keywords: Libraries, Role of libraries, Education, Quality education, Higher education institutions



Introduction

Education is a huge thing worldwide. It is just as important as any resource a country needs for its economy and industries to grow. This is because education is the way we develop our human resources. When we learn, we gain knowledge and information, which is like having power. This power is important for making people better and helping countries progress studied by Arjun et al. (2010). Quality education means making education better in every way. It can make sure that all students achieve good results that are measurable and recognizable in any way, especially in important subjects belonging to natural sciences, social sciences, and other life skills. The way students learn in classrooms and other places is very important for their future. A good education meets basic learning needs and makes learners' lives better overall highlighted by Samantaray (2017).

Libraries are like hubs of information that help communities. They offer different ways to find good information to help people. They play a big role in making things better in a country. They help with important things like good education, getting rid of poverty and hunger, making life better for everyone, treating men and women equally, giving access to clean water and toilets, and keeping people healthy identified by Dei & Asante (2022). Libraries are important for education, and you cannot separate them from it. Having libraries is crucial for any country's education system. Therefore, anything that helps education get better also helps the whole country improve. Without libraries, education can suffer. That is why students should be encouraged to use libraries. The library's job depends on what the school wants to achieve, but sometimes these goals are not very clear. Higher education, like college, also needs libraries. However, when it comes to online learning, people do not think about libraries as much. Libraries were among the first to use computers and teach others how to use them. They have also been leaders in using technology to change schools for the better measured by Mahesh (2016).

The origins of the worldwide quality movement can be attributed to Medieval Europe. During the late 13th century, artisans organized themselves into associations referred to as guilds. These guilds created inspection committees that established strict rules for the quality of products and services. They used special marks to identify flawless goods and even developed ways to track the source of faulty items. A significant quality revolution occurred in post-World War II Japan, which transformed the U.S. focus on quality into a concept called total quality management. This approach did not just focus on checking products and services; it aimed to improve all the processes within an organization. As time progressed, quality requirements extended beyond manufacturing to fields like services, healthcare, education, and government sectors. By the 1970s, the concern for quality had become so substantial that it captured the attention of national lawmakers (Sabaya, 2011).

Primary education in Pakistan is grappling with a significant challenge due to the scarcity of learning materials, especially pronounced in government schools. These schools often lack essential resources like chalkboards, textbooks, libraries, and other tools crucial for effective teaching and learning (Ahmad, 2013; Muhammad, 2002). The availability of educational resources like books, libraries, and proper facilities is crucial for the effective functioning of the education process. Unfortunately, these essential resources are notably absent in educational institutions across the country. Overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teaching staff, and poorly equipped laboratories exacerbate the situation. This dire



scenario has led to a sense of hopelessness and a decline in the overall quality of the education system (Ahmad et al., 2014).

The challenges faced in the teaching process are exacerbated by the scarcity of teaching and learning materials in schools. Numerous educational institutions are deficient in necessities such as blackboards, attendance registers, offices, libraries, laboratories, and up-to-date books. Additionally, a considerable portion of schools grapples with a shortage of classrooms, and, in many instances, they lack adequate facilities for playgrounds, which are crucial for the physical development of both students and educators, as highlighted by Saeed (2013). The Pakistani government should focus on enhancing standard libraries within its higher education system to align with global education standards. These libraries should demonstrate their significance and document their positive impact on advancing higher education development highlighted by Murtaza (2021).

Library standards in higher education should be formulated to promote and facilitate both public and private libraries. These libraries should collaboratively contribute to student learning, align with institutional goals, and establish themselves as prominent entities in evaluating the excellence of higher education development. To attain this, the Pakistani government, along with administrators and educational policymakers, should prioritize the establishment of additional libraries within higher education institutions, universities, and colleges. This expansion would enable access to valuable research materials and data, fostering improved educational quality studied by Khan & Ahmed (2013).

In Pakistan even though academic libraries have significant potential to provide quality education, they still face challenges like lack of funding to libraries, lack of well-structured library, lack of recognition of libraries by school administrators, absence of trained librarians, a shortage of up-to-date books, insufficient access to computers, unreliable internet connectivity, and inadequate power supply. Drawing insights from a literature review, personal observations, with libraries in Pakistan, these study goals to detect the obstacles faced by educational libraries in the country.

This paper studies the multifaceted role of libraries in promoting and sustaining quality education within higher educational institutions. By examining these various dimensions of libraries' role, we aim to highlight how these institutions serve as pillars of support for quality education, reinforcing the idea that they are not just buildings housing books, but vibrant engines driving academic progress and fostering a lifelong love for learning. Through this exploration, we hope to emphasize the integral place that libraries hold in shaping the educational journey of students within higher educational institutions.

Research Objectives

Following are research objectives of this study:

1. To explore the role of libraries improving the quality education in university libraries of Pakistan.
2. To establish the role of library information professionals on quality education in university libraries of Pakistan.

Significance of the Study

The role of libraries on quality education (RLQE) has received a lot of attention recently. The significance of the quality education phenomenon over the last years has been underlined. RLQE is renowned for numerous organizations and institutions around the world. Therefore, this comprehensive study will find out the role of libraries on quality education in academic libraries of Pakistan and determine



the role of university libraries and information professional in enhancing quality education. What resources and services are needed, and what challenges and opportunities are associated with the enhancement of quality education in universities libraries' of Pakistan both private and public sector. The literature review revealed that there are many studies that have been conducted in school and college libraries "role on student learning and quality education". There are no studies that have been conducted in higher education institutions particularly in Pakistan. This is the first study that is going to explore the role of libraries on quality education.

Literature Review

Quality Education

Quality education refers to an inclusive, accessible, and effective educational system that provides students with the knowledge, skills, and competencies they need to succeed. It involves qualified teachers, relevant curriculum, a supportive learning environment, fair assessment practices, and a focus on lifelong learning. Quality education encompasses a comprehensive approach that seeks to foster students' creativity and promote their overall development in terms of moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic aspects. According to Yang (2011) & Mahwasane (2017) quality education is not only grow student's scope of knowledge but also train their inventive capacities. More he says that quality education is to activate people's internal capability, give full play to students, enterprise spirits and thrive student's personalities. Dei (2022) stated that for quality education to be fruitful, funding required in educational institutions, updated teachers skills and academic improvements.

The significant growth of primary education has led to limited resources being stretched thin, raising concerns about the resulting quality of education. The study will focus on the factors influencing the quality of education, particularly the facilities provided at schools as argued by Ndabi (1985). Quality education plays a central role in attaining various Maintainable Development Goals. It serves as the cornerstone for breaking the cycle of poverty, improving employment prospects, and enhancing overall quality of life. High-quality education is essential for fostering sustainable development, as highlighted by Boeren (2019).

The United Nations recognizes the paramount importance of education for a brighter and more successful future. It strongly advocates for quality education, not just any education, to become a reality for everyone. This commitment is reflected in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, where quality education is a key objective aimed at transforming the world by 2030. Quality education, in the UN's view, entails providing equitable and standardized learning opportunities for all, fostering lifelong learning, and promoting a thirst for knowledge. The focus is on inclusivity and fairness, rather than merely increasing literacy rates. This perspective represents a revolutionary shift in understanding the role of education as a catalyst for global change described by Leverage Edu (2023).

In 2012, the United Nations introduced "Quality Education" as a vital component of their Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Education in contemporary times is greatly shaped by and reliant on Information and Communication Technology (ICT), enabling students to access primary and higher education. Quality education goes beyond merely preparing students for employment; it also fosters holistic personal development. For children, it encompasses their entire upbringing, including the integration of moral and ethical teachings into the curriculum, promoting healthy lifestyles and character development also highlighted by Leverage Edu (2023).



The Core Pillars of Education

The foundation of education rests upon four key pillars: the presence of qualified instructors, the effective use of high-quality educational materials and professional growth, and the establishment of secure and nurturing learning environments. According to Jacques (2001) and Samantaray (2017) who contributed significantly to UNESCO's important work, they propose "The four pillars of education for the 21st century." This framework offers the benefit of assisting individuals dedicated to high-quality pedagogical practices. These scholars contend that the expansion of knowledge enables a deeper understanding of one's surroundings, fosters curiosity, promotes the acquisition of autonomy, and encourages the use of critical thinking to comprehend the world.

Learning to know: This involves acquiring a broad range of general knowledge and having the opportunity to delve deeper into specific subjects. It emphasizes the capacity and urge to learn.

Learning to do: In addition to gaining occupational skills, this pillar focuses on developing the competence to handle various situations and collaborate effectively in teams. It emphasizes the "how" of doing things, not just the "what".

Learning to live together: This pillar emphasizes understanding and appreciating other people's perspectives and recognizing the interdependence among individuals. In today's technologically interconnected world, this is particularly significant.

Learning to be: This pillar focuses on nurturing one's character and empowering individuals to take more actions that are independent. Understanding one's inner consciousness and self-awareness are central to this aspect.

The study suggests that establishing a learning society having essential components such as knowledge management, skill enhancement, personal identity, and team spirit. Information literacy programs are effective means to fulfil these essential components of quality education.

Libraries and quality education

The concepts of quality education and 'library' are intrinsically interconnected, co-existing, and interdependent. They cannot exist separately, as they are mutually dependent on each other. Cyr & Conway (2020) recognized that they serve as means to share an ultimate goal and have been integral to human civilization since its inception, evolving in response to changing needs and circumstances across different stages of human life. Libraries are widely recognized as pivotal hubs for research and as essential sources of information empowerment, and their significance cannot be overstated, that benefiting the public immensely (Dei & Asante, 2022). Academic libraries play a crucial role towards enhancing education by promoting literacy, providing information, and supporting economic, social, and cultural development. Eminence university environment decide the future of any country and makes strong its foundation stone the youth. To achieve long-term results of improvements, the government, at local, regional, and national levels, should launch initiatives to build and equip academic libraries with well-trained staff, a diverse range of materials both printed and digital and modern technologies highlighted by Ogbebor (2011).

This concerted effort will contribute significantly to the overall improvement of education quality within the country. A well-equipped academic library offers teachers and students access to extensive knowledge and information, fostering the growth of creative thinking and innovative personalities among readers. This leads to a higher quality of education for students as they develop different perspectives and



skills through the resources available in the library. According to Darhmingliana (2018), one of the teaching tools that is thought to be more effective is libraries. A strong library is necessary for a community's citizens to advance intellectually, morally, and spiritually. People receive their education from institutions including schools, universities, agencies, and organizations, with libraries being the most notable of these.

The importance of libraries in quality education lies in their role as essential resources that provide access to knowledge, support research, foster literacy, offer a conducive learning environment, and promote lifelong learning for students and educators alike. Academic libraries hold great importance for students, aiding them in their journey towards excellence. These libraries offer an additional advantage in enhancing understanding, acting as a gateway to explore knowledge from all around the world. Komalla (2014) added that the library's significance in imparting and disseminating knowledge has been further emphasized due to advancements in continuing education, distance education, and the Open University system. In countries like India, where many students cannot afford essential books, university and college libraries have become even more crucial. A key attribute of a good library is its strong alignment with its institution, and its excellence is measured by how effectively its resources and services support the academic pursuits of the institution. Furthermore, Libraries hold significant educational power in shaping students' thoughts and promoting self-driven moral growth (Yang, 2011; Helgren & Lance, 2010).

Role of librarians in quality education

Mahwasane (2017) points out that Librarians serve as facilitators of knowledge, guiding students and educators in accessing reliable resources, promoting information literacy, supporting research, and creating a conducive learning environment to enhance the overall quality of education. In the educational setting, the teacher librarian plays a crucial and strategic role in shaping the knowledge environment. They actively contribute to facilitating learning by collaborating with students and educators to create a conducive learning environment. Kaur (2015) includes that the modern librarian's role has evolved significantly to meet current demands. No longer just caretakers of physical collections and quiet spaces, today's librarians act as knowledge navigators. They manage dynamic facilities, often-open 24/7, catering to diverse learning styles. The traditional rows of books and card catalogues have given way to a variety of digital resources such as audio recordings, videotapes, CD-ROMs, databases, and internet-connected computer terminals. These changes present an opportunity for academic libraries to reinvent themselves as catalysts for knowledge creation, discovery, and curation, serving both present and future generations of students and scholars.

Nworie (2018) observed that Librarians are unparalleled in their ability to provide a wealth of information and develop essential tools and databases for accessing knowledge. Modern libraries offer both print and electronic resources, including Reference materials, textbooks, and literature to support extended learning. They also provide various information retrieval tools like OPAC, indexes, and online databases. The collection encompasses systematic reviews, academic guidelines, and protocols for evidence-based practice, as well as popular books and lifestyle resources for students, researchers, and other academic users.

Challenges faced by libraries in Pakistan

Challenges faced by libraries encompass long-term access to resources, Lack of libraries recognition by management, ICT infrastructure, Keeping Up with Technological Advances, Staying up-to-date with Research, Copyright Management and Intellectual Property Rights, Obsolete Library policies,



Addressing Financial Challenges in Libraries, Challenges of Inadequate Library Facilities and Inadequate Infrastructure. As mentioned by Ashiq (2021), academic libraries are currently grappling with a range of persistent challenges, encompassing technological disruptions, leadership issues, educational transformation, digitization efforts, changes in scholarly communication, adapting to the needs of contemporary learners, and financial constraints. The entrenched traditional culture and mindset within these libraries may potentially impede the ability of younger professionals to innovate and exercise creativity.

Research/ Literature Gap

During an extensive literature review related to the study context, the researchers found many gaps, which need to be filled by conducting an empirical study. Therefore, a comprehensive study has been developed that neglected or less explored in previous studies. The first gap found in the existing literature the role of library in quality education has not been explored yet; only a few studies have been investigated to measure the role library in school education in the context of Pakistan. Thus, this is the first study to explore the role of library in quality education in HEIs in Pakistan.

Method and Search Strategy

The overall aim of this conducted research was to evaluate how libraries contribute to ensuring the quality of education in higher education institutions in Pakistan. This assessment was based on a careful examination of current and existing literature, with a focus on relevant articles. A comprehensive literature review was conducted to identify the most pertinent articles available. To gather the maximum relevant literature, a wide-ranging search strategy was employed. The researcher utilized subject-specific databases for this purpose, including Google, Google scholar, Web of Science, Science Direct. The following keywords were used to retrieve the data “Role of Libraries” OR “Quality Education” OR “Role of Librarian’s” OR “Education”.

Conclusion

Libraries play a crucial role in societal advancement by supporting education and academic research and meeting the information needs of countless individuals. The rapid progress in Science and Technology over the past two centuries has triggered an explosion of information, necessitating significant improvements in the library system to address evolving demands. Libraries' services have also transformed dramatically due to the introduction of cutting-edge computer and telecommunications technologies, revolutionizing the field of Library and Information Science.

Traditional and conventional libraries, once filled with printed documents, are undergoing a transformation into paperless libraries with extensive digital collections. Networking capabilities have further revolutionized modern libraries, resulting in the emergence of virtual libraries, breaking down physical barriers. Users now have access to information anytime and anywhere worldwide, thanks to modern communication tools like computers and the Internet.

In the modern era, libraries excel in managing knowledge. University librarians demonstrate innovation in leveraging new information technologies to grant access to a diverse array of multimedia resources. These libraries play a crucial role in imparting lifelong information-handling skills to students. The conventional notion of libraries as silent havens for print materials is evolving. Changes in educational approaches, the influence of computer technology, and the diverse student population have prompted



libraries to reorganize resources and develop services that align with the evolving demands of teaching and learning. Libraries curate collections and offer access to services that adapt to shifts in teaching, learning, and information technologies.

Recommendations

Following are the recommendations for improving the role of libraries in enhancing the quality education in higher education institutions of Pakistan:

1. Allocate adequate funding to HEI libraries to support the acquisition of current resources, professional development for staff, modernization of infrastructure, and integration of technology.
2. Libraries should improve their services is to embrace new technologies that can enhance quality education.
3. Library practitioners should possess the skills for effective planning in order to enhance the quality of education.
4. Library practitioners should actively engage in various initiatives to improve the quality of education for students.
5. Invest in training and professional development programs for library staff to enhance their skills in resource management, user services, technology integration, and research support.
6. Encourage open access publishing and institutional repositories to make research outputs freely accessible to a wider audience.
7. Renovate and modernize library facilities to provide a comfortable, accessible, and technology-rich learning environment for students and researchers.
8. Foster collaboration between librarians and faculty members to integrate library resources and services into teaching and learning activities.
9. Implement information literacy programs to empower students with the skills to effectively access, evaluate, and use information resources.
10. Implement strategies to engage library users, such as user orientation programs, workshops, promotional campaigns, and feedback mechanisms.
11. Provide research support services, such as literature searches, data analysis, and publication assistance, to faculty and researchers.
12. Raise awareness among HEI administrators, faculty, and students about the importance of libraries in supporting quality education and research.

By implementing these recommendations, HEI libraries in Pakistan can enhance their role in supporting quality education, promoting research and innovation, and contributing to the nation's intellectual and social development.

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