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Role of Strategic Planning in Quality Enhancement of Higher Education Institutions: Case Study of Bamyan University

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Abstract. Afghanistan is a conflict-impacted country with a higher education sector that is undergoing rapid growth in the last two decades. The Ministry of Higher Education established the Quality Assurance & Accreditation Commission in 2009; and established the Quality Assurance & Accreditation Directorate (QAAD) in 2011. This body is to administer and oversee the accreditation process in all public and private HEIs of Afghanistan with a strategic outlook. By providing a comprehensive QA Framework and aiming to meet international standards; QAAD is functioning for Internal and External Quality Assurance of HEIs. This Framework emphasizes the development of a Strategic Plan for Higher Education Institutions in its first main criteria. Since QAAD and its relevant processes of Quality Assurance are newly implemented phenomena for the Higher Education Institutions; the processes of Developing Strategic Plans seem to be ineffective, challenging, and not used as a fundamental tool for quality enhancement. Furthermore, there are considerable challenges facing the implementation level of developed plans. Considering the important role of strategic planning in quality assurance; this study aims to evaluate the effectiveness and impacts of strategic planning on the processes of quality enhancement of Bamyan University as one of the National Higher Education Institutions. Nine major aspects of quality issues focusing on three main levels of strategic planning at the institution, Faculty, and Department are among the core subjects of this study. This study is carried out from the implementers' point of view and includes the responses of all academic and non-academic members of Departments, Faculties, and Leadership of Bamyan University. Furthermore, this provides lessons learned and recommendations for institutions, policy makers, and other Higher Education Institutions. This study is conducted from February to August 2021 in Bamyan University of Afghanistan. A questionnaire was adopted and developed as the instrument of this study and nine major aspects of the qualification issues were included in the instrument. SPSS tool was employed to descriptively analyze the findings of the study. This study has shown that the exercise and experiences of strategic planning have not meaningfully and satisfactorily contributed to the enhancement of the quality of education of this University. The mean value of all aspects is somehow below average or average level. From the respondents' point of view; the impact of strategic planning on quality assurance activities is greater than other aspects and this impact is lower in the sustainability of financial resources.

Keywords. Quality Assurance, Quality Enhancement, Strategic Planning, and Educational Services

Introduction & Background

Quality assurance in higher education is an important issue globally and has become the central theme for higher education in many countries. Many people are concerned about the quality of the instructional programs, knowledge generation, services, and outputs of higher educational institutions (HEIs), and whether the stakeholders and the societies are getting real value for their investment in higher education (Akpan & Esirah, 2005). In the very competitive environment of education, quality assurance can be a driver for institutions to achieve excellence in higher education (Ryan, 2015). While talking about quality assurance in HEIs; means the quality of educational services that the students receive from institution and according to Seyfried & Pohlenz (2018), quality of teaching and learning has become a major strategic issue in tertiary education systems across the globe over the past decades (Seyfried & Pohlenz, 2018).

Since, quality assurance has always been a matter of concern and significance in education (Natarajan, 2000); the Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan also with consideration of quality assurance issues; has put efforts into enhancing & assuring the quality of higher education institutions. Currently, overall, 167 higher education institutions are providing educational services to Afghan society among them 39 are public and 128 are private institutions.

In this regard, the Ministry of Higher Education established Quality Assurance & Accreditation Commission in 2009 and established Quality Assurance & Accreditation Directorate (QAAD) in 2011. This qualification body is to administer and oversee the accreditation process in all public and private HEIs of Afghanistan with a strategic outlook. Through providing a comprehensive Quality Assurance Framework and aiming to meet international standards; QAAD is functioning for Internal and External Quality Assurance of HEIs. This Framework emphasizes the development of a Strategic Plan for Higher Education Institutions in its first main criteria. Likewise, QAAD has put efforts into recognizing strategic planning as a roadmap of the internal & external quality assurance processes. The Strategic View of Higher Education in the country states that “the establishment of a high-quality public and private higher education system that meets the national and international requirements.”

Besides these efforts that have taken place by the Ministry of Higher Education, there are still many challenges relevant to the quality of educational services to be taken into account. These challenges are particularly at the implementation levels of the policies and Welch & Wahidyar (2019) in their study found some tensions between stated policies regarding Quality Assurance in Afghan higher education including limited finance, growing levels of insecurity, and limited capacity within the Ministry of Higher Education, including staff training. Some barriers within higher education institutions are also pointed out in both public and private higher educational institutions (Welch & Wahidyar, 2019).

Considering the importance of strategic planning in enhancing & assuring the quality of HEIs; this study has been conducted to evaluate the role of strategic planning in the enhancement of major aspects of qualification criteria. These criteria at the institutional level include educational activities & outcomes, research activities, admission & student services, improvement of human resources, sustainability of financial resources, administration & managerial capabilities, organizational effectiveness, cooperation with other organizations, and quality assurance. With regards to the challenges at implementation levels of policies and legislation, this paper was carried out based on the attitudes of strategic plan implementers at the institutional level. As a case study, Bamyān University is surveyed and investigated for the

study. Considering the topic, all present academic and non-academic members of this university have taken part in the study and have been surveyed.

About Quality Assurance in HEIs

Quality assurance is defined in the context of higher education to denote the practices whereby academic standards, i.e., the level of academic achievement attained by higher education graduates, are maintained and improved. This definition of academic quality as equivalent to academic standards is consistent with the emerging focus in higher education policies on student learning outcomes -- the specific levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities that students achieve as a consequence of their engagement in a particular education program (Dill, 2007).

Quality is defined more broadly and in the context of education, this concept varies from that of providing a special service to conforming to standards or fitness for purpose. The quality could be described in terms of the worth, appropriateness, validity, and relevance of resources available for the achievement of educational goals and priorities. According to Hayward (2017), quality assurance is an all-embracing effort covering all policies and actions through which the quality of higher education is maintained and developed.

Quality assurance processes are explained as internal and external processes and a useful distinction is drawn between internal and external academic quality assurance. Internal quality assurance refers to those policies and practices whereby academic institutions themselves monitor and improve the quality of their education provision, while external quality assurance refers to supra-institutional policies and practices whereby the quality of higher education institutions and programs are assured (Dill, 2007). The process of external quality review is used in higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities, and higher education programs for quality assurance and quality improvement (Hayward, 2017).

Furthermore, quality is ever an elusive and evolving, omnipotent, and ubiquitous business mechanism. It has been used and manipulated by organizations to convince consumers that their products and/or services have achieved a level of acceptance based on certain standards and criteria (Shawyun, 2012).

Meanwhile, according to Shawyun (2012), quality education could be defined through the purpose or mission of HEI's which represents the strategic direction of the reason for the HEI's existence. This strategic direction summarily includes; providing competent and qualified graduates, pushing forward the frontiers of knowledge, and contributing to the development of society.

Quality assurance definitions vary from place to place, hence the importance of defining based on the institutional culture of that place. Loukkola & Zhang (2010), state that in the study of quality assurance, all activities related to defining, assuring, and enhancing the quality of an HEI need to be included thus arguing for an all-encompassing approach derived from institutions' own strategic goals, fitting into their internal quality culture, while also fulfilling the external requirements for QA (Loukkola & Zhang, 2010).

According to Mishra (2007), the British Standard Institution (BSI) Defines quality as "the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs". Mishra (2007), concerning Green and Harvey (1993); brings five different approaches to defining quality and these approaches are: 1) In terms of exceptional (exceeding high standards and passing a required standard); 2) In terms of consistency (exhibited through " zero defects" and " getting right the first time" making quality a culture); 3) As fitness for purpose (meaning the product or service meets the stated purpose, customer

specifications, and satisfaction); 4) As value for money (through efficiency and effectiveness); and 5)As transformative (in term of qualitative change).

About Strategic Planning

The concept of strategic planning is defined as an instrument that allows making long-term plans in consideration of the risks and opportunities faced by the organization and improving efficiency by acting in line with these plans. It has a long-term and future-oriented approach and consists of the four components of vision, mission, strategy, and action (Ozdem, 2011).

According to Taylor & Miroiu (2002), possibly the best definition of strategy was offered by Chandler, in his book on Strategy and Structure, written in 1962: The Determination of the Long-term Goals and Objectives of an Enterprise and the Adoption of Courses of Action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals. Thus, they bring a second definition of institutional planning, especially in the context of higher education, which was offered by Lockwood and Davies, in 1985, and state the continuous and collective exercise of foresight in the integrated process of making informed decisions in the future (Taylor & Miroiu, 2002).

In today's competitive higher education atmosphere, it is critical to strategically develop approaches for the improvement and growth of systems, services, and strategies. Therefore, it is the complexity and uncertainty of higher education's future in a briskly changing world that will position the foundation for the challenges facing HEIs ahead. The main challenges are the competition for scarce resources; an absence of a strategic systems approach to planning to understand the changing marketplace and identify opportunities, threats, internal strengths, and weaknesses; and the shift in faculty and students' pursuit of greater participation in decision-making and a robust culture of transparency.

The application of strategic planning, which is rooted in the military theory and has been adapted as a tool for businesses, in HEIs allows the institution to 1) devise a realistic framework for determining the process a university should take in achieving its stated and desired future; 2) embrace continuous innovation and quality improvement; 3) establish goals and priorities; and 4) involve key implementers and stakeholders in defining the strategic direction of the institution (Ibrahim et al., 2014).

In the meanwhile, Universities are driven to engage in a strategic planning process by a variety of forces. These include increasing demand for higher education concurrent with a decline in government funding, changing student demographics, and a need to compete with the emerging models of higher education while keeping the essence of a traditional comprehensive University. A strategic planning process can help prepare a university to face these emerging challenges and address these challenges. Similarly, strategy is a tool for the University to find its competitive advantage and place within the environment (Lerner, 1999).

Strategic planning also has a series of benefits to the HEIs through a variety of ways and these include 1) creating a framework for determining the direction a university should take to achieve its desired future, 2) Providing a framework for achieving competitive advantage, 3) Allows all university constituencies to participate and work together towards accomplishing goals, 4) Raises the vision of all key participants, encouraging them to reflect creatively on the strategic direction of the university, 5) Allows the dialogue between the participants improving understanding of the organization's vision, and fostering a sense of ownership of the strategic plan, and belonging to the organization, 6) Aims to align the university with its environment, and 7) Allows the university to set priorities (Lerner, 1999).

Looking to the levels of implementation; strategic planning and management can take place at various levels within an institution: the whole institution the faculty the department or school the subject group or research group the individual (Taylor & Miroiu, 2002); and for evaluation of the impacts and effectiveness of the strategies there is need to focus on these major levels at the respected institutions.

Effective strategic planning within HEIs is vital for assuring the quality of education. Effective strategic planning will also contribute to the independence of the Universities from the direct control of the government. The highly competitive environment, including competition for student recruitment, research funds, and the best staff also requires proper planning for HEIs. Furthermore, there are some other reasons like pressure on resources, accountability & assessment requirements; external interaction of the institution, and internal management of the institution that highlight the importance of effective strategic planning.

The autonomy of HEIs enhances their responsibility to select the tools for management and quality assurance. Even though each institution has its own management and quality assurance system, there is a need to develop a general framework to describe the strategic plan and the quality assurance system. The general framework can be tailored for each institution, considering the organization's management and its internal processes.

HEIs are accountable for their performance to the ministries of education, quality assurance agencies, and other stakeholders. The institutions are obliged to participate in regular external evaluations and audit their quality assurance systems. The relationship between institutional management and quality assurance needs more attention. Without adherence to the quality assurance system, no institution can know how well it is performing. The institutional management and internal processes must be integrated into the quality assurance system (Kettunen, 2011).

Nevertheless, in the context of strategic planning execution in HEIs, the process is often truncated by the absence of clearly defined and reliably documented outcomes. This is due to the impacts of other influences, for instance institutional leadership, demographic changes, funding, politics, social, and cultural forces. Furthermore, universities are driven to engage with strategy planning to address the challenges of the knowledge society and by a variety of forces. Through this plan, institutions will likely stimulate the priorities and activities to maintain and improve the quality of the services in today's changing environment (Ahmad et al., 2012).

During the past decade, institutions of higher education had to confront numerous changes in their external and internal environment and respond to emerging challenges, such as decreasing financial support, rapid technological advances, changing demographics, and outdated academic programs. As a result, many universities engaged in strategic planning as a means to “make beneficial, strategic changes ... to adapt to the rapidly shifting environment” (Lerner, 1999).

Methodology

According to (Ibrahim et al., 2014), the institution’s strategic plan should reflect the assessment and evaluation of educational activities, learning outcomes, research and postgraduates, admission and grants, student services, human resources, financial stability, governance and administration, institutional effectiveness, cooperation with national and international higher education institutions and compliance with accreditation requirements.

Considering this theoretical framework & Quality Assurance Framework of QAAD including its 11 criteria; the instrument of this study was developed to evaluate and assess the

role and impacts of the strategic planning on the following variables of quality issues: (1) Biographical data, (2) Educational Activities & outcomes, (3) Research Activities, (4) Admission & Student Services, (5) Enhancement of Human Resources, (6) Financial Stability of Institution, (7) Improvement of Governance & Administration, (8) Institutional Effectiveness, (9) Cooperation with National and International HEIs, and (10) compliance with accreditation requirements.

These 10 major topics of the questionnaire included overall 76 questions/ items. A five-point Likert Scale starting from very low to below average, average, above average, and very high was employed and the values were considered from (1) to (5) respectively. All academic and non-academic members of Bamyán University as implementers of the plans and policies were surveyed and overall, 116 questionnaires were distributed.

The SPSS program was used to create a database for descriptive analysis of the collected data. Questionnaire results were entered and analyzed using this instrument and basic descriptive statistics including frequencies, means, and standard deviation were used for the scaled responses.

Reliability and Validity of the Instrument

Reliability and validity have been defined as “felt to be applicable and credible benchmarks by which the quality of all research could be judged” (Straub, 1989, p.523). According to (De Vaus, 2004) validity and reliability could result in measurement error in a situation, whereby the degree of observed variable does not represent the actual data. In this case, all indicators of the instrument used in this study to measure the impacts of strategic planning on the quality issues had content validity, because the current instrument was validated by (two) associate professors who were experts in the field of quality assurance before the implementation of the study. Reliability assesses the degree of internal consistency between multiple measurements of variables, which means that a repeatedly identical result obtained indicates that the measures are stable and consistent (Creswell & Poth, 2016). However, the values of Cronbach’s coefficient can line in the range from 0 to 1.0; the higher value represents more internal consistency among the constructs in a scale or index, while there are no absolute standard cut-off points. Generally, it was reported that alpha value $\alpha \geq 0.90$ is considered excellent, and those value in the range of $0.70 \leq \alpha < 0.90$ is considered good (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011); while those values in the range of $0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.70$ is considered acceptable (Namairage, 2014 and Schmitt, 1996). Alpha greater than 0.60 indicates that the scale is a reliable tool, while those with values between $0.50 \leq \alpha < 0.60$ are considered poor, but those with values less than 0.50 would be unacceptable (Ary et al., 2010).

The **Cronbach’s Alpha** of the data was **0.972** which is at an excellent level and the reliability of all items excluding the demography of the respondents was checked. Overall, 70 items/ questions were included in the reliability check which cover all variables of this study.

Demography of the Respondents

The average age of the respondents of this study was reported to be 33 years old and about 10 percent of the respondents were female respondents including academic female staff and nonacademic female staff. Out of all participants, 79% were academic staff and 21% were administrative or nonacademic staff of Bamyán University. Looking at the educational degree of respondents; the survey reported 50% had master's degrees, 42% had bachelor's degrees and 8% were Ph.D. Degree holders. All 34 disciplines and 7 faculties including administrative workers participated in the study. The majority of 75% of the respondents had experience in

strategic planning in the institution and the remaining 25% had not been involved in strategic planning yet.

Findings of the study

Out of 10 items/ questions which were included in the educational activities and outcomes; the impact of the strategic planning on the improvement of student-centered learning was greater than other items. Table no (1) shows that according to the strategic plan implementers of Bamyan University; the strategic planning exercises have not considerably impacted the manner of fieldwork activities of the students of this university. The overall impact of strategic planning on educational activities and outcomes is considerable and above the average level.

Table no (1): Impact of Strategic Planning on Educational Activities and Outcomes

	Mean	SD
<i>Attention to the Field Work of Students</i>	2.84	1.031
<i>More attention on the Educational Exercises</i>	2.93	.948
<i>Improvement of Assignment Evaluation</i>	3.07	1.045
<i>More focus on the Competitive Examination</i>	3.11	1.064
<i>Changes in Teaching Methodology</i>	3.19	.950
<i>Providing Educational & Research Resources</i>	3.19	1.111
<i>Improvement of Evaluation system</i>	3.24	.891
<i>Improvement of Monograph Mechanism</i>	3.30	1.021
<i>Use of Educational Technology</i>	3.41	1.111
<i>Improvement of SCL</i>	3.46	1.050

As Table no (2) highlights the impact of strategic planning on the research activities is satisfactory and above the average. Bamyan University staff considers that the experiences of strategic planning have positively contributed to the expansion of research culture and exercises. Focusing on the overall 9 items under the category of research activities the study shows that research methodology courses have not increased in the curriculum of the programs as satisfactory and major progress has taken place in the establishment of the research committees.

Table No (2): Impact of Strategic Planning on Research Activities

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>	N	Mean	SD
<i>Increase in Research Methodology Courses</i>	113	2.74	1.084
<i>Increase of Students' Participation in Research</i>	114	2.88	.988
<i>Increase in Research conferences & Seminars</i>	113	3.00	1.094
<i>Focus of Research on Comprehensive Development</i>	112	3.00	1.040
<i>Improving Research Centered Curriculum</i>	113	3.20	1.087
<i>Encourage & Support of Research Publication</i>	114	3.25	1.135
<i>Providing Research Policy & Legislation</i>	112	3.30	1.056
<i>Increase of Instructors' Participation in Research</i>	113	3.42	1.006
<i>Establishment of Research Committee</i>	113	3.61	1.021

Impact of strategic planning on the admission and student services of Bamyang University is shown in the table no (3) including its 11 items of various activities and services. The responses of the participants in this regard overall is somehow below average which is due to direct impacts of limitations of the students' services at Bamyang University. Out of items the lesser rank is allocated to the students' consultancy services and the greater response is regarding students' progression.

Table No (3): Impact of Strategic Planning on Admission & Student Services

Descriptive Statistics	N	Mean	SD
<i>Increase in students' consultancy services</i>	115	2.67	1.168
<i>Contact with employers for improvement of student's skills</i>	112	2.75	1.044
<i>Improvement of evaluation system of students need</i>	114	2.76	1.042
<i>Improvement in students access to the IT services</i>	115	2.78	1.130
<i>Establishment of students' associations and alumni</i>	115	2.83	1.110
<i>Improvement of Library Resources and Management system</i>	114	2.87	1.077
<i>Establishment & enhancement of students database</i>	114	2.89	1.054
<i>Increase in students' admission</i>	113	2.96	1.183
<i>Increase in gender ratio</i>	112	3.17	1.081
<i>Raising awareness of students regarding role of Un in Society</i>	115	3.23	.985
<i>Increase in students' progression</i>	110	3.36	.936

As Table no (4) highlights, overall the process of Human Resource Improvement is not satisfactory and is ranked below average. The table also reminds us that the number of nonacademic staff at Bamyang University is not satisfactory whereas the quality of academic staff is above average and satisfactory.

Table No (4): Impact of Strategic Planning on Improvement of HR

Descriptive Statistics	N	Mean	SD
<i>Quantitative appropriateness of Nonacademic staff</i>	110	2.38	1.125
<i>Quantitative appropriateness of instructors</i>	113	2.63	1.095
<i>Effectiveness & improvement of capacity building programs</i>	113	2.76	1.088
<i>Effectiveness of Human Resource division</i>	111	2.77	1.053
<i>Improvement in functions of Nonacademic staff</i>	114	2.87	.955
<i>Qualitative appropriateness of NA staff</i>	112	2.91	1.045
<i>Improvement in functions of Academic staff</i>	114	3.07	.947
<i>Qualitative appropriateness of instructors</i>	111	3.40	2.015

Among all dependent variables of this study, the stability of financial resources is dissatisfactory for the University staff. This category of questions was ranked very low by the participants of this study. The financial sustainability of this institution has not been satisfactorily impacted by experiences of strategic planning. This might be due to the financial dependency of public higher education institutions on the national-level mechanism of resource allocation (see Table no 5).

Table No (5): Impact of Strategic Planning on Sustainability of Financial Resources

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>	N	Mean	SD
<i>Increase in financial resource & income</i>	113	2.43	1.149
<i>Financial management to support Strategic plan</i>	113	2.43	1.068
<i>Increase in attraction of financial supports</i>	114	2.48	1.138
<i>Providing beneficial & effective financial plans</i>	114	2.57	1.047
<i>Transparency maintenance of financial reports</i>	114	2.83	1.159
<i>Maintenance of effectiveness in financial systems</i>	112	2.84	1.111

The responses to the category of items regarding the administration and management of Bamyán University are at the average level. As Table no (6) shows, all 5 items of this category are ranked somehow near to the average level among them administration capacity is ranked lower and leadership capacity is ranked greater than others.

Table No (6): Impact of Strategic Planning on Administration & Management

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>	N	Mean	SD
<i>Increase of administration capacity</i>	114	2.75	1.077
<i>Establishment of effective administrative structure</i>	116	2.85	1.024
<i>Enhancement of plans of strengthening managerial system</i>	114	2.93	1.103
<i>Improvement of monitoring & evaluation system</i>	115	3.07	1.082
<i>Increase of leadership capacity</i>	116	3.26	1.064

Table no (7) evaluates the impact of strategic planning on increasing organizational effectiveness. This series of questions is also reported to be ranked as average level by participants. With an intra-item comparison this could be found that the participation of academic staff in social development activities is below the average and production, development, and dissemination of professional knowledge is a little above the average in the Bamyán University.

Table No (7): Impact of Strategic Planning on Organizational Effectiveness

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>	N	Mea n	SD
<i>Participation of Academic staff in social development</i>	114	2.97	1.017
<i>Responsiveness of University to the academic & Prof. needs of Society</i>	115	2.97	1.088
<i>Enhancement of University relation with Govt., Society & Industry</i>	114	3.03	1.085
<i>Promotion of freedom of thoughts & academic thought exchange</i>	114	3.04	1.116
<i>Increase in production, development & dissemination of Prof. Knowledge</i>	115	3.16	.996

According to table no (8); the strategic planning at Bamyán University has not satisfactorily contributed to the expansion of intra-institutional cooperation of this University. All 5 questions of this category were ranked below average by respondents of this investigation. There are no meaningful differences between the items of this category found which could be stated.

Table No (8): Impact of Strategic Planning on Cooperation with other Organizations

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>	N	Mean	SD
<i>Providing exchange programs</i>	11	2.52	1.066
<i>Increase in MoUs with International institutions</i>	11	2.58	1.072
<i>Conducting shared research with other institutions</i>	11	2.59	1.075
<i>Providing relevant structures to enhance MoUs</i>	11	2.66	1.059
<i>Increase in MoUs with National institutions</i>	11	2.73	1.118

The major and greatest impact of strategic planning was found to be on quality enhancement and quality assurance activities. As table no (9) shows almost all questions in this category were ranked above average by respondents. However, the improvement of technological infrastructure was reported to be the lowest among all others but the overall 11 items are ranked satisfactory. The establishment of the QA committees is the most tangible activity from the respondents' point of view.

Table No (9): Impact of Strategic Planning on Quality Assurance

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>	N	Mea	SD
<i>Improvement of technologic infrastructure</i>	11	2.84	1.09
	4		4
<i>Improvement of Understanding from strategic planning</i>	11	3.11	.993
	4		
<i>Providing justice policy</i>	11	3.15	1.09
	3		6
<i>Update of curriculum according to market need</i>	11	3.17	1.11
	4		2
<i>Periodic Programme Review</i>	11	3.20	1.01
	3		0
<i>Awareness of stakeholders with code of ethics</i>	11	3.22	.975
	4		
<i>Protection of academic freedom</i>	11	3.44	.987
	4		
<i>Annual Programme Monitoring</i>	11	3.45	1.02
	4		3
<i>Providing and improvement of discipline policies</i>	11	3.51	1.02
	2		2
<i>Improvement of security & safety in university area</i>	11	3.60	1.09
	3		0
<i>Establishment of Quality Assurance & QE Committees</i>	11	3.80	.918
	3		

Table no (10) is a comparison tool to evaluate the impact of strategic planning on the main 9 categories of questions. The major 9 aspects of quality assurance activities are included in this table. According to this table, the values of the majority of these categories or aspects of quality assurance activities are below average level or dissatisfactory. Only the impact of the strategic planning on the quality assurance activities is meaningfully valued by respondents and the rest are either below average or a little above average.

Table No (10): Impact of Strategic Planning on Major Variables

<i>Variables</i>	Mean
<i>Sustainability of Financial Resources</i>	2.5997
<i>Cooperation with other Organizations</i>	2.6139
<i>Improvement of Human Resources</i>	2.8487
<i>Admission and Student Services</i>	2.9320
<i>Administration and Managerial Capabilities</i>	2.9707
<i>Organizational Effectiveness</i>	3.0330
<i>Research Activities</i>	3.1583
<i>Educational Activities and Outcomes</i>	3.1739
<i>Quality Assurance</i>	3.3316

Conclusion

The issues of quality and quality assurance have become the central themes for higher education in many countries of the world. Concerning this worldwide issue; the Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan also established the Quality Assurance & Accreditation Commission in 2009 and established Quality Assurance & Accreditation Directorate (QAAD) in 2011. This body is to administer and oversee the accreditation process in all public and private HEIs of Afghanistan with a strategic outlook to address all aspects of the issue of quality enhancement and quality assurance at the country level. Besides these efforts taken place by the Ministry of Higher Education, there are still many challenges relevant to the quality of educational services to be taken into account. These challenges are particularly at the implementation levels of the policies and ineffectiveness of planning. Ineffective planning and limitations of implementation of the plans have resulted in less qualified higher education services in almost all private and public higher education institutions. Considering the importance of strategic planning in enhancing & assuring the quality of HEIs; this study has been conducted to evaluate the role of strategic planning in the enhancement of major aspects of quality issues. Concerning the challenges at implementation levels of policies and legislation, this study focused more on the implementers' point of view. As a case study, Bamyan University was surveyed and investigated for the study. Considering the topic, all present academic and non-academic members of this university have taken part in the study and have been surveyed. Findings show that the exercise and experiences of institutional strategic planning at Bamyan University overall are not satisfactory and are almost below or average level of satisfaction. After almost one decade of exercises of strategic planning still, the culture of quality has not improved or enhanced among all academic and nonacademic staff of this University. These exercises have not been able to bring considerable signs of progress and changes to the quality of educational activities and services. However, the enhancement of quality-relevant structures is considerable and realizable but the changes in the overall culture of quality and manners of quality are not tangible and acceptable yet. Since educational services are highly dependent on the financial resources of the institution and the majority of the respondents are also concerned about it; this issue has aroused significant the implementation of policies, plans, and legislations. This study also shows that strategic planning and strategic outlook for bringing quality culture to higher education institutions are still facing challenges that need to be taken into account.

Recommendations

Considering the findings of this study the following recommendations need to be taken into account:

1. Similar studies are required to be undertaken by other public and private higher education institutions to evaluate the impacts of the quality relevant efforts on the enhancement of their institutional qualification.
2. Bamyan University is required to review its policies, legislations, and implementation mechanisms to find out the exact challenges at the implementation level.
3. Bamyan University requires training relevant to quality assurance and provides further training opportunities to the academic and non-academic staff of the institution.
4. Bamyan University is required to reevaluate its financial systems, activities, and resources to strengthen its financial capabilities to tackle the upcoming challenges.
5. Bamyan University requires to rethink and redefine its structures and legislations relevant to building linkages and cooperation with other national and international institutions.

6. The Ministry of Higher Education particularly QAAD also requires strengthening the monitoring and evaluation system of qualification processes. 7. The Ministry of Higher Education is required to review the legislation and mechanisms of allocation of financial resources and other national-level supports.

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