

To identify the Challenges of Quality Management at Secondary School Level in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Quality education is a vision of every nation in the 21st century. The study aimed to identify the Challenges of Quality Management at secondary level in Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), Pakistan. The focus of the study was on quality management considering leadership, process management, performance, resource management and improvement. This research is a struggle in secondary education after announcing and planning the educational policy 2023-40 of AJ&K State. The questionnaire was developed for data collection from students regarding quality of learners, teachers, learning environments, content, process and evaluation. Supervisors, educational and language experts had validated the instrument and the reliability was tested through SPSS. The study focused on more than 900 public secondary schools in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K). A stratified random sampling technique was used to select four districts, followed by a random sampling technique to select the secondary schools. Data were collected from 1,385 students through a survey questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, to address the research objective.

Keywords: Challenges, Quality, Quality Management, Quality Education, Secondary Level.

BACKGROUND

Quality dimensions have remained a challenge whether at the local, regional, national or international level for several years. National Education Policy (2009) suggests reforms in different areas to improve the quality of education i.e. teachers, curriculum, textbooks, assessments, the learning environment and relevance of education to practical life. AJ&K Education Policy 2023-2040 vision is Quality Education institutions in public sectors. Policy makers intend to introduce some innovative programs for mobilizing additional resources.

Education produces good citizens who are aware of rights and responsibilities (Sharma, Ankit , & Ambedkar, 2023). Quality education may improve through threats, competition, or rewards but true attachment to learning requires quality experience that nurtures independent learners (Tribus, Inc., & CA, 1993). Quality is the extent to which an object's intrinsic qualities meet criteria, demands or expectations that are explicit or required (ISO 9000, 2015). According to UNICEF (2000), definitions of the quality of education should be flexible and evolving understandings of the nature of educational difficulties.

The management of technological and scientific resources appears as a challenging task (Amanullah, 2016). QM is the efficient use of material, human, financial, informational, and technical resources to achieve predetermined goals (Girmanova, Solc, Blasko, & Petrik, 2022). According to Crosby, QM is a means of guaranteeing that planned operations are carried out as intended. Quality management must be seen as an ongoing assessment of both teaching and student understanding (Khan, 2010). QM includes; process management, continuous improvement, stakeholder participation, leadership and dedication, and a quality-oriented culture (Tariq et al., 2020).

Educational materials and approaches must be created to meet students' learning requirements & life's difficulties (National Education Policy , 2017). According to Henery Fayal. "Management is the use of people to accomplish goals" (Sultana, 2014).

Pakistan has two categories of secondary education; matriculation, which includes classes 9 and 10, and intermediate education, which includes classes 11 and 12, respectively (Qurat-ul-ain, Liaqut, Zai, & Shaheen, 2022). It is crucial for providing a bridge from elementary to higher education, preparing students for the trained workforce (National Education Policy 2917-25, 2017). Challenges are obstacles or difficulties to test our resilience, adaptability, and problem-solving skills that require effort to overcome. Pakistan is a country that has many challenges in different sector but most of them are linked with education (Mushtaq & Kayani , 2013). Rationale of the Study is that with high literacy rate the focus of the policymakers has always been on the quantity & literacy of education and not the quality.

Statement of the Problem

This research was conducted to identify the challenges of quality management system at Secondary School Level in AJ&K, Pakistan. Secondary education is hampered by several challenges in establishing quality education including the need to maintain uniformity across diverse institutions while striking a balance between standardization and individualization. There is a need (Shahzad, 2021) to bring drastic changes within the secondary school. Achieving uniform quality across secondary-level schools proves challenging due to variations in resources, teacher qualifications, student demographics, flawed assessment techniques and poor resource distribution.

Significance of the Study

Theoretically the study was integrated ISO 9004-18 which provides guidelines and guidance for institutions to achieve sustained success in a demanding and ever-changing environment, with reference to the Juran trilogy and quality management principles (ISO 9000:2015), can provide a unifying basis for an organization's values.

Empirically it was an evidence regarding ISO-9004:2018 to understand the challenges of quality Management in education. In this era of globalization conceptual framework provided a comprehensive, structured and integrated approach contributed to academic knowledge & healthy relationship between stakeholders & practitioners. Important for policy makers, researchers, elementary and secondary department, administrators and institutional heads in ensuring quality education in secondary-level education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Quality Management (QM) contributes to understanding the challenge of Quality Management, increasingly gained attention in the field of education as a systematic approach and process to improving institutional performance, teaching practices, practitioners strategies, and student learning outcomes.

Despite the growing recognition of QM in education, the state Azad Jammu and Kashmir face significant challenges in its implementation. These challenges may include limited resources, insufficient professional training for teachers, weak policy implementation, inadequate monitoring mechanisms, lack of institutional support. Education system continues to face structural, administrative, and resource-related challenges. Quality management became international concern with the expansion of technological advances specially advancements in the field of communication. The world became a global village and resultantly people became aware of the problems, issues, challenges and trends of other societies.

Quality management process

In Islam, the Holy Quran encourages & emphasizes the pursuit of knowledge; 'Read in the name of your Lord who created' (Surah Al-Alaq 96:1–5) and promotes continuous improvement through the prayer 'My Lord, increase me in knowledge' (Surah Taha 20:114), which aligns with the objectives of SDG-4 and the principles of Quality Management in education. According to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): "Knowledge seeking is mandatory on all Muslim." (Jabeen, Kayani, & Yousuf, 2022). Education Policy (2017) lays a great stress on the quality of education through better teachers, reformed curriculum, standard learning environment, better learning achievements and matching with the labor market. Students play very crucial role in the context and may make the educational institutions centers of excellence.

Quality management

(Sadiq, 2021) Mishra (2007) says that the term Quality has its etymology in Latin word *qualis* that mean "what kind of." Harvey, Green and Sadiq (2021) stated five fundamentals, techniques about quality in education; excellence in performance or good quality Education, flaws & consistency, fitness to the purpose, payback value and contribution of education in improving the self-esteem.

The following quality indicators of QMS were found in the literature by Saeed (2003): Self-Evaluation and Development, Information, Comparison, The role and context of the school, The process of teaching and learning and Personal Development and Growth. According to Tariq et al., (2020), an effective QMS includes elements such as leadership and commitment, stakeholder engagement, process management, continuous improvement and culture of quality.

The term "management" describes a methodical approach to using human, financial, material, informational, and technical resources in an efficient way to accomplish predetermined goals, decisions on altering or continuing certain organizational tasks. (girmanova, solc, blasko, & petric, 2022). According to Ho, Fung, Sallis (2002) the success stories of quality management in the field of business forced educationists to draw considerable attention to the system of quality management and its application in the field of education. Quality management approach involves not only quality in management but influences on all sectors of educational process: organization, management, human and physical resources, interpersonal relations etc. Mehrotra (2005) and Bonsingl (2004) believe that quality management can be the very salient system for education. Henri Fayol enumerates five responsibilities or elements of QM; organizing, command, coordination, control, and planning. Top management should routinely monitor, analyses, evaluate, and review the organization's context (International Journal ISO 9004:2018).

Main Practices of management are exams and competitions, stakeholders' or community participation, characteristics of the school population, school results or outcomes, elements that help students to succeed, what works well and what does not work well, pathways, well-being, obstacles to

implementation, identify risks and improvement.

Rao as quoted by Ammanullah 2016 defined quality assurance is a means of confirmation by an institution to itself and to other that conditions and standards set by the institution are met and achieved. Dr Faridullah, (2010) thus the terms of quality control, quality assurance and quality enhancement are in vogue today. Ayaz & Sharjeel (2020) the well-known External Quality Assurance System (EFQM) model is a tool for evaluating an organization's function. Professor Edward Deming philosophy of management revolves round four basic steps: plan, do study and act (PDSA). Joseph M. Juran stresses on the quality of all levels with zero deficits. Juran's focus is on three levels quality: quality planning, quality control and quality improvement. Philip B. Crosby was accepted as a quality guru from his masterpiece book "Quality is Free". All of the QM advocate for planning, processing, producing in one hand, and on the other hand there is a stress on providing quality leadership.

The main focus of this award **Malcolm Baldrige Quality Management Model** in USA, is to promote high-performance management practices. Document ISO-9004-2018 offers guidelines, with reference to the QM concepts outlined in ISO 9000:2015 along with principles as a set of fundamental norms for an organisation. Pakistan's Minimal Standards or Yardsticks, Specifications are Input Criteria, Process Standards and Outcome Standards, for high-quality education. SDG-4 highlights the need to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (UNESCO and Educatio , 2017).

Quality Education in Global Perspective

United Nations Children's Fund defines dimensions of quality in education; Quality Learner, Quality Learning Environments, Quality Content, Quality Process, Quality Outcomes. Quality refers to the best performance of pupils or high standards of attainment in different school subjects that is acceptable to the market and other stakeholders in education.

Secondary Education in AJ&K

Pakistan now a day is taking secondary education very serious and following the international concern, compulsory free education is being provided at secondary level. In AJ&K Secondary Education consists of 9 to 12 classes. The age group in AJ&K is 13 to 16+ years, which includes Secondary (9-10 grades) 13-14 + year age and Higher Secondary (11-12 grades) 15-16 + year age group. Ammanullah (2016) stated Secondary Education serves two key functions: supplies the tertiary system with input and supplies skilled labour. Educational development is joint effort of AJK Government (AJ&K Education Policy 2023 - 2040).

In October 1947 the State Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJ&K) was freed from India. It is now split into three divisions (Muzaffarabad, Poonch, and Mirpur), along with 10 administrative districts and 32 subdivisions. There were 746 High Schools, 103 Higher Secondary Schools, 93 Intermediate Colleges compare to 06 High Schools, and 01 Intermediate College in 1947 (Statistical Year Book, 2021). The 18th amendment in Pakistan redefines provincial government's role in quality of education (AJ&K Education Policy 2021-30, 2021).

Challenges and Problem of Quality Education

Chachar, Ullah & Ujjan (2023), identifies various barriers to education access, including limited infrastructure, insufficient funding, low teacher qualifications, gender disparities, and socio-cultural influences. Additionally, it highlights obstacles to educational quality such as unqualified teachers,

outdated curriculum, inadequate teaching materials, and a weak monitoring system. Education can play a vital role in the eradication of poverty, extremism and the other challenges that are the threats to our country's development, sovereignty integrity and sustainability. By promoting Quality Education, all the challenges can be encountered (Qamar Z. A., 2017).

Qamar & Rashid, Augus (2020), quality education in schools faces several obstacles, ranging from curriculum development to teacher preparation. The Pakistani government has made several actions to address these issues and clarify that education is essential to a country's prosperity. Kennedy (2010) suggests that there shouldn't be a strong emphasis on teaching quality at the expense of teacher quality. Guga and **Mugenyi** (2022) stated that lack of in - service training, poor infrastructure, in adequate resources such as inadequate quality teachers and finances, non - involvement of stakeholders in school activities were identified key challenges that hinder QM of schools.

Suleman, Pakhtunkhwa, Gul, Guga and Mugenyi (2022) study findings showed that; ineffective leadership, lack of findings and research resources, insubordination of work force, lack of management commitment, poor and ineffective planning, political interference, poor teachers' status and morale were the major challenges (Zahoor & Shahzadi, 2026). Due to weak execution mechanisms well-designed policies fail to produce desired results, consequently, become a challenge for Practitioners (Guga & Mugenyi, 2022).

Challenges of Quality Education in Pakistan

Aamir Ayaz (2018) and Shah (2010) states that as Pakistan remained a colony of British Empire, therefore, the roots of British legacy still persist that focus on to prepare individuals for public services and to further promote the elite class. This phenomenon has created a hurdle to transform the education to play its due role in the development of country's economy.

Hussain, Nadeem (2020) stated that many forums in Pakistan criticise school education, saying that it is of poor quality. There is a serious mismatch between the jobs demanded by the emerging needs of the economy and the supply of skills and trained manpower in the country which has created waste and misallocation of resources on one hand and shortages of essential skills on the other hand. Less qualified leadership, lacking school supervision and ineffective internal assessment are some of those. Student focused classroom observation is rare. Educational planning in Pakistan lacks alignment with needs, and implementation is consistently neglected, resulting in a deteriorating system.

Challenges Related to Qm in Secondary Education in AJ&K

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (E&SE) headed by a secretary is the key organ in AJ&K, and responsible for all the matters related to planning and management of secondary education.

Scattered Management System

Currently, in AJ&K the management of secondary education is dispersed and comes under two departments, four directorates and many divisional and district offices. This scattered management causes many hurdles in equal provision of resources, implementation of policies, management of human resource and especially monitoring & supervision.

Ineffective assessment Practices

Assessment at secondary level is very ineffective. Summative assessment is totally textbooks based. The

internal exams are just a formality. Updated Internal exams record is very rare in schools.

Low Students' Attainment & Quality Concerns

The low attainment level of students in academics and low standard in quality education are the two dark holes in economic development.

Weak Monitoring, Supervision & Policies Implementation Gap

Monitoring, supervision and the most affected areas are quality of education, educational governance, guidance, curriculum, textbooks development, IT education, use of ICT for promotion of education. Majority of Management is insensitive about supervision policy & procedures, purposeful school visits reports, feedback on HTs/teachers' performance, follow-up of previous directions, recommendation to senior management. In E&SE department a supervision policy exists but not fully implemented (AJ&K Education Policy 2021-30, 2021).

Limited Curriculum Dissemination

There is no regular mechanism of curriculum dissemination to different stakeholders. In schools, mostly stakeholders are not aware about curriculum booklets/ guidelines. Textbooks are treated as curriculum Bible; no one thinks beyond textbooks. Therefore, SLO based teaching and learning is missing.

Dispersed Secondary and Higher Secondary Education

Currently, secondary education is delivered in different institutions and under different administrative units. HS & HSS are under School education department but under male and female directorates, Inter Colleges and Degree Colleges are under Higher education department. Whereas Private Sector Institution and Madrassas are not supervised by any external body. In AJ&K, High and Higher Secondary Schools are offering pre-primary, primary and middle level education along with Secondary and Higher Secondary Education. Some inter colleges & degree colleges are also offering different levels of educations along with secondary and higher secondary education.

In-active Educational Leadership

Schools leaders do not have any school management training. It is commonly observed that leadership of HS and HSS is laissez-faire They are mainly interested in office holding.

Absence of Career Counseling at Secondary Level

Students select such a field of study upon the wish of their parents which may be contrary to their aptitude. Consequently, they are unable to perform as required. Similarly, on paper education manager is responsible for educational supervision and monitoring, educational planning and development, financial management, community involvement, HR management and professional development of teachers. But in practice, managers pay their attention towards some aspects of HR management only (AJ&K Education Policy 2021-30, 2021).

Inadequate Funding

Financial problems include inadequate funding in relation to the demands and specifications for secondary school universalisation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design of the study is quantitative in nature, aimed to identify the challenges of quality management at secondary school level in AJ&K. A descriptive survey design was considered more appropriate to gather perception of respondents from a large sample size group. The design enabled the researcher to collect and analyze data. The methodology was structured to ensure objectivity, reliability, and generalizability of findings across the selected districts of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Population & Sample of the Study

The population included all public secondary schools (900+) of State Azad Jammu & Kashmir along with students of 9th & 10th classes both male & female. Stratified random sampling technique was used. Simple random sampling technique was used for four districts selection; Public secondary schools were selected followed by students.

Data Collection Methods

By survey data was gathered on challenges of quality management in education. Data was collected both by postage and personal visits of respective secondary schools.

Instrument of the Study

The questionnaire was developed by the researcher to collect data from secondary schools' students on various challenges of Quality Management. It included key dimensions of management; leadership, process and resource management, performance, improvement learning and innovation. The demographic information of the respondents (such as age, gender, district of school education) was included in the first section of the questionnaire. A five-point Likert scale was used to get respondents' opinions.

Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted on a group of students from district Poonch of AJ&K. The respondents were not the part for the main study. The purpose was to confirm the clarity, reliability and feasibility of the questionnaire before final data collection.

Validity And Reliability

Validity is the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure. (L.R.Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). Researcher ensured face, content and construct validity to measure the specific aspects of quality management interested in, and they were appropriated for the population being studied. The internal consistency was measured by using SPSS software (version 23) and the Chronach's Alpha reliability coefficient was 0.833, indicating a good level of internal consistency (L.R.Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012).

The reliability of the research instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha through SPSS (Version 23). The overall reliability coefficient was found to be **0.833**, indicating a good level of internal consistency among the items (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012).

For reliability

5DATA COLLECTION/FINDINGS/DISCUSSION

The data were collected, coded, cleaned, analyzed, interpreted, and discussed.

Table 01: Frequency and percentage of items of subscale challenge of quality management

CHQM	Never		Rarely		Most of the time		Frequently		Always	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Ch1LPI1	109	7.9	69	5.0	327	23.6	143	10.3	737	53.2
Ch1LPI2	109	7.9	102	7.4	233	16.8	262	18.9	679	49.0
Ch2PD3	39	2.8	41	3.0	226	16.3	142	10.3	937	67.7
Ch2PD4	83	6.0	68	4.9	232	16.8	252	18.2	750	54.2
Ch2PD5	325	23.5	150	10.8	258	18.6	268	19.4	384	27.7
Ch3OC6	177	12.8	128	9.2	323	23.3	288	20.8	469	33.9
Ch3OC7	383	27.7	221	16.0	269	19.4	242	17.5	270	19.5
Ch3OC8	391	28.2	159	11.5	359	25.9	166	12.0	310	22.4
Ch4LR9	428	30.9	116	8.4	191	13.8	248	17.9	402	29.0
Ch4LR10	175	12.6	125	9.0	335	24.2	157	11.3	593	42.8
Ch4LR11	646	46.6	164	11.8	215	15.5	209	15.1	151	10.9
Ch5PAE12	137	9.9	68	4.9	391	28.2	250	18.1	539	38.9
Ch5PAE13	127	9.2	59	4.3	298	21.5	266	19.2	635	45.8

Table 02: Mean, standard Deviation and Variance of subscale challenge of quality management

S. No.	Challenge of quality management	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	N
1	The school is well-organized and managed.	3.96	1.294	1.675	1385
2	The school follows clear rules and regulations to ensure quality education.	3.94	1.288	1.659	1385
3	Teachers come to class well in time.	4.37	1.037	1.076	1385
4	Teachers explain topics & ideas clearly.	4.10	1.199	1.437	1385
5	There is insufficient supporting staff.	3.17	1.524	2.322	1385
6	Syllabus taught is according to the desires of the society.	3.54	1.371	1.879	1385
7	The current curriculum disables the students to brighten their future.	2.85	1.483	2.200	1385
8	The curriculum may not be based on interest of students.	2.89	1.499	2.248	1385
9	There is lack of classrooms and proper furniture.	3.06	1.630	2.659	1385
10	The school is clean, safe, and well-maintained.	3.63	1.425	2.030	1385
11	Audio - Video aids are used during teaching.	2.32	1.452	2.107	1385
12	Progress is regularly checked and monitored by coordinators.	3.71	1.295	1.676	1385
13	Assignment, quiz and test reflect what students have learned in class.	3.88	1.287	1.657	1385

FINDINGS

The table 4.1 indicates the frequency and percentages distribution of responses of students to the items measuring challenges of Quality Management in education. Responses were predominantly clustered within the “Most of the Time” and “Always” categories, suggesting that students frequently encountered Quality Management- related Challenges in their schools. Ch2PD3 received the strongest endorsement in the category “Always” with 937 (67.7 %) respondents, followed by Ch2PD4 with 750 (54.2 %), Ch1LPI1 with 737 (53.2 %), and Ch1LPI2 with 679 (49.2 %) respondents. The highest proportion of responses in the “Always” category indicates that these aspects were perceived as the prominent Quality Management Challenges. Ch5PAE12 with 391 (28.2 %), followed by Ch3OC8 with 359 (25.9 %) and Ch4LR10 with 335 (24.2 %) respondents in the “Most of the Time” category reflects the considerable recurring nature of Challenges across multiple dimensions of Quality Management. Several items attracted higher responses in the “Never” category, **including** Ch4LR11 with 646 (46.6%), Ch4LR9 with 428 (30.9%), Ch3OC8 with 391 (28.2%), and Ch3OC7 with 383 (27.7%). This variation suggests that respondents did not perceive all indicators of challenges uniformly.

Table 4.2 presents the mean, standard deviation and variance of items measuring Challenges of Quality Management among students. The mean values ranged from 2.32 to 4.37, indicating variation in perceptions of students regarding different dimensions of Challenges of Quality Management. The highest mean score ($M = 4.37$) was recorded for the item “Teachers come to class well in time” followed by ($M = 4.10$) for the item “Teachers explain topics and ideas clearly”, and ($M = 3.96$) for the item “School is well organized”. These findings show that students expressed agreement regarding teachers’ punctuality, instructional clarity, and overall school organization.

The lowest mean value ($M = 2.32$) was recorded for the item “Audio-video aids are used during teaching”, followed by “The current curriculum does not enable students to brighten their future” ($M = 2.85$), and “The curriculum may not be based on students’ interests” ($M = 2.89$). These findings indicate weaker agreement and greater uncertainty among students regarding the availability of instructional technology and curriculum relevance. The highest standard deviation ($SD = 1.630$) was recorded for the item “There is a lack of classrooms and proper furniture”, suggesting considerable differences in students’ perceptions regarding the adequacy of physical facilities. The findings highlight that while teaching-related aspects such as punctuality and clarity are viewed positively, challenges remain in the areas of instructional resources, curriculum relevance, and physical infrastructure.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study reveal that students frequently experience a range of Quality Management (QM) related challenges in secondary schools. The response pattern, with a dominant concentration in the “Most of the Time” and “Always” categories, indicates that these challenges are persistent and recurring within the school environment and not occasional in nature. The high proportion of responses in the “Always” category for indicators suggests that certain QM-related issues are deeply embedded in the schooling system. This reflects that students consistently encounter structural and operational deficiencies that may affect the effective delivery of quality education. Such challenges may hinder the smooth functioning of key educational processes, ultimately outcomes.

At the same time, the presence of a considerable proportion of responses in the “Most of the Time” category highlights that many challenges are frequent but not uniformly experienced across all contexts. The variation patterns suggest differences in frequencies due to different school context. The presence of notable responses in the “Never” category for certain indicators reveals that not all students perceive all challenges equally. This variation suggests contextual diversity among schools, where some institutions

may be performing better in specific areas of quality management than others. Quality Management challenges are multidimensional and unevenly distributed across the education system. The findings align with the broader understanding that quality in education is influenced by multiple interconnected factors, including institutional practices, resource availability, and Quality Management.

Chachar et al. (2023), reported that infrastructure limitations, socio-cultural factors, and inefficiencies significantly hinder the quality of secondary education. These challenges highlight the need for systematic and continuous improvement efforts within secondary schools to improve the Quality of education.

The mean values, ranging from 2.32 to 4.37, indicate that students do not perceive all dimensions of QM in the same way, reflecting both strengths and weaknesses within the schooling system of the State. The relatively high mean scores for items related to teachers' punctuality, clarity in instruction, and overall school organization suggest that students generally hold positive views about the instructional behavior of teachers and basic administrative functioning of schools. Some essential elements of classroom management and teaching delivery are being implemented effectively, which contributes positively to the learning environment. The lowest mean values for items related to the use of audio-visual aids and curriculum relevance indicate areas of concern. Students appear less satisfied with the integration of modern instructional technology in teaching practices, which may limit opportunities for interactive and engaging learning experiences.

Perceptions regarding curriculum relevance suggest that students may not fully see a strong connection between what is being taught and their future academic or career needs. Memon (2007) emphasized that the quality of education is shaped by teacher effectiveness, curriculum relevance, and institutional management practices, and that weaknesses in these areas collectively undermine learning outcomes.

These aspects point toward gaps in instructional innovation and curriculum alignment with learners' expectations. Suleman (2015), reported that inadequate infrastructure, weak curriculum relevance, limited instructional resources, and poor stakeholder involvement hinder the implementation of Quality Management in public secondary schools.

The high standard deviation observed for the item related to classroom availability and furniture highlights significant differences in students' experiences across schools. This variation suggests that infrastructure quality is not uniform and may depend on contextual factors. Such disparities can lead to unequal learning conditions, which is a key concern in achieving consistent Quality Management standards across institutions. The findings suggest that while certain aspects of school functioning such as teacher attendance and instructional clarity are relatively strong, other critical components of Quality Management, particularly instructional resources, curriculum relevance, and physical infrastructure require substantial improvement.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that Quality Management challenges are widely prevalent in public secondary schools of state AJ&K. The concentration of responses in the "Most of the Time" and "Always" categories indicates that students regularly face issues that may negatively influence the effectiveness of educational processes. The intensity of these challenges varies across different indicators. QM-related problems are a consistent feature of the school environment. The existence of variation in responses also suggests differences in institutional performance and resource conditions across schools.

Quality Management challenges remain a significant concern at the secondary school level. Addressing these issues requires sustained attention toward improving institutional practices and strategies,

strengthening school resources, and ensuring more consistent implementation of quality standards across all educational settings. Students perceive Quality Management in secondary schools as uneven, with both strengths and areas requiring improvement. Positive perceptions are mainly associated with teacher-related practices and basic school organization, indicating that some foundational aspects of quality education are being maintained effectively. Challenges are evident in the use of instructional technology, curriculum relevance, and availability of adequate physical facilities. There are inconsistencies in resource provision and learning conditions across schools. Certain elements of Quality Management are functioning satisfactorily, significant gaps remain in key areas that are essential for ensuring a modern, student-centered, and equitable educational environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A systematic **monitoring and evaluation mechanism** should be established to assess continuous improvement in secondary schools.
2. Secondary schools should adopt proper management of human and physical resources to ensure smooth implementation of quality management.
3. Educational authorities should develop policy implementation frameworks and support systems to overcome challenges such as lack of resources, limited training opportunities, and weak monitoring mechanisms in school.
4. There should be a regular teacher-parent contact and school should also have contact with other schools for system improvement.
5. There should also be a strong tradition of delivering motivation from different stakeholders and community to school system to make it more and more effective institution.
6. There is a need to cooperation & coordinate practitioners and expert's services for the school to achieve SDG-4 targets and ISO principles.
7. Continuous in-service training should be conducted and additionally participation in seminars, conferences and professional workshops must be made compulsion for teachers.
8. School should equip with instructional technologies and A. V. Aids to enhance students' engagement.

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