

Evaluation of Students' Perception Regarding Educational Environment and Future Prospects

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Abstract

Amid increasingly regional economic competition, accelerating productivity adhere special importance, whereas boosting the quality over quantity of human-capital comprises an important component of productivity and growth. This research tries to identify the two sister universities: Bacha Khan University at Charsadda (BKUC) and Abdul Wali Khan University at Mardan (AWKUM), students' perception regarding educational environment. Structured questionnaire method being followed to quantify both universities' students perception regarding educational, administrative and their response towards job searching. Responses of the students at BKUC were more varied than students at AWKUM. But at structural level, due to the lack of space availability, lack of proper training, number of permanent faculty members, and curriculum design and delivery, students at BKUC are more interested to have libraries, sufficient number of classrooms, permanent faculty members to ease supervisor availability for the purpose to conduct smoothly their academic activities. Whereas, after graduation most of the students hunt for government jobs as compared to other selected areas of work. But due to the development differences of Mardan and Charsadda regions, students at AWKUM prefers to establish their own businesses as compared to BKUC.

Keywords: Regional Economic Growth; Human Capital Development; Education Environment; Students' Perception.

Introduction

Man is always in the continuous process of learning. Every environment has a great influence on the learning process of individuals. A suitable and working environment produces

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productive individuals while bad and unsuitable environment motivate individuals towards deviant and abnormal behaviors. Likewise, an environment with high motivation and facilitation creates highly skilled, motivated and productive individuals while unsuitable learning environment usually fail to produce effective human capital.

Education practice involves changes and dynamic and positive changes in human behavior, as a whole, in the social and economic life of man. Education can also be distinguished as an exercise to acquire knowledge through observation or study, where people acquire learning about the tactics to perform their duties in a good manner and further produce more innovative tactics to save time and earn more. The knowledge-society globally transcended from generation to generation. Learning process of any individual usually starts in an informal family setting. Education practice is further distributed in two types. First, the formal education in public schools, inside the school building, is a child's opportunity to learn basic or academic or professional skills. Second, informal education where a brother or family member teaches the child how to prepare a meal or ride a bicycle. Furthermore, informal learning process in family institution is followed by a formal learning process in the school organization. In the formal learning organizations, universities are at the apex of formal educational institutions in any society which plays a vital role in creating a productive and skilled human resource. If the learning environment in these universities is suitable, the desired objective of productive human resource will be accomplished easily. According to Awan (2011) education means a positive, useful and peaceful long term process of learning to secure knowledge, abilities, potentials and convictions. The learning and knowledge transmitted through debate and discussions. For this purpose, academia must provide a safe educational environment in which students are accepted and share their ideas, (Mann, 2001). Educational institutions have a responsibility to create and promote quality education and satisfactory learning environment, (Kreber, 2003).

In modern times, quality education and sustainability in the learning environment are emerging issues that are rapidly spreading within educational institutions. The results of this research will try to show that the educational environment is very important for each student. Each educational institution should focus on factors that can be linked to a satisfied learning environment as well as to keep this learning environment comfortable in the future. Regard satisfied educational environment, educational institutions can consider providing better standards for explicit services and improving the quality of learning. It is essential for

educational institutions to monitor the educational environment they provide regularly and to make positive changes and changes in the current and available environment (Mirza, 2012).

Two important and fundamental elements of the learning environment are tangible and intangible components. The physical component consists of all physical aspects, such as classrooms, educational materials and educational facilities, inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, it also includes library services, entertainment, accommodation, transport and playground while non-tangible component includes the communication between students and faculty. Besides, responsiveness, participation, timely feedback, employability and flexibility are also the necessary dimensions of the non-tangibility aspect of the educational environment. Both components complement each other to create and define the learning environment and influence the learning process in which they occur, (Fraser, 1994; Kilgour, 2006).

The upcoming sections are organized as follow. Section 2 give a brief list of literature review while Section 3 highlights the methodology of the study that how questionnaire, samples and conceptual framework are designed. Section 4 incorporates the results and discussion where each specified factor is analyzed and observed that how the two universities' students respond to designed questionnaire. Concluding remarks are given in section 4.

Literature Review

The learning environment is the social, mental and academic environment that can affect the learning, achievement and mental state of alternatives. The tangible part of learning has taken an important role in improving the level of universities and is considered a real determinant of student learning. In the context of more competitive educational environment, universities are becoming a rigorous knowledge industry. In order to get superiority and rank, every educational institution has seriously realized student satisfaction. Students are considered clients of advanced learning. Satisfaction of university students is essential for all educational institutions because each institution is able to satisfy students, and thus, this satisfaction also means more potential students to the university. Satisfaction is an emotional response that focuses on specific aspects of acquisition and / or consumption occurring at the precise moment in which the individual assesses the goals, (Giese & Cote, 2000). The term "student satisfaction" can be interpreted in several ways. It depends on the evaluation of the quality of courses, other study activities and other factors related to the university. Moreover, this is a

reaction of the students towards sensitivity, sympathy and assistance available for them within their educational institutions, (Kaldenberg et al., 1998). Satisfaction of students is an evaluative guide and tool on the basis of which an appraisal is made of the educational institution, (Elliot & Healy, 2001). In most of the studies about student's satisfaction the researchers consider students as customers and they face problem of creating standard definition for student's satisfactions. Furthermore, it is very necessary for researchers to create an accurate theory for defining student's satisfaction, (Hom, 2002). Although it's difficult to consider students as customers but in the present educational market of higher education it's the new moral right that students are customers because students are paying fee and have reasonable demands about their studies (William, 2002).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) aims to accelerate national economies and make appropriate efforts to improve a unified educational environment by providing equal opportunities for men and women. Therefore, developing countries such as Pakistan have intended at fostering education development at every level by including both genders: trying to reduce the education gap and provoking the masses to get education equally, as a top social and economic priority. For achieving excellence in education, government is opening new universities across the country, as evident from the establishment of the Higher Education Commission (HEC). HEC is specially monitoring existing universities and favouring establishment of the new universities.

In this study few aspects were selected as determinants of educational environment in the selected universities. These include Academic, Non-academic, Tangibility, Accessibility, Design Delivery and Assessment. The operational definitions of these aspects are given below.

Academic aspects are purely relevant to the teaching and learning process, which includes teacher experience, teacher communication skills, adequate consultation, periodic feedback to students and the ability to outsource faculty members associated with the responsibilities of academics. Academic workshops and library books are also included in the academic aspects of the educational environment (Firdaus, 2005). Non-academic aspects refer to aspects that relate to the tasks performed by non-academic's staff (Firdaus, 2005). This includes when students face difficulties, administrative staff shows the sincerity to resolve them, administrative offices maintain accurate records of students, staff treat students equally and administrators have good knowledge of the systems.

Design, delivery, and evaluation include the design of the course or curriculum, the teaching methodology, assessment procedures, and assessment system for students (Afjal et al., 2009).

This aspect consists of course design, and the design of the course is covered in the period specified for the semester; all students in the class are given an opportunity to participate.

Accessibility refers to the approachability and ease of communication between academic and non-academic aspects (Firdaus, 2005). In addition, supervisors have a reasonable number of research students under their supervision, supervising large numbers of research students through the quality of the impact research supervisor. The smaller classroom size helps students understand better, teachers are never busy responding to my request for help and staff makes sure they communicate with them easily.

Tangible is the state of facilitating good, physical condition of the buildings and the environment, appearance of physical facilities, tools and equipment (Kayastha, 2011). In selected items of the study, tangibility factor includes those aspects which are physical and touchable such as, laboratory equipment, classroom space, appearance of physical classroom, lighting in the classrooms, facilitating good, physical condition of the university buildings, playground, drinking water and sanitation facilities tools and equipment used in library and laboratory.

Methodology

The present study focuses on the students' contribution to local economy amidst to their learning satisfaction. For this purpose, this study has utilized two different kinds of analyses techniques, first students' response to the education environment provided by the concern institution and second, students' contribution to the local economic development. As evident from the first case the study is descriptive in nature and will use techniques of graphical representation to elaborate the study usefulness, while the latter will elaborate economic utilization of educated personals, after acquiring degrees.

Current study will dig out the basic information that is contributing to the economic satisfaction and perception of students in an educational environment. Both theoretical as well as empirical data related to the topic will be reviewed in order to give conceptual clarity of the study. Dependent variable and independent variables of the study will be identified under the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. Keeping in views the nature of the study and getting rich information from the targeted communities, the researcher will

conduct the study under the techniques of Regional Economics and Spatial Economics (triangulation of methods). Sample size will be determined out of the total male and female students of the targeted universities by using Sekran Table. A pretested interview schedule will be used for collection of the data. The collected data will be analysed through STATA and Eviews programs by using analytical techniques. And after completion of the research process, the study will be properly interpreted and documented and the basic findings and policy recommendations will be submitted to the quarter concerned for bringing improvement.

BKUC Charsadda and AWKUM at Mardan are newly established universities. Although, all of the newly established universities are facing many problems in one way or the other in terms of improving their ranking. In this regard BKUC which became the direct victim of terrorism and the Murder of late. Mashal Khan at AWKUM, proved very crucial and hard time for both universities, respectively. Where AWKUM is comparatively matured university than BKUC and took short time to recover their academic calendar, while BKUC which is also at the central point and at a little distance from comparatively senior universities on both sides i.e. AWKUM on the East and University of Peshawar on the West, is facing assorted problems not only from the standpoint of its development but also in perception shaping of students about the educational environment of the university.

Therefore, in such a competitive environment among the universities, where student is the market representative and recognition of the university, the perception of student about the educational environment and their share to the regional economic market are significantly important. The present study tries to evaluate the stimulus provided by BKUC and AWKUM to the local economies and the perception of students of BKUC and AWKUM from the standpoint of academic as well as present and future economic beneficence.

This research will try, first, to dig out the basic information that is contributing to the economic satisfaction of education. Second, to study and analyse the perception of students regarding location of the university and its importance in terms of the local economy. Lastly, and how to accelerate education spill over and circumvent local economic problems.

Population and Sample Size

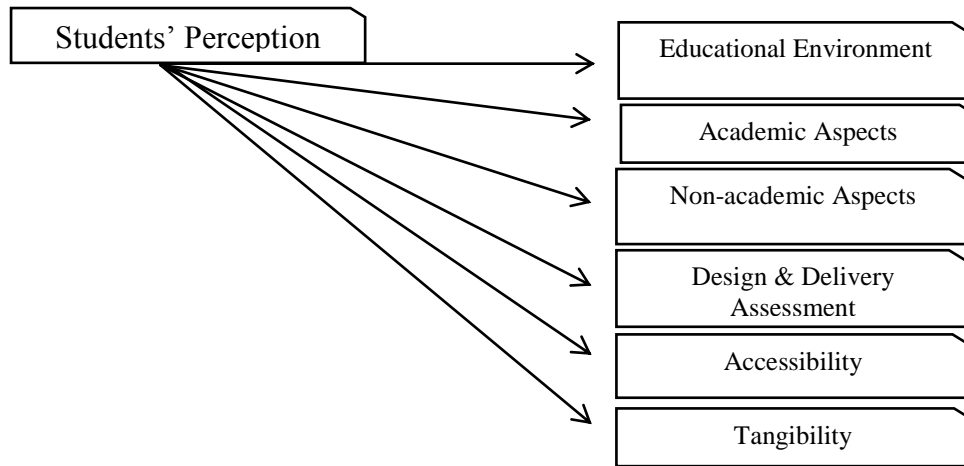
For each research study, the definition of population depends on the background of the research. A search population is defined as a group of individuals or objects with similar characteristics. All individuals within a particular population generally have similar

characteristics or features. The population of this study were students from AWKUM and BKUC. Both university students were taken but due to the large number of MPhil and PhD scholars in both these varsities, it was very difficult to interview all the students, Therefore, a sample size was calculated from the larger population size of the students in these universities.

The sample is a limited part of the numerical population whose properties are designed to obtain materials on the total population. The sample can also be defined as a group of respondents selected from a larger population for the purpose of surveying. Sampling in the research is the process of selecting respondents from a group of specific regions so that by reviewing the sample, we can generalize our results to the group of respondents. Self-satisfaction sample Selection of 217 graduate students (M.Phil. & PhD scholars). The data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Data collection was completed in one month. Data analysis is a procedure to review, cleansing, model and convert data in order to identify useful information, propose conclusions and support decision-making. After assembly, the data was analyzed through SPSS to obtain the result. Demographic information was analyzed by simple repetition and percentage. The correlation analysis of variables (dependent and independent) was applied to the students' perception of the educational environment.

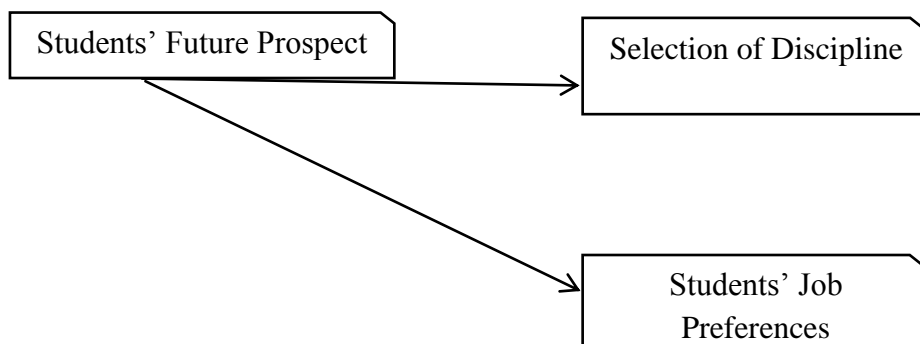
Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study shows the logical interconnectedness among the selected variables. Future prospects of students and their perception towards educational environment were selected as determinants of students' evaluation in terms of both universities. After a thorough review of the relevant literature, few dimensions of the educational environment were selected as our interview questions to deconstruct the abstract and general term of educational environment. Following conceptual framework was designed to practically demonstrate the relationship of our study variables. After a rigorous review of literature, data collection tools were deliberately designed. A structured and closed ended questionnaire was designed to collect data on our selected study variables. The selected sample size of our study consisted upon educated people therefore questionnaire was used as tool of data collection. The questionnaire protocol is consisted on two parts including the basic information of the study participant and the detail set of questions on the study variables.



Questionnaire was framed based on the five point Likert scale 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree. Data was collected from few respondents for pre testing and a reliability test was also performed to test the validity of the tool of data collection. Detail data collection was started from BKUC. An intensive field work was conducted and all the students were accessed during the office hours of the week. Some questionnaires were filled with the help of friends and colleagues in various departments.

Likewise, data was collected in the main campus of AWKUM. Few visits were conducted during the data collection period and all the questionnaires were filled out by the study participants on the spot with the help of selected research assistants (MSc Economics Students). After intensive field work and data collection process, the filled questionnaires were thoroughly checked and few wrongly filed or partially filled cases were eliminated and removed. The questionnaires were properly numbered. All the data was put in to the Microsoft Excel sheet for further processing and properly coded for our understanding.



Data was analyzed with the help of various statistical tools to get the desired results on our objectives. Demographic information was tabulated with the help of frequencies and percentage distribution and put in a single table. While the second part of our questionnaire comprised on the response items related to every study variable was analyzed with the help of mean and standard deviation test to get the cumulative response on each variable.

Results and Discussions

As per the title of the project, present study is related to two different universities at two different locations at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa therefore every table and figure will represent table-details and figures with their title names to clearly elaborate the finding of the study.

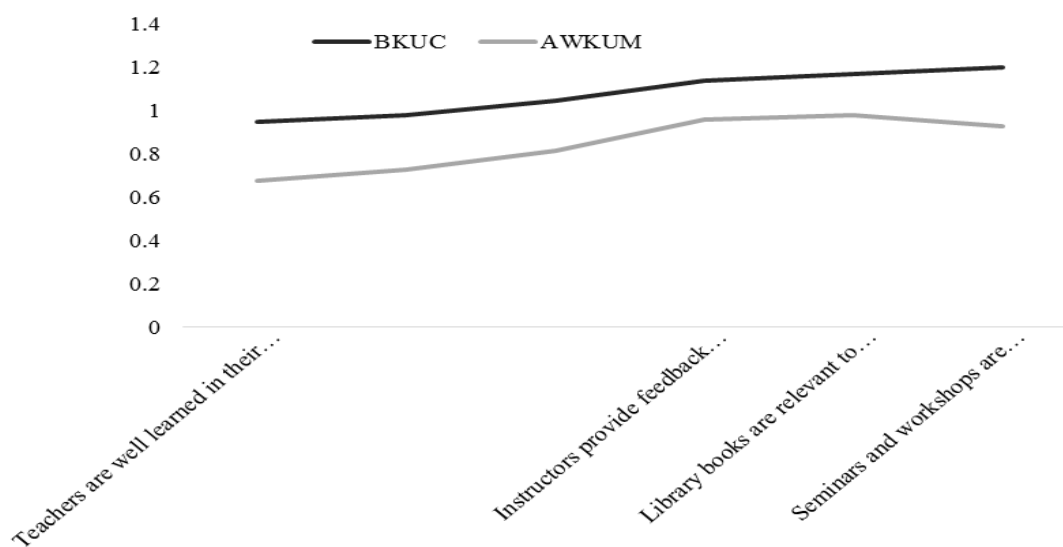
Table 1: Summary Statistics

	BKUC		AWKUM	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Male	76	67.9	48	45.7
Female	36	32.1	57	54.3
Total	112		105	
Age of the Respondent				
19-22	64	57.1	51	48.6
22-25	30	26.8	39	39.1
25-28	18	16.1	15	12.3

Data collected through survey

Table.1 incorporates the summary statistics where data regarding gender respondents and their age lags are divided into categories as mentioned in the previous section. Due to the insufficient number of PhD programs at BKUC, this study has removed the PhD students from its consideration and mainly focus on students enrolled in or graduated from Bachelor and Masters Programs. The questionnaire consists of three parts: first part included questions related to personal information, second part asked academic questions while third part incorporated question related to professional career whether having or not having a job. Most of the students are between 19 to 28 years old, where, on the average, half of them are enrolled in master program or married.

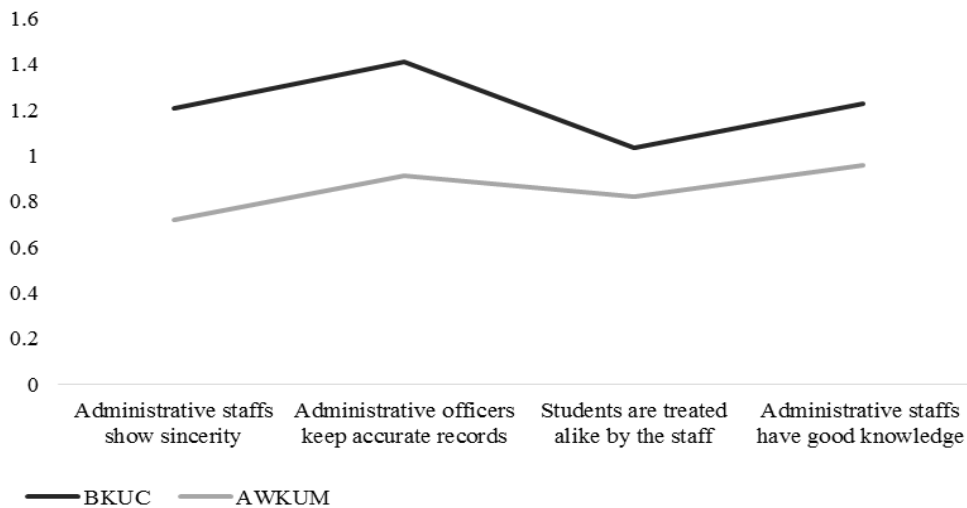
Figure. 1: Variation in academic perceptions



The figure.1 expresses deviation in students' perception regarding selected academic perception. Students of both universities showed different perception where variation in BKUC's students was much higher than AWKUM. Throughout the project deep-dark line represents BKUC and light-grey line will represent AWKUM. From these variations one can conclude that either different departmental facilities varies too much as compared to AWKUM and the institution need to focus on its academic facilities. One thing that was observed during the survey that most of faculties working in BKUC are under FIX-PAY contract system which according to the survey and result is not beneficial whereas AWKUM is comparatively more established institution and ratio of permanent to contract faculty is lower which helps the faculty to focus on students' academics.

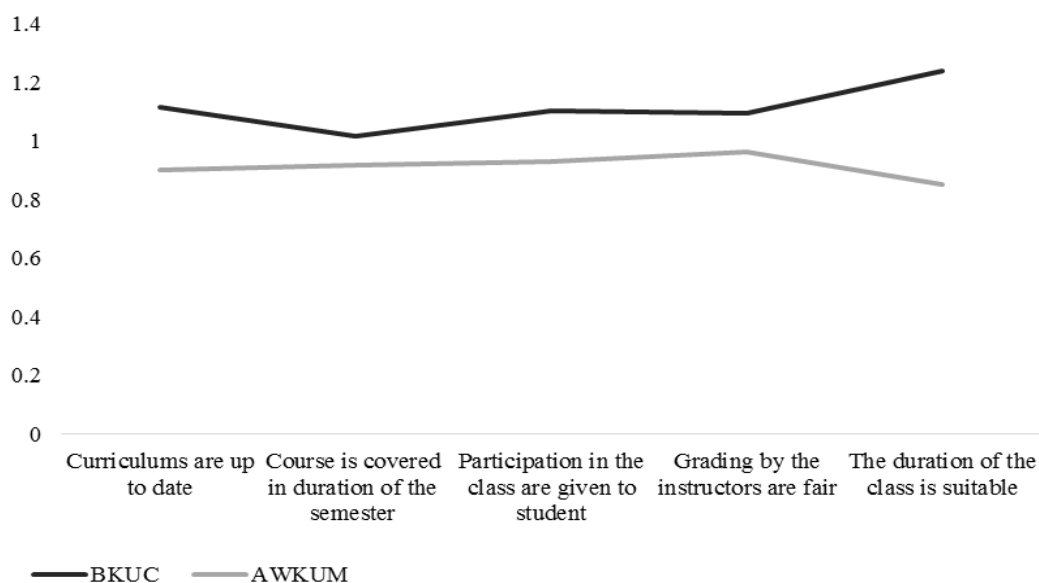
Similarly, communication skills and lecture material provision are also varied due to the time period of particular teacher at specific institution. As compared to AWKUM, presently BKUC has limited space to spare for libraries therefore the variation in number is larger.

Figure 2: Variation in non-academic perceptions



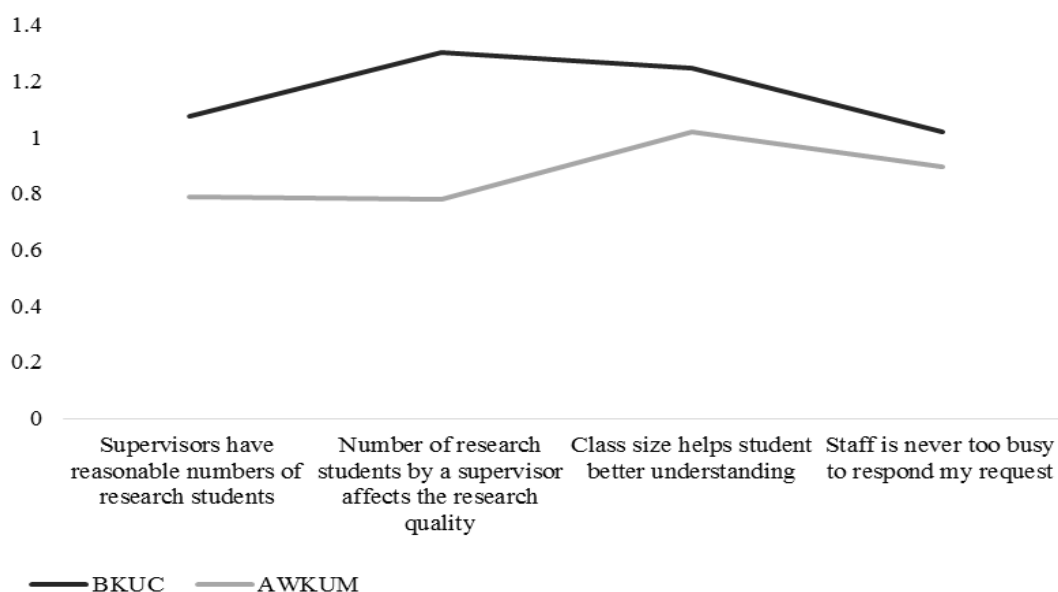
Second, students' response regarding different indicators, as mentioned in figure. 2 are much important in the sense to deal students' non-academic activities. Where, as per survey result, variation in BKUC's students' perception is much varied as compared to AWKUM. As per interviews students declared that most of the administrative staffs are either lacking proper trainings or facing mismanagement of students' record. Record missing problems are due to the duty rotations inside the campus or job-mismatch. Both universities face record missing problems and administrative staff learning problem. Responses received from students of both universities regarding classroom activities are much alike. But variation in curriculum and class duration are much higher as compared to other three indicators.

Figure 3: Variation in design, delivery and assessment perceptions



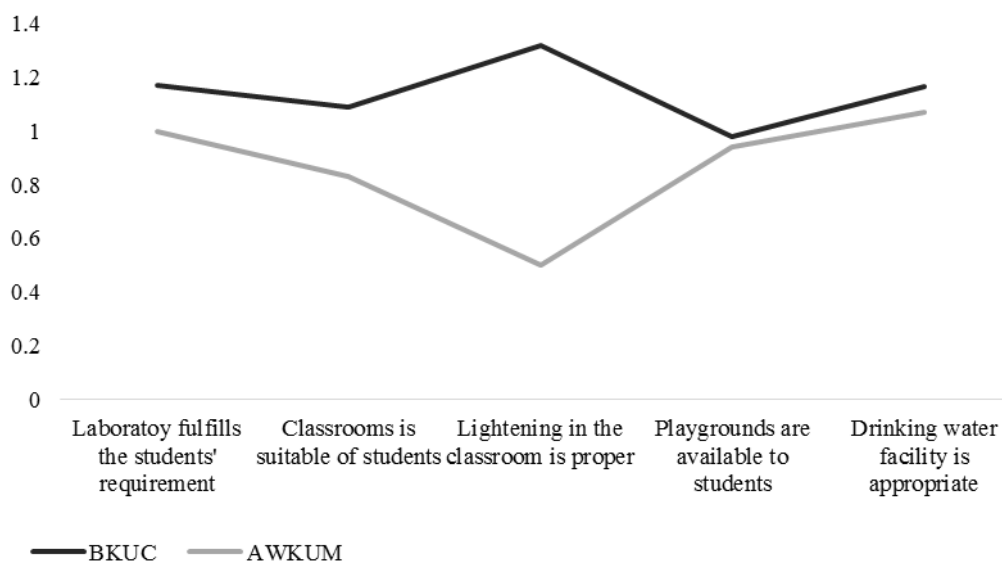
Although, students seems to be satisfied that either the curriculum is outdated or upgraded, faculty of both universities trying their best to accommodate most of the course. But still performance of BKUC fall behind that of AWKUM where students' major complaints are regarding curriculum, opportunity of presentation and class duration. Whereas, AWKUM grading problem which indicates that either teachers follow their own interest or maybe grading formula is not accurate or misused which created such problems. But still AWKUM is best class duration and curriculum maintenance which might be the reason of timely arranging Board of Studies (BoS) meetings or strengthened the process required to call BoS.

Figure 4: Variation in accessibility perceptions



Fourth, communication between students and teachers are much varied and mostly following opposite trend in both universities, except for teachers respond. Students at BKUC are much satisfied from teachers' response as compared to other indicators where their response variates more at the question related to the number of students with supervisor effects quality of research conducted mainly at the time of accomplishment of their BS, Master and MPhil thesis or writing a research paper, while students at AWKUM are much satisfied at the same indicator. Whereas, students' perception regarding class size at AWKUM is much varied due to the unavailability of proper classrooms or over-admission. Perception regarding class size came as the major problem faced by the students at which should be managed either by constructing new blocks or limit the number of admission.

Figure 5: Variation in tangibility perceptions



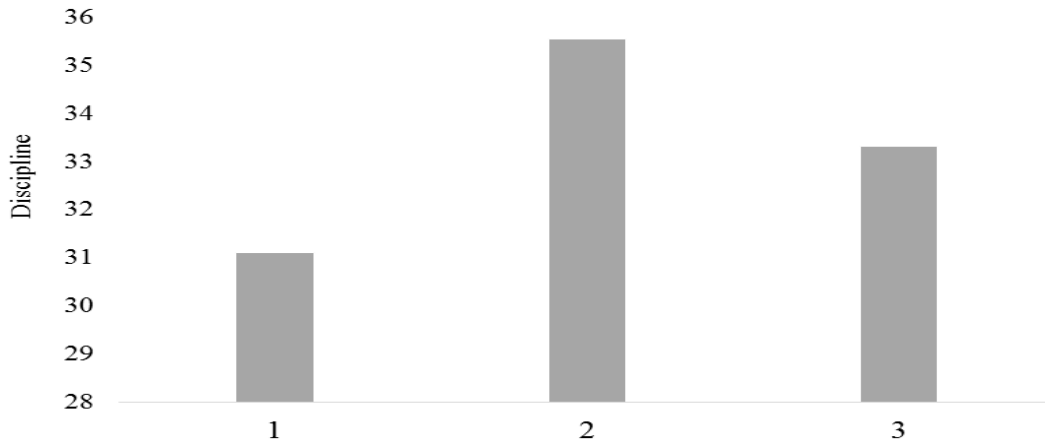
At the end, perception regarding selected tangible factors varies in same proportion for all selected factors except lightening in the classrooms. Due to the poor electricity system in Charsadda, the University has only its own resources i-e generators and UPS to depend on. Students' perception regarding laboratory fulfills students' requirement but the variation in their response might be alternatively correlated to the light in Charsadda and Mardan. Because laboratories cannot be operated without availability of required electricity. Fortunately, ratio of students to playground is same in both universities at present but with the increase in number of students at BKUC will probably escalate demand for larger specialized playground.

Students' future prospect

Selection of discipline

Different available majors are being categorized by Higher Education of Pakistan (HEC) into three categories and left open for every student to select the major from each category they like. There are millions of majors available to study at different general or specialized universities.

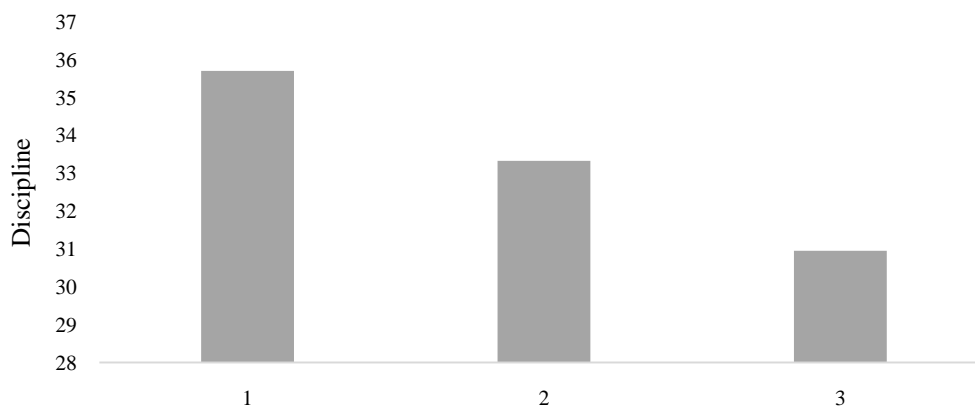
Figure1: Ratio of students preferred discipline (BKUC)



1= Natural science 2= Social science 3= Arts

Out of which Bacha Khan University has 13 major departments which further contain different major such as physics and statistics are combined with mathematics department and zoology is combined with botany department. Most of which are science related subjects but astonishingly response and preference of the students in our survey still point toward that students prefer social science over natural sciences and arts.

Figure 7: Ratio of students preferred discipline (AWKUM)



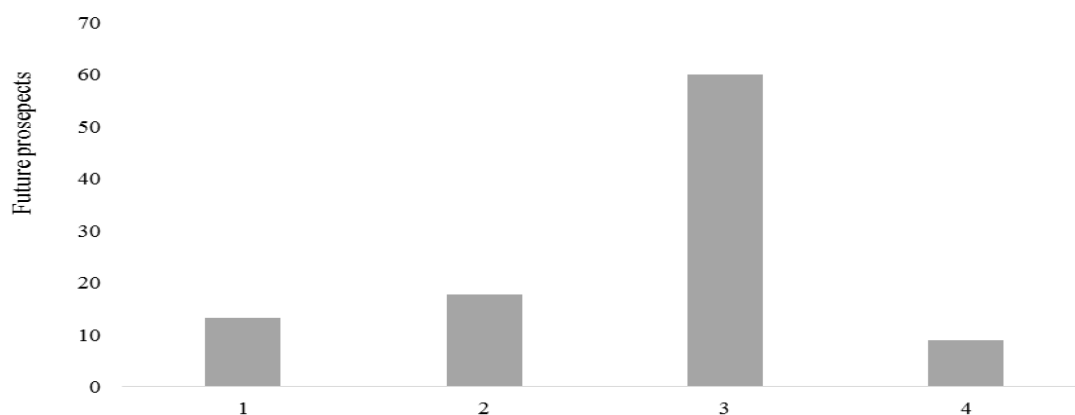
1=Natural science 2= Social science 3=Arts

Their response varied due to the availability of labs, equipment, faculty and issue related to students' facilitation. But as we observed from the survey and decomposed that their responses were not merely cause of university internal affairs but it was the availability of jobs at most. As compared to BKUC, students' preference toward selection of different majors at AWKUM was mostly dominated by natural sciences, social sciences and arts respectively. Aggregately, the two universities are showing different results due to location factor where most of the students at BKUC are local residents of Charsadda and prefer to choose social sciences. Whereas, students of AWKUM are from different localities and their preferences were different as well but accumulatively it came up with natural science as most liked category for study and pursue their future plans. Amid to conclusion derived from the figures, fortunately priorities for both universities varies where BKUC should focus on social sciences to serve the people of Charsadda while AWKUM should more stress on natural sciences to contribute to the human capital of Mardan. Variation in the students' preferences also point towards opening university's administration and policy makers to design policies in such a way to facilitate students and contribute to local economy.

Students' job preferences

Finally, we tried to check students' preferences whether their studies are for job purpose or they planned to establish their own business. And surprisingly, we found that students graduated from BKUC prefer to find job at government sector while the rest has categorized as private sector job, semi-government jobs and establishing their own business or carry on their family business.

Figure 5: Ratio of future prospects of students (BKUC)

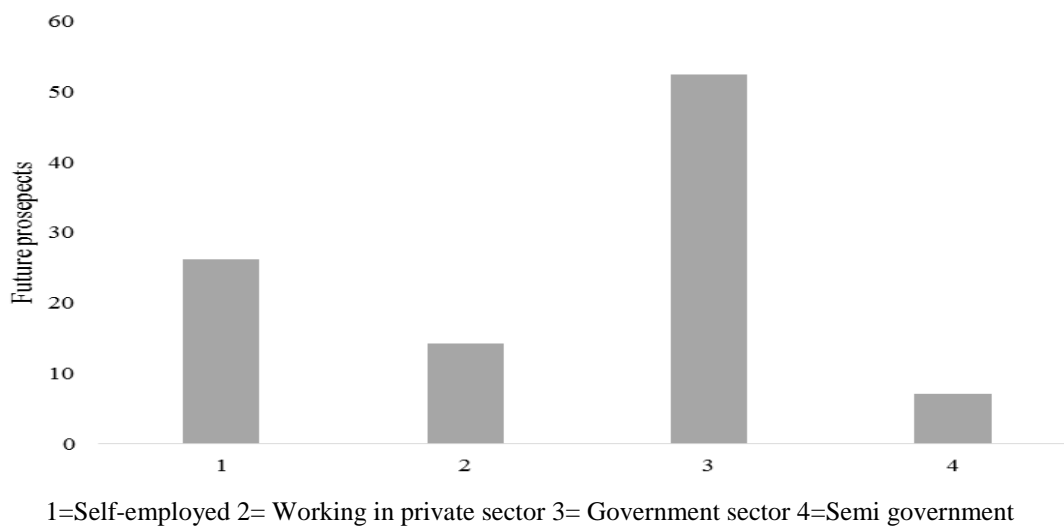


1=Self-employed 2= Working in private sector 3= Government sector 4=Semi government

By analysing these preferences it is found that due to the sluggish economic growth of Charsadda and almost agriculture based economy, majority of Charsadda's population has less opportunity to either engage their labour force in private businesses or create their own business; in such prevailing situation government sector is left as most secured option to provide their services and earn bread for their dependents. To control the huge dependence on government sector jobs, local government of Charsadda should establish a wing or window to facilitate local businessmen to safely invest and hire more and more of local labour force; and also monitor these private sector businesses on regular basis for the purpose that these private businesses entrepreneurs not exploit the local labour force either by over burden in term of time or money.

Similarly, while these questions were asked from the students of AWKUM, they replied according to their preferences where again their most preferable sector to serve is government sector where they might secure their bread. But as compared to BKUC, AWKUM's students' preference were different and majority of the responses were affected by the location of the university. As students of AWKUM categorized their preference, as after government sector jobs, self-employment, private sector jobs and at the end or most nonpreferred jobs were from semi-government.

Figure 5: Ratio of future prospects of students (AWKUM)



From these analyses we found that due to the, comparatively, faster and economic growth and available infrastructure students preferred to engage their selves in their own business. These results are much different from the results derived for Charsadda, which alternatively points towards comparatively better economic milieu in Mardan. But from the response of

the students in terms of private sector is not supporting the answer to first question, which alternatively pointing to the fact that Mardan can be a good location for establishing new business due to better government policies but students does not prefer to work in private sector under a private entrepreneur. This can be a direction for government organization to monitor private businesses on regular basis to stop the possible exploitation of the workers.

Conclusion

The objective of the research is to identify the two sisters universities' students perception regarding educational environment. For the purpose random sampling technique was utilized and data was collected both from Bacha Khan University Charsadda (BKUC) and Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan (AWKUM). Although, both universities possess different number of students and teachers, where BKUC is comparatively newly established university as compared to AWKUM, but still it is being observed that both universities are contributing to local economy according to the location requirements.

Furthermore, education quality and performance maintenance are rising themes for any educational environment which can accelerate the transformation of skilled labor force. Although, performance of AWKUM is comparatively better than BKUC regarding academic perception but still varying in the same proportion where among the selected indicators "Instructor provide feedback about my work" ranked highest for BKUC. Similarly, students' perception regarding non-academic activities, students of AWKUM rank "Administrative offices keeps accurate records" at highest position while students at BKUC rank "Administrative staff have good knowledge" about their day to day duties at higher position. Third, students of both universities were interviewed regarding curriculum and other selected factor, where both universities performed almost similar scores. But students of AWKUM were more satisfied from "The duration of the class is suitable" whereas students at BKUC were more unsatisfied. Fourth, students perception regarding accessibility, students of AWKUM were more satisfied from "Number of research students by a supervisor affects the research quality" while students at BKUC ranked "Class size helps students better understanding" at highest position. Fifth, students perception regarding tangibility, surprisingly students at AWKUM and BKUC responded differently to "lightening in the classroom is proper", whereas the rest of the selected factors vary in the same proportion for both institutions.

Apart from the academic perception, the research also conducted a survey regarding the students' future prospects whether they are satisfied from the education they have received and whether they can fit their skills in any professional field of work to earn their bread. Following students' perception regarding education to economic utilization, we tried to interview student in four selected indicators. First, we interviewed students while their preference towards selection of one of the available three disciplines (i-e. natural science, social science and arts). Students at BKUC preferred social sciences while students at AWKUM preferred natural sciences as guarantee to their successful career. Variation in the answers is due to location factor, as Mardan is comparatively more developed while Charsadda lag behind. These answers are further elaborated in the next question regarding "Ratio of future prospects of students at BKUC and AWKUM". Perception regarding future varied as per location of the university. Students of BKUC and AWKUM preferred job in government sector while at second preference students of AWKUM placed self-employment while students of BKUC preferred working in private sector. Self-employment and job at private sector indirectly points towards the economic stability of the location, whether the location has suitable and sustainable economic environment majority will prefer to establish their own business, whereas unsuitable and unsustainable economic environment will lead to not taking any risk of establishing their own business but rather work in private business. Therefore, people of Mardan preferred self-employment while people Charsadda prefer working in private sector, which is the ultimate indicator of economic sustainability and infrastructure.

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