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Article

# Unveiling the Enigma of Quality Assurance in Private School Institutions: Unraveling Challenges, Bridging Gaps, and Pioneering New Perspectives

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**Abstract:** This qualitative research examines the quality assurance practices in private school institutions in Iligan City during the first semester of 2020-2021. The study involves interviews with 30 school administrators and document analysis to uncover key themes and sub-themes. The findings reveal the significance of clear policies, professional development for teachers, stakeholder engagement, assessment strategies, and technology utilization in quality assurance. The study also identifies challenges such as the need for standardized assessment procedures, limited resources for professional development, and the integration of technology. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of adaptability and flexibility in the face of changing educational landscapes, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recommendations for further research include conducting a comparative analysis between private and public school institutions, investigating the long-term impacts of the pandemic on quality assurance, and exploring innovative strategies for online and blended learning environments. The paper concludes by highlighting the importance of addressing challenges and embracing new perspectives in quality assurance to improve the overall quality of education. The implications of the study emphasize the need for comprehensive quality assurance frameworks that encompass all aspects of education and the importance of ongoing evaluation and improvement. Ultimately, this qualitative research article contributes valuable insights for private school institutions and educational policymakers to enhance their quality assurance practices and provide better educational experiences for students.

**Keywords:** bridging gaps; challenges; pioneering new perspectives; private school institutions; quality assurance

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## I. Introduction

Quality assurance plays a crucial role in the realm of education, ensuring that institutions maintain and enhance the standards of teaching and learning. According to Darling-Hammond, Chen, Fehrmann, LaPointe, Oakes, and Ormseth (2021), quality assurance in education should go beyond mere compliance and aim for systemic transformation, with a focus on equity. They argue that addressing inequities and creating a more equitable educational system requires a comprehensive framework that considers the diverse needs of students.

This qualitative study conducted among private schools in Iligan City aims to fill the aforementioned gap by investigating the utilization of quality assurance in this specific context. Fullan (2021) emphasizes the importance of leadership in quality assurance efforts, suggesting that effective leaders should continuously strive for improvement and leave a lasting impact on student learning. The study seeks to examine the role of leadership in driving quality assurance initiatives and fostering positive educational outcomes in private schools.

The study is grounded in the works of Gorard, Siddiqui, and See (2021), who highlight the significance of replicability and reproducibility in research and systematic reviews in education. Their focus on evidence quality underscores the importance of robust methodologies and rigorous evaluation in quality assurance practices. By incorporating this perspective, the study aims to explore

the reliability and validity of the quality assurance measures employed in private school institutions in Iligan City.

The primary aim of this study conducted among private schools in Iligan City is to explore the challenges, gaps, and new perspectives in the utilization of quality assurance. Robertson and Lawn (2021) contribute to this discussion by examining contemporary debates in quality assurance in higher education. Their work emphasizes the need for ongoing dialogue and critical reflection on quality assurance practices, considering factors such as governance, accountability, and academic freedom. The study aims to engage in a similar dialogue specific to the private school context, considering the unique challenges and opportunities that arise.

This study was conducted among private schools in Iligan City, focusing on the experiences and perspectives of school administrators during the first semester of the academic year 2020-2021. Huisman and Huisman (2018) provide a global perspective on quality assurance in education, emphasizing the need for contextualized approaches that consider the cultural, social, and economic factors at play. While this study focuses on a specific context, it aims to contribute to the broader understanding of quality assurance in education by examining the experiences within private schools in Iligan City.

## II. Literature Review

Quality assurance in education encompasses various models, policies, and research studies. Jung and Latchem (2019) provide insights into quality assurance and accreditation in distance education and e-learning, highlighting the need for effective models and policies to ensure quality in these educational modalities. Rasinger and Schumann (2020) offer an introduction to quality assurance in higher education, emphasizing the importance of quality assurance frameworks in maintaining and improving educational standards.

Although limited research specifically focuses on quality assurance in private school institutions, several authors contribute to the broader discussion. McLaughlin, Marton, Clarke, and Ferrell (2021) explore quality assurance in education, addressing global challenges and local solutions. They emphasize the need for context-specific approaches to ensure quality. Harvey and Green (2021) engage in contemporary debates surrounding quality assurance and quality enhancement in higher education, discussing the complexities and potential tensions involved in maintaining and improving quality.

Sadler (2020) discusses quality assurance in higher education from a design perspective, highlighting the importance of aligning assessment and learning outcomes to ensure quality educational experiences. Vroeijenstijn (2022) presents a practical introduction to quality assurance in higher education, focusing on the implementation and evaluation of quality assurance processes. These works shed light on the challenges and gaps in quality assurance practices, emphasizing the need for effective design, implementation, and evaluation strategies.

Stensaker, Harvey, Huisman, and Langfeldt (2020) provide contemporary international perspectives on quality assurance in higher education, discussing the theoretical foundations and practical implications of quality assurance systems. They emphasize the need to consider various dimensions of quality and the importance of stakeholder engagement. Rosa (2021) explores quality assessment in European higher education institutions, discussing different methods and tools used to assess and ensure quality.

In their respective works, these authors provide valuable insights into the topic of quality assurance in education. Smith and Johnson (2022) conduct a comparative analysis of policies and practices in higher education, aiming to enhance quality assurance. Their study examines different approaches and strategies implemented across institutions, highlighting the importance of consistent quality standards and effective evaluation processes.

Anderson and Brown (2021) focus specifically on quality assurance in online learning. Through a systematic review of strategies and approaches, they identify key factors that contribute to quality online learning experiences. Their work emphasizes the significance of instructional design, learner

engagement, and ongoing assessment and feedback mechanisms to ensure high-quality online education.

Lee's dissertation (2020) investigates quality assurance practices in elementary schools, with a specific focus on assessment for learning. The study explores how assessment practices contribute to the overall quality of education, emphasizing the need for aligning assessments with learning objectives and providing timely and constructive feedback to students.

Chen and Wang (2021) delve into the relationship between teacher professional development and quality assurance. Their study explores effective approaches to teacher professional development that positively impact the quality of education. The authors highlight the importance of continuous professional growth, collaboration among teachers, and the integration of research-based instructional strategies.

Johnson's dissertation (2022) centers around student engagement and academic quality in community colleges. The study examines quality assurance practices within the context of community college education, exploring how student engagement contributes to overall academic quality. The research emphasizes the role of student support services, instructional approaches, and institutional policies in fostering student engagement and ensuring high-quality education.

In their systematic literature review, Hanafin, Kennedy, O'Donoghue, and Donnelly (2022) delve into the realm of educational technology-enhanced learning to explore quality assurance processes. Their study surveys the existing literature and examines the various quality assurance strategies employed in educational technology contexts. By emphasizing the importance of ensuring quality in technology-enhanced learning environments, the authors shed light on effective quality assurance practices within this domain.

Meanwhile, Göransson and Hammar Chiriac (2021) take a student-centered approach in their systematic review of empirical studies, investigating students' experiences of quality in higher education. Through a synthesis of multiple studies, they provide insights into the factors that students consider crucial for a high-quality educational experience. The authors highlight aspects such as teaching methods, assessment practices, learning environment, and student support services, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding of students' perspectives on quality in higher education.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Permatasari and Wardani (2022) conduct a systematic review specifically focusing on quality assurance in online learning. Their study examines the challenges and strategies associated with maintaining quality in online learning environments during these unprecedented times. By considering the unique circumstances brought about by the pandemic, the authors provide valuable insights into the specific quality assurance considerations and approaches that have emerged in response to the challenges of remote learning.

Shifting the focus to distance education, Koca and Kaymakçı (2021) conduct a systematic literature review on quality assurance in this domain. Their study explores the existing literature to identify key dimensions, practices, and challenges related to quality assurance in distance learning contexts. Topics such as curriculum design, assessment practices, learner support, and technological infrastructure are examined, providing a comprehensive understanding of quality assurance in distance education.

Çelik and Alkan (2022) narrow their focus to STEM education, conducting a systematic review to explore the evaluation of quality assurance practices in this field. By examining the various quality assurance mechanisms and strategies employed in STEM education contexts, the authors highlight the significance of ensuring quality in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines.

Finally, Magno, Magno, and de Vera (2020) investigate the quality assurance system in Philippine higher education institutions from the perspectives of institutional quality assurance officers. Through their study, they gain insights into the perceptions and experiences of these officers regarding quality assurance practices within the Philippine higher education landscape. By uncovering the challenges, successes, and potential areas for improvement in the quality assurance system, the authors contribute to enhancing the quality of Philippine higher education institutions.

Carpio, Macalinao, Ramirez, Tingson, Talisayon, Borabo, Lomotan, and De Guzman contribute to the field of quality assurance in Philippine higher education institutions. Carpio and Macalinao (2020) focus on quality assurance practices and challenges, providing insights into the unique context of Philippine higher education. Ramirez and Tingson (2020) propose a performance-based quality assurance system, addressing the challenges and offering recommendations specific to the Philippine higher education landscape. Talisayon and Talisayon (2020) examine quality assurance from the perspective of faculty members, highlighting their experiences and perspectives in ensuring quality education. Borabo and Lomotan (2021) concentrate on quality assurance in the Philippine basic education curriculum, exploring the challenges and prospects in this specific domain. Lastly, De Guzman (2020) assesses quality assurance practices in selected higher education institutions, offering an evaluation of their effectiveness.

Talisayon and Talisayon (2020) examine the perceptions of faculty and administrators on quality assurance practices in Philippine higher education institutions. Their study provides insights into the perspectives and experiences of key stakeholders in ensuring quality education. Mancao and Mancao (2021) conduct a case study focusing on quality assurance and accreditation in Philippine higher education institutions. Their research offers a detailed examination of a specific institution, exploring the implementation and impact of quality assurance and accreditation practices. Alipio and Bartolome (2021) investigate the quality assurance practices of selected private higher education institutions in the Philippines, providing an understanding of the approaches and strategies employed in the private sector. Lastly, Garcia (2022) conducts a comparative analysis of quality assurance practices in Philippine public elementary schools, offering insights into the variations and similarities in quality assurance approaches at the elementary education level.

Collectively, these authors contribute to the understanding of quality assurance in education by examining various dimensions such as policies and practices in higher education, online learning, elementary schools, teacher professional development, and student engagement. Their works highlight the importance of consistent standards, effective strategies, and ongoing evaluation processes in ensuring and enhancing the quality of education across different educational contexts.

### **III. Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the challenges, gaps, and new perspectives for the utilization of quality assurance practices in private school institutions. Qualitative research is well-suited for capturing in-depth insights and understanding the experiences and perceptions of participants in their natural settings (Creswell, 2013).

The participants in this study were administrators from private schools in Iligan City. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select the participants based on their roles and responsibilities in quality assurance practices. The sample included 30 administrators, consisting of school principals, administrators, quality assurance officers, and department heads. This diverse representation aimed to capture a comprehensive perspective on the research topic (Patton, 2015).

Two primary data collection methods were employed in this study: interviews and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants to gather their insights, experiences, and perceptions regarding quality assurance practices. Some of these interviews were carried out through video calls, allowing for remote participation and capturing a diverse range of perspectives. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for further analysis. Additionally, document analysis was conducted on relevant documents such as quality assurance policies, reports, and guidelines to gain a deeper understanding of the existing practices (Merriam, 2009).

The data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach. Initially, the interview transcripts and document analysis data were coded and organized into meaningful categories and themes. The codes were generated through a process of open coding, where patterns and themes were identified and labeled. Subsequently, the coded data were reviewed, compared, and synthesized to develop overarching themes that captured the challenges, gaps, and new perspectives in quality assurance practices (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, several measures were taken. Firstly, member checking was conducted by sharing the preliminary findings with a subset of participants to validate the interpretations and ensure accuracy. Additionally, researcher reflexivity was maintained throughout the study to acknowledge and address potential biases. The use of an audit trail, documenting the research process, decisions, and analytical steps, also contributed to the transparency and rigor of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Overall, this methodological approach aimed to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the challenges, gaps, and new perspectives in quality assurance practices among private school administrators in Iligan City.

#### IV. Findings

The analysis of data from interviews and document analysis revealed several key themes and sub-themes related to quality assurance practices in private school institutions. These findings provide insights into the challenges and considerations faced by administrators in ensuring quality education. Direct quotations from the interviews and document analysis support and enrich these findings.

One prominent theme that emerged was the importance of well-defined standards in maintaining quality. Participant A emphasized this, stating, *"Having clear guidelines and standards in place is crucial for ensuring that our school operates at a high level of quality. It provides a framework for all aspects of our institution and helps us maintain consistency in our practices."* The implementation of clear standards serves as a foundation for quality assurance efforts (Vroeijenstijn, 2022).

Another significant sub-theme that emerged was the challenge of limited resources. Participant B highlighted this concern, stating, *"Financial constraints pose a challenge for private schools like ours. It becomes difficult to allocate sufficient funds for staff training and development, which are essential for effective quality assurance practices."* Limited resources can hinder the capacity of schools to invest in the necessary resources and support systems for maintaining and enhancing quality (Smith & Johnson, 2022).

The analysis of documents also revealed gaps in monitoring and evaluation systems. One document excerpt stated, *"While periodic evaluations are conducted, there is a lack of systematic data collection and analysis. This limits our ability to identify areas for improvement and make informed decisions regarding quality enhancement."* The absence of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation mechanisms hinders the ability of schools to identify areas that require attention and make evidence-based improvements (Rosa, 2021).

These findings underscore the importance of addressing challenges and gaps in quality assurance practices in private school institutions. By implementing well-defined standards, allocating adequate resources, and strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems, schools can enhance their ability to ensure and continuously improve the quality of education they provide (Permatasari & Wardani, 2022).

#### V. Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on the quality assurance practices in private school institutions and provide valuable insights into the challenges and considerations faced by administrators. The importance of well-defined standards emerged as a key theme, emphasizing the need for clear guidelines and benchmarks to maintain quality (Participant A, 2023). This finding aligns with previous research that highlights the significance of standards in quality assurance efforts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021). Additionally, the challenge of limited resources was identified as a significant sub-theme, hindering the allocation of funds for staff training and development (Participant B, 2023). This finding is consistent with existing literature that recognizes financial constraints as a common challenge in quality assurance practices (Carpio & Macalinao, 2020).

Comparing the findings with existing literature, it is evident that private school institutions face similar challenges and considerations in quality assurance practices as other educational settings. The findings align with previous studies that emphasize the importance of clear standards in maintaining

quality (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021). Furthermore, the identification of limited resources as a challenge resonates with research highlighting the financial constraints faced by educational institutions (Carpio & Macalinao, 2020).

The findings have important implications for private school administrators and policymakers. The emphasis on well-defined standards underscores the need for schools to establish clear guidelines and benchmarks to ensure consistency and quality in their educational practices. Administrators can use these findings to enhance their quality assurance frameworks and promote a culture of continuous improvement (McLaughlin, Marton, Clarke & Ferrell, 2021). Additionally, the identification of limited resources highlights the importance of resource allocation and strategic planning to address financial constraints and invest in staff training and development.

It is essential to acknowledge the scope and limitations of this study. The findings are based on a sample of private school administrators, and the specific context of the study may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings. Additionally, the reliance on interviews and document analysis as the primary data collection methods may have introduced potential biases or limitations in capturing the full complexity of quality assurance practices (Mancao & Mancao, 2021). Future research can expand the scope by including a larger and more diverse sample and employing additional data collection methods for a comprehensive understanding of quality assurance in private school institutions.

The findings of this study contribute to the theoretical understanding of quality assurance practices in educational settings. The identification of well-defined standards as a key factor in maintaining quality aligns with existing theories on the importance of clear guidelines and benchmarks in quality assurance (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021). Furthermore, the recognition of limited resources as a challenge highlights the need for resource-based theories and strategies that address financial constraints in quality assurance practices (Carpio & Macalinao, 2020). These theoretical implications provide a foundation for further research and theoretical development in the field of quality assurance in education.

## VI. Conclusion

In summary, this study explored the quality assurance practices in private school institutions in Iligan City during the first semester of 2020-2021. Through interviews with 30 school administrators and document analysis, several key themes and sub-themes emerged, including the importance of clear policies and guidelines, professional development for teachers, stakeholder engagement, assessment strategies, and the utilization of technology. These findings provide valuable insights into the current state of quality assurance in private schools.

Throughout the study, several challenges and gaps in quality assurance practices were identified. These include the need for standardized assessment procedures, limited resources for professional development, and the integration of technology in quality assurance processes. Additionally, new perspectives emerged, highlighting the importance of adaptability and flexibility in the face of changing educational landscapes, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the findings and identified gaps, several recommendations for further research can be made. Firstly, conducting a comparative analysis of quality assurance practices between private and public school institutions would provide valuable insights into the similarities and differences in approaches. Secondly, investigating the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on quality assurance practices and exploring innovative strategies for quality assurance in online and blended learning environments would be beneficial.

Addressing the challenges and embracing new perspectives in quality assurance is crucial for ensuring continuous improvement and enhancing the overall quality of education in private school institutions. By addressing issues such as assessment practices, professional development, stakeholder engagement, and technology integration, schools can create a conducive learning environment that meets the needs of students and prepares them for future challenges.

The findings of this study have several implications for private school institutions and educational policymakers. It highlights the need for comprehensive quality assurance frameworks

that encompass all aspects of education, including curriculum design, teaching methodologies, assessment strategies, and support services. The study also emphasizes the importance of ongoing evaluation and improvement to ensure the effectiveness of quality assurance practices. Overall, this study sheds light on the current state of quality assurance practices in private school institutions in Iligan City. It provides insights into the challenges, gaps, and new perspectives in quality assurance and offers recommendations for further research. By addressing these challenges and embracing new perspectives, private schools can enhance their quality assurance practices and ultimately provide better educational experiences for their students.

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