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# Examining the Role of Quality Assurance in Accelerating the Internationalization Process of Higher Education in Afghanistan

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**Abstract:** Internationalization of higher education has become one of the strategic priorities for universities worldwide in recent decades; however, its effective realization largely depends on the existence of efficient quality assurance systems, Given the growing importance and discussion of quality assurance and the internationalization of higher education, to date, no specific research has been conducted on the relationship between the quality assurance process and higher education in Afghanistan. Therefore, addressing this issue is essential. This study aims to examine the role of quality assurance in supporting and strengthening the internationalization process of higher education in Afghanistan. This study is a systematic review in which data were gathered from scholarly articles, institutional reports, and policy documents published between 2006 - 2025 in databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, Wiley, Springer, Sage, Taylor & Francis, ERIC, ACE, ENQA, IEAC, Google Scholar and World Bank, and analyzed following the PRISMA guidelines. References citations have been made using Mendeley Reference Manager. The results of this research indicate that the establishment of effective quality assurance mechanisms can pave the way for increased trust and academic credibility of universities, improve the quality of teaching and research, increase participation in joint international research projects, faculty exchange, student exchange, and the internationalization of curricula. Overall, strengthening quality assurance systems can be considered one of the fundamental strategies to support the sustainable internationalization of higher education in Afghanistan.

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## INTRODUCTION

The progression of societies is inextricably linked to the quantitative and qualitative expansion of the educational system in general, and higher education in particular. Higher education

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signifies a significant investment in human capital, and its pivotal role in a nation's cultural, social, and economic growth and development is widely acknowledged. The contemporary higher education landscape is marked by an unprecedented level of global interconnectedness. This requires a strategic focus on internationalization to cultivate relationships and collaborations, promote knowledge exchange, and develop graduates who are skilled and competent on the global stage (Peacelenn, 2006).

The internationalization of higher education is increasingly recognized as a hallmark of high-quality education. It encompasses cross-border collaborations, joint research, faculty and student exchanges, and developing curricula that align with international standards. To expand international cooperation, attract international students, and participate in cross-border research projects, universities must meet certain quality standards (Knight, 2012).

The internationalization of higher education has emerged as a strategic priority for institutions worldwide. It is anticipated that universities in disparate regions will assume a pivotal role in the global knowledge network. This phenomenon is not confined to scientific relations between governments but also encompasses the expansion of collaborations among higher education institutions and universities operating beyond national borders (Guri-Rosenblit, 2015).

The American Council on Education (ACE) has provided a comprehensive framework for internationalization, describing it as a strategic, coordinated structure that integrates policies, programs, initiatives, and individuals to advance globalization and establish international connections in colleges and universities. This definition emphasizes that internationalization is not a static goal but a continuous process that requires institutional commitment and strategic planning

The American Council on Education (ACE) has provided a comprehensive framework for internationalization. ACE describes internationalization as a strategic, coordinated structure that integrates policies, programs, initiatives, and individuals to advance globalization and establish international connections in colleges and universities. According to this definition, internationalization is not a static goal, but rather a continuous process requiring institutional commitment and strategic planning (ACE, 2024).

There are five pairs of opposing tensions that shape higher education internationalization strategies: serving national priorities versus operating in an international environment; government direction versus institutional autonomy; increasing diversity versus homogenizing policies; competition versus collaboration; and intellectual property versus scholarly goodwill. These tensions reveal the inherent complexity of the internationalization process and emphasize the need for institutions to balance these competing demands (Guri-Rosenblit, 2015).

The US Council on Education's Comprehensive Internationalization Model identifies six interrelated goal areas that require strategic attention: curriculum and extracurricular activities, faculty and staff support, collaborations and mobility, leadership and structure, institutional commitment and policy, and evaluation of global learning. Three key strategic perspectives—diversity, equality, and inclusion; agility and change; and data-driven decision-

making—are used to frame these topics. Internationalization initiatives often involve cross-border education, international partnerships, international research collaborations, curricular internationalization, and student and faculty mobility. Institutional resources, national legislation, and cultural variables all have a significant impact on how these methods are implemented in different circumstances (ACE, 2024).

However, in the absence of strong institutional quality assurance mechanisms, higher education institutions may not be able to keep pace with global standards, leading to their isolation from the international scientific community and marginalization in the global arena (De Wit & Hunter, 2015). Due to the growing need for accountability, competitiveness, and educational efficacy, quality assurance has emerged as a major concern for universities around the globe. The methodical process of ensuring that a created good or service satisfies specifications is known as quality assurance. Quality assurance in higher education refers to a collection of methods intended to assess, track, and enhance the caliber of instruction and research (Ryan, 2015).

The concept of quality in higher education is complicated and often the subject of disagreement. Quality assurance is important in higher education because it helps students receive an effective education and ensures that educational programs meet the needs of the job market. This closes the gap between school and work. Quality assurance helps educational programs improve over time, and its impact on students is considered one of the most important aspects of the system (Kayyali, 2023).

Quality assurance frameworks usually include both internal and external mechanisms. It includes internal quality assurance, institutional evaluation, faculty development, curriculum design, and continuous improvement in education and research. On the other hand, external quality assurance includes accreditation, comparison of criteria and mechanisms, and regulatory frameworks imposed by foreign institutions. There is no single definition or universally agreed model for quality assurance that can fully reflect the diversity of approaches in different fields. Despite this diversity, there are common elements among quality assurance systems, including a focus on student learning outcomes, faculty competencies, institutional resources, and governance structures. Students are at the center of the higher education system, and time and financial investment are at its core; therefore, students' active participation significantly improves quality assurance processes (Ryan, 2015; Kayyali, 2023).

Setting up quality assurance systems is hard, especially in developing countries where resources are limited. Some of these problems include faculty resistance, poor infrastructure, insufficient experience with quality assessment, and the difficulty of adapting international models to local contexts. However, quality assurance remains important for improving educational quality and building trust among stakeholders in higher education institutions (Ryan, 2015).

Setting up a robust quality assurance system is crucial for making higher education institutions more credible and competitive on the global stage. Also, it makes it easier for international partners to work together, move students and faculty, and have their academic

credentials recognized worldwide by building trust amonghem (Pillay & Kimber, 2009). Quality assurance processes are used worldwide to improve institutions from the inside out and make them more visible and competitive on the global stage (Chi Hou, 2016).

Afghanistan's higher education system has been severely affected by decades of war, political instability, and economic problems. A mountain range just beginning to form is a good way to compare higher education in Afghanistan. This shows how hard it is and how much room there is for growth in this field. The higher education system in Afghanistan faces many problems, including limited access, low quality, governance issues, and insufficient funding (World Bank, 2013).

Afghanistan has a lot of work to do to rebuild and grow after a period of conflict and war. It is also having difficulty becoming part of the global higher education system, which is because Afghanistan has had an unstable government for a long time. This has made it really tough for Afghanistan to create and implement systems to ensure quality education in the higher education sector. As a result, it is very difficult for Afghanistan to become a part of the community of universities and colleges. Afghanistan is still trying to catch up with the rest of the world when it comes to education (Welch & Wahidyar, 2020).

There are still many issues with Afghanistan's higher education system. Those who are concerned about education in Afghanistan are working to ensure that it is of high quality and comparable to that of other nations. The Afghan higher education system still faces challenges such as inadequate funding, poor facilities, and a lack of safety. Additionally, the Afghan higher education system lacks specialists in particular fields. The Afghan higher education system has issues: not everyone has the opportunity to receive an education, the methods used to assess school quality are weak, and the system does not collaborate sufficiently with other nations (Niroo & Glass, 2022).

The existing literature on higher education in Afghanistan is primarily focused on post-conflict reconstruction, access, governance, and initial quality improvements. Although the Afghan higher education sector has demonstrated its resilience and experienced rapid expansion in recent years, it still operates under very difficult conditions, including a legacy of conflict, persistent political instability, severe resource constraints, inadequate infrastructure, limited institutional autonomy, and a scarcity of skilled human capital (Yusufzada et al., 2020).

A section of a World Bank report discusses improving higher education. It examines topics such as how well teachers instruct students, how buildings and equipment are used, how students are tested, and how to ensure everything is of high quality. According to the World Bank report, Afghanistan's efforts to ensure high-quality education are just getting started. They are still not very good at doing it. To improve education, Afghanistan's universities must address issues such as faculty credentials and instructional strategies. People are needed in Afghanistan to verify the quality of education (World Bank, 2013).

In response to widespread concerns about the quality of education and the need for alignment with global standards, the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education, with international

support, has launched formal quality assurance and accreditation processes. However, implementing these quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms faces significant obstacles. Initial research and reports indicate that universities face serious difficulties in meeting anticipated accreditation standards due to insufficient resources, infrastructure, and capacity. Furthermore, challenges with institutional leadership's engagement in perception and meaning-making processes, the heavy administrative burden that overshadows the qualitative goals of teaching and research, and the difficulties in internalizing policies derived from external sources also hinder the effective institutionalization of a culture of quality (Zolfaghari et al., 2009).

Universities in developing countries, such as Afghanistan, face numerous challenges. Afghanistan has numerous economic issues. For instance, research on quality assurance in the Afghan educational system reveals some serious issues. Implementing policies, funding shortages, and a lack of international recognition are among the issues. Because these issues may impact on how quality assurance supports internationalization, we must have a thorough understanding of them. Internationalization and quality assurance are. We must understand how they collaborate in various locations, such as Afghanistan. For internationalization, quality assurance is crucial (Fahimi, 2023).

The emergence of quality assurance mechanisms and international partnerships with other universities is considered a significant advancement for higher education in Afghanistan. However, these mechanisms are not yet fully developed relative to international standards and face challenges in implementation and sustainability (Roof, 2015).

For Afghanistan's higher education institutions to connect with the international academic community, raise standards through collaboration, facilitate mobility, and expand intellectual horizons, internationalization is essential. Internationalization provides opportunities for knowledge sharing, capacity building, and improving Afghanistan's higher education reputation abroad. However, the same systemic flaws and resource limitations that impede the successful implementation of quality assurance also limit Afghanistan's higher education institutions' ability to participate meaningfully in international activities (Mussawy, 2019). While international standards are commonly used as benchmarks in quality assurance frameworks, at a theoretical level, robust quality assurance is considered a necessary condition for international credibility and for establishing cross-border partnerships (Kayyali, 2023).

In recent decades, experts have been more interested in the relationship between quality assurance and the globalization of higher education. Quality assurance is becoming essential due to the globalization of higher education institutions' operations. Quality assurance is a key component of establishing international trust, as several studies have demonstrated, and such systems are necessary for educational institutions to join worldwide collaborative networks (Westerheijden et al., 2007)

The experience of developing countries indicates that low-quality education, the absence of an effective evaluation system, and weaknesses in the implementation of quality assurance policies are major obstacles to the internationalization of universities (Altbach & Salmi, 2011).

In Afghanistan, over the past 20 years, the Ministry of Higher Education has worked to establish and institutionalize a quality assurance system. These measures include establishing the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Accreditation, establishing quality management units within universities, developing standards, and initiating internal and external evaluation processes (QAAD, 2025).

Despite the growing importance of quality assurance and internationalization for advancing higher education, the specific relationship and interaction between these components in the context of Afghanistan have not been sufficiently examined or understood, and limited research has explored the role of quality assurance systems in accelerating this process. The lack of comprehensive research in this area is considered a serious obstacle to informed policymaking, decision-making, and effective strategic planning. Addressing this research issue is vital for aligning higher education in Afghanistan with global trends and standards.

This research examines the special role of quality assurance in facilitating the internationalization of higher education in Afghanistan. By doing so, it seeks to fill gaps identified in the scientific literature and advance both theoretical understanding and practical applications. A review of sources reveals significant gaps in the research on quality assurance's role in the internationalization of higher education in Afghanistan. These gaps underscore the importance of the present study and its potential to expand existing knowledge.

The integration of theories related to quality assurance and internationalization remains limited in the Afghan higher education system. Few studies have examined the relationship between quality assurance and the internationalization of higher education. Therefore, there is an urgent need for research that demonstrates how quality assurance can guide internationalization and how internationalization can enhance the quality of higher education in Afghanistan (Guri-Rosenblit, 2015).

Foreign collaborations in Afghanistan have not received much attention. don't know much about whether these collaborations improve Afghan institutions or whether they affect other nations' acceptance of Afghan academic credentials. When considering partnerships in Afghanistan, it is crucial to consider Afghan institutions and academic credentials. To create better international partnerships in Afghanistan in the future, research on these partnerships is necessary to determine what works and what doesn't. need to learn more about international partnerships in Afghanistan because they can be beneficial (Roof, 2015).

The significance of this study on the function of quality assurance in the internationalization of higher education in Afghanistan is underscored by these gaps. By filling this research gap, the role of quality assurance in the internationalization of higher education can be better understood, and the Afghan higher education system can gain important insights for effective policymaking and action.

A review of domestic and international scholarly literature reveals that although the relationship between quality assurance and internationalization has been extensively

researched globally (Lemaitre & Karakhanyan, 2020), Specific research in the context of Afghanistan is limited, and a significant gap exists in this area.

This study attempts to close these gaps by carefully reviewing and synthesizing the corpus of empirical data on the influence of quality assurance on internationalization. It focuses on identifying enduring challenges, positive experiences, and recurrent themes across a range of global contexts. By combining the results of multiple studies, this article offers a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the relationship between internationalization and quality assurance. The novelty of this article lies in its comprehensive analytical approach, which advances theoretical understanding and practical application in the field of internationalization of higher education by summarizing the existing body of knowledge and offering specific recommendations appropriate to different institutional and regional contexts.

The main objective of this research is to examine the role of quality assurance in facilitating and accelerating the internationalization process of higher education in Afghanistan. In pursuit of this general objective, an effort has been made to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the current state of the quality assurance system in Afghanistan's higher education system?
2. Does the implementation of quality assurance frameworks play a decisive role in enhancing the academic credibility of the higher education system?
3. Does the implementation of quality assurance frameworks have a positive role in improving the quality of teaching and research in the higher education system?
4. Does the implementation of quality assurance frameworks have a positive role in the execution of joint research projects with international universities?
5. Does the implementation of quality assurance frameworks play a role in faculty exchanges with international universities?
6. Does implementing quality assurance frameworks affect student exchanges with international universities?
7. Does the implementation of quality assurance frameworks contribute to the internationalization of curricula?

## RESEARCH METHOD

In this section, the research design, search strategy, procedures for evaluating, selecting, and excluding articles, methods of data analysis, and the study's limitations are described. This study adopts a systematic review approach to provide a comprehensive analysis of the role of quality assurance on facilitating and accelerating the internationalization process of higher education in Afghanistan. The review process was conducted following the PRISMA guidelines and included the following stages:

1. Records Identified: At this point, a thorough search was carried out in academic databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, Wiley, Springer, Sage, Taylor & Francis, ERIC, ACE, IEAC, Google Scholar and the World Bank using keywords like higher education quality assurance and internationalization of higher education, Every pertinent academic source and article pertaining to the research topic was found and noted.
2. Records Screened: Duplicate entries were then removed, and the retrieved publications' titles and abstracts were reviewed to see how well they addressed the study topic.
3. Records Excluded. In this stage, several sources and articles were excluded because they focused on primary education, did not meet the study's inclusion criteria, or were not sufficiently related to the research topic.
4. Full-Text Assessed. At this stage, the full texts of the selected sources and articles were carefully examined, including their research methods and data, and the extent to which they were directly related to the objectives of this study. Articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded.
5. Studies Included. At the final stage, after carefully evaluating the relevance and quality of the articles and analyzing their data, the most relevant sources and studies were selected and included in this research.

***Search Strategy***

In this study, documents, sources, and scholarly articles published between 2006 and 2025 were searched and reviewed using keywords such as higher education, quality assurance, internationalization of higher education, and quality assurance in higher education in Afghanistan. Major academic databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, Wiley, Springer, Sage, Taylor & Francis, ERIC, ACE, ENQA, IEAC, Google Scholar, and World Bank website were searched, Several factors were taken into account to increase the data's scientific credibility such as the validity of the sources the data's recentness, and its direct relevance to the goals and topic of the study.

***Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria***

This study took into account both quantitative and qualitative studies on the globalization of higher education and quality assurance in higher education. Studies published in scholarly databases between 2006 and 2025 that were authored in Persian, Turkish, or English met the inclusion requirements. Duplicate publications, non-academic sources, irrelevant research, conference abstracts without full-text papers, and studies unrelated to higher education were all eliminated.

***Data Extraction and Analysis***

A structured data extraction approach was used to extract pertinent information from the chosen studies, including the author (s), year of publication, research context, methodology, and key conclusions regarding the connection between quality assurance and the internationalization of higher education. The following procedures were part of the thematic

analysis approach used to examine the data gathered from the literature review and document analysis:

1. Initial acquaintance: Articles and resources were reviewed multiple times to understand their content better.
2. Coding: Themes, concepts, and recurring patterns related to quality assurance and the internationalization of higher education were identified.
3. Theme Development: Subjects and concepts related to quality control and internationalization of higher education were categorized.
4. Interpretation and Synthesis. Themes, ideas, and conclusions from multiple sources were integrated to form a coherent narrative and answer the research questions.
5. Setting the scene. Contextual factors, including regional differences and cultural, social, and political contexts, that influence the relationship between quality assurance and the internationalization of higher education were investigated.

This approach to analysis provides a basis for drawing reliable conclusions from a variety of sources and enhances the validity and robustness of the analysis. The results of the data analysis were interpreted to answer the research questions.

***Evaluation of Quality***

To ensure the reliability and validity of the sources and studies, the quality of the selected articles and documents was evaluated. In this process, each study was assessed based on factors such as the research objectives, clarity of the methodology, data collection and analysis techniques, and the relevance of the results to the research topic. Studies published in peer-reviewed academic journals and employing rigorous research methods were found to have higher scientific quality. However, articles that lacked sufficient methodological information or had little to do with quality control and the globalization of higher education were eliminated during the eligibility evaluation.

***Limitations of the Study***

Despite providing valuable information about the significance of quality assurance in the internationalization of higher education, these studies have certain limitations because they only include sources and papers published between 2006 and 2025. Because the study focuses on publications published in English, Turkish, and Persian, several significant studies published in other languages may not have been included. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, environmental influences might have affected the findings. To give a more thorough knowledge of the connection between quality assurance and the internationalization of higher education, further quantitative research is advised.

## FINDINGS

In this study, which examined credible sources and articles using a systematic approach, the results supported by the cited literature indicate that the topics of quality assurance and the internationalization of higher education have garnered significant attention from numerous researchers.

Initial discussions about internationalization focused primarily on student and faculty mobility, curricular internationalization, and cross-border educational partnerships. However, as international activities expanded and became more complex, concerns about quality and standards grew. This led to a growing recognition of the vital role of quality assurance in supporting and legitimizing internationalization efforts. For example, the European Higher Education (2024) common quality assurance framework has been actively promoted in the area to improve transparency and trust while facilitating internationalization. This framework highlights that quality assurance is a strategic tool for international engagement rather than just an administrative burden.

By establishing standards aligned with global expectations, quality assurance can support internationalization. Similarly, exposure to international best practices, faculty professional development, and resource sharing are all ways that internationalization can enhance quality (World Bank, 2013). International partnerships have expanded alongside the development of quality assurance frameworks and mechanisms, opening the possibility of synergy between these two trends. While quality assurance frameworks and mechanisms can ensure that international collaborations align with local requirements and standards, these partnerships can offer useful resources, research expertise, and quality enhancement models (Roof, 2015). Studies indicate that the internationalization of higher education requires universities to adhere to specific quality standards to expand international relationships and collaborations, attract international students, and participate in cross-border research projects (Knight, 2012).

The European Quality Assurance Mechanisms and Framework, according to the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (2024), is an essential element in promoting openness and confidence, which will facilitate internationalization in the European Higher Education Area. This point of view emphasizes how crucial a coordinated quality assurance system is to enable cross-border activities at universities, including the mobility and acceptance of academic credentials.

Numerous research has examined the intricate effects of quality assurance on various aspects of internationalization. For example, improving institutions' academic status requires strong quality assurance processes like accreditation and qualitative evaluations. This reputation is crucial for building trustworthy international collaborations and attracting international teachers and students. Additionally, the quality of research and instruction at higher education institutions is significantly improved by the application of quality assurance systems. When institutions follow internationally recognized quality standards, their degrees and qualifications gain greater acceptance and transferability across different education

systems, which directly supports student and faculty mobility. By promoting regular self-assessment external review, and continuous improvement, these processes encourage institutions to refine teaching methods, enhance research infrastructure and foster a culture of academic excellence, this internal strengthening makes institutions more attractive partners for international research collaborations and joint academic programs (Velkoska & Nuredin, 2024) Furthermore the integration of global perspectives into curricula a key component of internationalization in higher education is often facilitated through the processes and implementation of quality assurance frameworks processes that encourage curriculum review and alignment with global standards (Oyedotun, 2025).

The following provides an analysis of the role of quality assurance across the various dimensions of internationalization in higher education and addresses each research question.

***Current State of Quality Assurance in the Afghanistan Higher Education System***

The higher education system in Afghanistan is primarily administered by the Ministry of Higher Education, which oversees public and private universities. The higher education system in Afghanistan offers academic programs at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. However, master's and doctoral programs are still in development and are limited in scope. In recent years, the higher education system in Afghanistan has sought to increase access and improve quality. In Afghanistan's higher education sector, the quality assurance system is still in its infancy and faces both substantial progress and persistent obstacles. After decades of violence and instability, attempts to restore and improve the higher education system have included the establishment of quality assurance mechanisms. However, both public and private higher education institutions face obstacles that make it difficult for them to successfully use quality assurance procedures. Despite these obstacles, stakeholders are very enthusiastic about raising the standard of higher education, suggesting that advancement is possible if structural issues are resolved. As a result, quality assurance in Afghanistan is now a developing process that faces operational and contextual difficulties despite having a minimum infrastructure in place (Welch & Wahidyar, 2020).

Research indicates that, despite efforts to institutionalize quality assurance and accreditation processes in Afghanistan's higher education sector, their implementation has been fraught with numerous difficulties. The main problems include nascent frameworks, differing interpretations of quality assurance, political instability, limited resources, weaknesses in policy and planning units, and inefficient implementation mechanisms. As a result, the expected benefits of quality assurance, such as enhanced academic credibility and global recognition, have yet to be realized. No educational institution in Afghanistan has achieved global recognition in international evaluation systems; this underscores the urgent need for fundamental reforms and structural support for quality assurance frameworks. The discrepancy between the policies established by the Ministry of Higher Education and their execution at the university level has emerged as a substantial impediment (Fahimi, 2023). Concurrent with this state of affairs, research findings have revealed a discordance between the quality assurance policies formally articulated and their operationalization in practice. The

aforementioned discordance has been attributed to several factors, including, but not limited to, a paucity of financial resources, a pervasive sense of insecurity, and inadequate capacity within the purview of the Ministry of Higher Education. (Welch & Wahidyar, 2020).

A review of the extant research reveals that implementing quality assurance and internationalization in Afghanistan is encumbered by significant challenges. These challenges include limited resources, capacity gaps, cultural factors, political instability, and the centralized governance structure of Afghanistan's higher education system, which shapes the relationship between quality assurance and internationalization. The discordance between government directives and institutional autonomy exerts a dual influence on the implementation of quality assurance measures and the formulation of internationalization strategies. Finding the right balance between central coordination and institutional flexibility remains a significant challenge for Afghanistan's higher education system (World Bank, 2013).

***Quality Assurance's Contribution to Increasing Scientific Credibility***

The significance of quality assurance frameworks in academic credibility is a persistent topic in literature. Many studies have shown that quality assurance is one of the most important factors in building trust worldwide. It is also necessary for educational institutions to join international collaborative networks (Westerheijden et al., 2007).

Most people agree that strong quality assurance systems and frameworks are necessary for colleges and universities to keep their credibility and reach academic excellence. The International Education Accreditation Council (2025) states that quality assurance frameworks typically cover academic standards, learning and teaching, assessment, and the student experience. All of these things affect the quality and trust in the services of higher education institutions.

Strong quality assurance frameworks are key to improving the academic credibility of higher education systems around the world. International academic credibility is built on trust, openness, and the consistent demonstration of high standards in research and education. People trust and value institutions with good international quality assurance systems, and their credentials are more valuable and accepted in the global market. This trustworthiness is major reason credentials are recognized around the world, why faculty and students can move around, and why global academic collaborations can occur. (Velkoska & Nuredin, 2024).

Quality assurance frameworks are very important for making higher education systems more academically credible. Robust quality assurance systems provide a structured approach to ensure adherence to and maintenance of educational standards, which, in turn, strengthen the trust of students, employers, and other stakeholders. The International Education Accreditation Council (2025) states that well-defined, consistent quality assurance mechanisms and frameworks are essential for upholding educational standards and demonstrating a commitment to institutional excellence and continuous improvement.

### *The Role of Quality Assurance in Improving the Quality of Teaching and Research*

According to studies, higher education systems may enhance the caliber of instruction and research by using quality assurance frameworks. Setting curricular standards, utilizing data to guide decision-making, establishing quality frameworks, and promoting innovation are all seen to be crucial strategies for raising the caliber of instruction and research (IEAC, 2025).

In education, this trend leads to changes in the curriculum, improved teaching methods, more support for students, and better learning environments. It enhances quality assurance, faculty professional development, the use of innovative teaching methods, and the alignment of education with market needs and global standards. In research, quality assurance frameworks promote a culture of rigorous investigation, adherence to research ethics, and the production of impactful results. The aforementioned processes have been demonstrated to have a positive impact on institutions, encouraging them to invest in research infrastructure, promote interdisciplinary collaborations, and publish high-quality research findings (Oyedotun, 2025).

### *The Role of Quality Assurance on Joint Research Projects with International Universities*

The application of quality assurance frameworks plays a positive, direct role in the execution of joint research projects with international universities. International research collaborations are typically complex processes that require trust, mutual understanding, and assurance of scientific capacities and adherence to the ethical standards of the partners. When educational institutions have robust quality assurance systems, potential international partners have greater confidence in their data research methods and ethical oversight. Moreover, quality assurance frameworks often encompass regulations on data sharing, research, governance, and intellectual property management, all of which are indispensable for the success of global partnerships. Adherence to international research standards has been demonstrated to enhance an institution's standing within the global scientific community, thereby signifying its capacity to contribute meaningfully to international research endeavors (Velkoska & Nuredin, 2024).

Higher education institutions engaged in international joint research partnerships often encounter obstacles, including disparities in scientific, ethical, and research-methods standards. In the context of collaborative research endeavors, the implementation of quality assurance frameworks and mechanisms establishes a shared foundation and a harmonized understanding of the anticipated standards. Universities across the globe are implementing this initiative (ENQA, 2024). The promotion of research findings in reputable international scientific journals and conferences is an integral component of quality assurance, as it raises awareness of the institution's research endeavors. Consequently, this development paves the way for novel opportunities in international research collaboration (Chien, 2023).

### *The Role of Quality Assurance in Faculty Exchanges with International Universities*

Frameworks for quality assurance have been demonstrated to facilitate faculty exchanges with foreign universities to a significant degree. However, it is imperative to establish a foundation of confidence in the visiting faculty's professional expertise and academic standing to ensure the success of these exchanges. Quality assurance frameworks are

instrumental in fostering this trust by ensuring that visiting professors' credentials, instructional strategies, and research capacities meet established standards. International universities encounter fewer challenges in accepting visiting professors thanks to this assurance. Consequently, promoting quality assurance through mutual academic enrichment directly fosters faculty exchanges and enhances higher education institutions' capacity for teaching and research (ENQA, 2024).

The quality assurance frameworks in place ensure the academic and professional caliber of participating faculty members, thereby facilitating standardization in teaching and research contributions. This, in turn, fosters consistent experience for both new and departing faculty members. To ensure the appropriate caliber of visiting faculty, quality assurance mechanisms typically entail a comprehensive evaluation of faculty members' credentials, teaching effectiveness, and research output (IEAC, 2025).

***The Role of Quality Assurance on Student Exchanges with International Universities***

Student mobility is regarded as one of the primary indicators of internationalization because it offers opportunities for intercultural learning, exposure to diverse educational settings, and the development of global employability skills. The establishment of mutual trust between the partner institutions concerning the equitable evaluation of educational quality and the recognition of academic credits is imperative for the success of these programs. Academic programs are guaranteed to meet high standards, have precise learning objectives, and followpen evaluation procedures thanks to quality assurance frameworks (Velkoska & Nuredin, 2024). Quality assurance frameworks provide this assurance by verifying that academic programs, teaching standards, and support services at partner universities are in line with recognized benchmarks (IEAC, 2025).

***The Role of Quality Assurance Frameworks in the Internationalization of Curricula***

The internationalization of university curricula and the use of quality assurance systems have a robust and expanding link. Integrating international, intercultural, and global aspects into a program of study's content, learning objectives, assessment tasks, instructional strategies, and support services is known as curriculum internationalization. Quality assurance frameworks are essential instruments to guarantee the successful and systematic integration of various factors while maintaining academic coherence and rigor. The development of new internationalized curriculum may be guided by quality assurance procedures, ensuring that these courses meet both local and international standards (ECA, 2015).

The structure necessary for curriculum review and development is provided by quality assurance frameworks, thereby ensuring that curriculum internationalization is an essential component of program design, rather than a superficial addition. These frameworks and mechanisms guide higher education institutions in improving students' intercultural skills, using global case studies, and aligningheir programs with international standards (Oyedotun, 2025).

To improve the quality of curricula with global components, quality assurance plays a direct role in their design, implementation, and evaluation. Institutions are encouraged by

quality assurance procedures to periodically review and update their curricula to meet the demands of the global labor market and global challenges (Deardorff, 2006).

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that the internationalization of higher education in Afghanistan is facilitated and accelerated by quality assurance systems, which have a significant and diverse function. The results showed that the effective implementation of quality assurance frameworks may raise the academic standing of universities, improve the standard of teaching and research, promote global scientific collaborations, and encourage faculty and student interchange.

The importance of quality assurance in building academic credibility and confidence between foreign partners and higher education institutions is one of the study's most significant conclusions. Academic credibility and trust are seen as essential elements in the formation of international partnerships in the global higher education system. Quality assurance frameworks, by defining specific standards for teaching, research, and university management, provide the necessary foundation for building this trust. Prior research shows that implementing efficient quality assurance systems can help universities participate in global scientific networks and improve their academic credibility. To improve their standing internationally, many universities work to incorporate quality assurance systems into their administrative and academic frameworks (Lemaitre & Karakhanyan, 2020).

On the other hand, this study's findings indicate that quality assurance plays a significant role in enhancing the quality of teaching and research in higher education institutions. Mechanisms for ensuring quality, such as ongoing curriculum evaluation and faculty performance evaluation, enhancing instructional strategies, and monitoring research projects, help universities raise their academic standards. This result aligns with numerous studies that highlight the importance of quality assurance systems in elevating the quality of university instruction and research (Kayyali, 2023; Pillay & Kimber, 2009).

The results of this research also indicate that quality assurance frameworks can play a significant role in developing international research collaborations. The existence of quality assurance systems can facilitate more effective collaborations by establishing common scientific and research standards. Research indicates that adhering to international research and scholarly management standards plays a crucial role in expanding research collaborations and universities' participation in global scientific projects. Furthermore, upholding global standards in research can increase universities' scientific Visibility and enhance their Standing in the international scientific community (Chien, 2023; Velkoska & Nuredin, 2024).

Another important conclusion of this study is the effect of quality assurance on the expansion of faculty and student exchange programs. International universities may trust quality assurance systems by assessing the academic qualifications of faculty members, standardizing curriculum, and guaranteeing the caliber of the educational experience for students. Therefore, the development of international educational partnerships and academic exchange programs can be facilitated by the existence of efficient quality assurance frameworks (IEAC, 2025).

Furthermore, research findings indicate that quality assurance can also play a significant role in the internationalization of University curricula. By overseeing the design and revision of curricula, quality assurance frameworks can ensure that educational programs align with global standards and develop the international skills and competencies students need. In this regard, research indicates that quality assurance systems can play a crucial role in integrating global dimensions into educational programs and enhancing students' intercultural competencies (Deardorff, 2006; Knight, 2012).

The findings of this research indicate that quality assurance is not only a tool for enhancing universities' academic credibility but also the primary foundation for internationalization. These results align with the studies by Knight (2012) and Westerheijden et al. (2007), which have identified quality assurance as an essential prerequisite for earning global trust and establishing cross-border cooperation networks.

Furthermore, this study's results indicate that the quality assurance system in higher education in Afghanistan still faces challenges. Many higher education institutions face limited financial resources, a shortage of specialized personnel, weak educational infrastructure, and constraints on managerial capacity. Previous studies also indicate that the effective implementation of quality assurance policies in Afghanistan has been accompanied by structural and institutional challenges (Mussawy, 2019; Niroo & Glass, 2022). Furthermore, some research indicates that the higher education system in Afghanistan is still developing quality assurance systems and requires structural reforms and the strengthening of institutional capacities to meet international standards (Welch & Wahidyar, 2020).

The present research shows that weak institutional structures, a lack of financial and human resources, and political interventions have caused quality assurance to become more of an administrative requirement than a dynamic process for quality improvement. This situation aligns with the analyses of Niroo & Glass (2022), who referred to the “illusion of improvement” in quality assurance policies.

The results of this study indicate that quality assurance has a dual role in the Afghan context: on the one hand, it can enhance academic credibility and trust and open the door to international collaboration, on the other hand, political, structural and resource limitations prevent its full potential from being realized, This is in line with earlier research conducted in developing nations (Altbach & Salmi, 2011; Guri-Rosenblit, 2015), which found that one of the primary barriers to the internationalization of higher education.

Overall, this study's results indicate that strengthening quality assurance systems is a fundamental strategy for the internationalization of higher education in Afghanistan. The foundation for improving Afghan higher education's standing on the international scientific scene can be laid by establishing robust quality assurance frameworks, fostering a culture of excellence across universities, strengthening research and teaching capabilities, and expanding international scientific partnerships. This not only helps increase scientific and

academic interactions with the global community but can also, in the long run, enhance higher education quality and the country's sustainable development.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the study's findings, it can be said that the quality assurance system in Afghanistan's higher education sector has encountered many difficulties in its implementation, despite efforts to institutionalize quality assurance procedures. The centralized governance structure of Afghanistan's higher education system, the gap between policy making at the Ministry of Higher Education and its implementation at the university level, weaknesses in policy and planning units, emerging frameworks, varying interpretations of quality assurance, political instability, resource constraints, lack of capacity, and ineffective implementation mechanisms are some of the main obstacles.

The study also showed that improving academic reputation is crucial for drawing in foreign partners and students. Putting quality assurance frameworks into practice immediately helps to raise the caliber of instruction and research, which increases an institution's competitiveness and appeal on a worldwide scale. The execution of collaborative research initiatives, teacher exchange programs, and student mobility with foreign institutions all benefit from quality assurance. Building trust, guaranteeing standard compatibility, and promoting cooperative processes are the primary means of achieving this influence. The internationalization of university curricula and quality assurance frameworks is ultimately closely related, ensuring that global aspects are systematically and effectively incorporated into academic programs while maintaining academic rigor. Overall, this study confirms that effective quality assurance mechanisms are essential for building trust among international stakeholders. Such trust is necessary for attracting global talent, establishing meaningful international partnerships, and ultimately advancing the internationalization of Afghanistan’s higher education system.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed for policymakers, administrators, and higher education stakeholders to more effectively utilize quality assurance in facilitating and accelerating the internationalization of higher education:

1. Create thorough quality assurance frameworks: A quality assurance framework should be developed that specifically addresses internationalization, including collaborative programs, hiring foreign faculty and students, and curriculum development.
2. Strengthen and encourage international cooperation in quality assurance: To align standards, exchange experiences, take part in international quality assurance networks, establish collaborative accreditation programs, and develop common instruments for assessing quality in higher education, national and international quality assurance bodies should strengthen their cooperation.
3. Invest in quality assurance capacity building: Funding for professional development and training for those in charge of quality assurance, such as faculty, policymakers, implementers,

and quality assurance specialists, should be given top priority to guarantee that quality assurance measures are successfully planned and carried out.

4. Use technology for quality control: Organizations should investigate and implement technological solutions to improve data collection and analysis, increase transparency, and streamline quality assurance procedures. Digital platforms for self-evaluation, review, and reporting may fall under this category.

Additionally, the following suggestions for further research on quality assurance and internationalization in Afghan higher education can be made in light of the study findings:

1. Analyzing the impact of organizational and cultural elements on the success of quality assurance systems: Future research may examine how faculty attitudes, student acceptance, and organizational culture affect the efficacy of quality assurance and the growth of global partnerships.
2. Comparative studies of quality assurance systems in developing and developed countries: Research comparing quality assurance systems in countries similar to Afghanistan with those in developed countries may identify strategies for improvement and better institutionalization.
3. Examining how new technologies can improve quality assurance procedures: Future research may look at how digital platforms, quality management systems, and educational data analytics can improve quality and internationalization.
4. Examining the impact of institutions on the institutionalization of quality assurance: Future studies could look at how national and international organizations, as well as the Ministry of Higher Education, contribute to the development and strengthening of quality assurance systems.

## AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

Faizulhaq Faizi wrote the methodology and results sections. Ataulhaq Ahmadi wrote the introduction. Atiqullah Rahimi wrote the discussion and conclusion sections. Yücel Şimşek carried out the editing, critical review, and revision of the manuscript.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors affirm that they have no personal, professional, or financial conflicts of interest pertaining to the conduct of this study or the composition of this manuscript.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

All data used in this systematic review is derived from published studies and are included within the article and its references.

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