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## THE ROLE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE OFFICERS' ATTRIBUTES IN ENHANCING PERFORMANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: A BIBLIOMETRIC REVIEW

Syarifah Fairuz Syed Radzuan<sup>1\*</sup>, Noor Farisha Abd.Rahim<sup>2</sup>, Laila Suryani Elias<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Business and Management Sciences, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin (UniSIRAJ), Malaysia

Email: shfairuz@unisiraj.edu.my

<sup>2</sup> Strategic and Quality Management Centre, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin (UniSIRAJ), Malaysia

Email: farisha@unisiraj.edu.my

<sup>3</sup> Strategic and Quality Management Centre, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin (UniSIRAJ), Malaysia

Email: lailasuryani@unisiraj.edu.my

\* Corresponding Author

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### Abstract:

The role of quality assurance (QA) officers has become increasingly critical in driving the performance and sustainability of higher educational institutions (HEIs) in a rapidly evolving global academic landscape. The scholarly exploration of QA officers' attributes and their direct impact on institutional performance remains fragmented and under-researched in the literature. This study conducts a comprehensive bibliometric review to map and analyze the literature on quality assurance in HEIs. Using the Scopus database as the primary source, the search strategy applied two specific keywords: "quality assurance" and "higher education institution," resulting in 220 relevant documents published between 2020 and 2025. The methodological framework involved three key tools: Scopus Analyzer for data retrieval and fundamental trend analysis, OpenRefine for data cleaning and refinement, and VOSviewer for visualizing bibliometric networks such as co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence. This study revealed key publication trends, prominent authors, influential journals, active countries, and thematic research clusters. The numerical results indicate a steady increase in research output on this topic over the past four years, with a significant concentration of studies originating in developed regions. Co-occurrence analysis highlighted recurring themes such as accreditation, institutional performance, policy development, and continuous improvement. This review underscores the growing academic interest in the attributes and competencies of QA officers and their linkages to organizational effectiveness in HEIs. The findings provide valuable insights

for future research directions and practical implications for policymakers and institutional leaders aiming to enhance quality management systems in higher education settings.

**Keywords:**

Quality Assurance, Higher Education Institution, University, Private Institution, Public Institution

**Introduction**

Quality assurance (QA) in higher education is a critical mechanism for ensuring the effectiveness and performance of educational institutions. It encompasses both internal and external evaluations aimed at maintaining and enhancing the core values of academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and social responsibility (Eaton, 2021). In higher education, QA systems are essential for supporting and improving the educational services provided by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (Jingura & Kamusoko, 2019). Quality assurance officers, who are responsible for implementing these systems, play a pivotal role in fostering a culture of continuous improvement and ensuring compliance with national and international standards (Kayal & Khalife, 2025). This introduction sets the stage for exploring the attributes of quality assurance officers and their impact on the performance of higher educational institutions, as illustrated in Figure 1.

***Role and Competencies of Quality Assurance Officers***

Quality assurance officers in higher education institutions are tasked with various functions crucial for maintaining and enhancing the quality of education. These functions include setting regulatory frameworks, conducting evaluations, audits, and reviews, and facilitating continuous improvement (Jingura & Kamusoko, 2019). The competency framework for these officers is comprehensive, encompassing knowledge, communication, managerial, analytical, digital, research, interpersonal, and personal skills, as well as the right attitude (Jingura & Kamusoko, 2019). These competencies enable QA officers to perform their roles effectively, ensuring that institutions meet the internal and external quality standards.

***Impact on Institutional Performance***

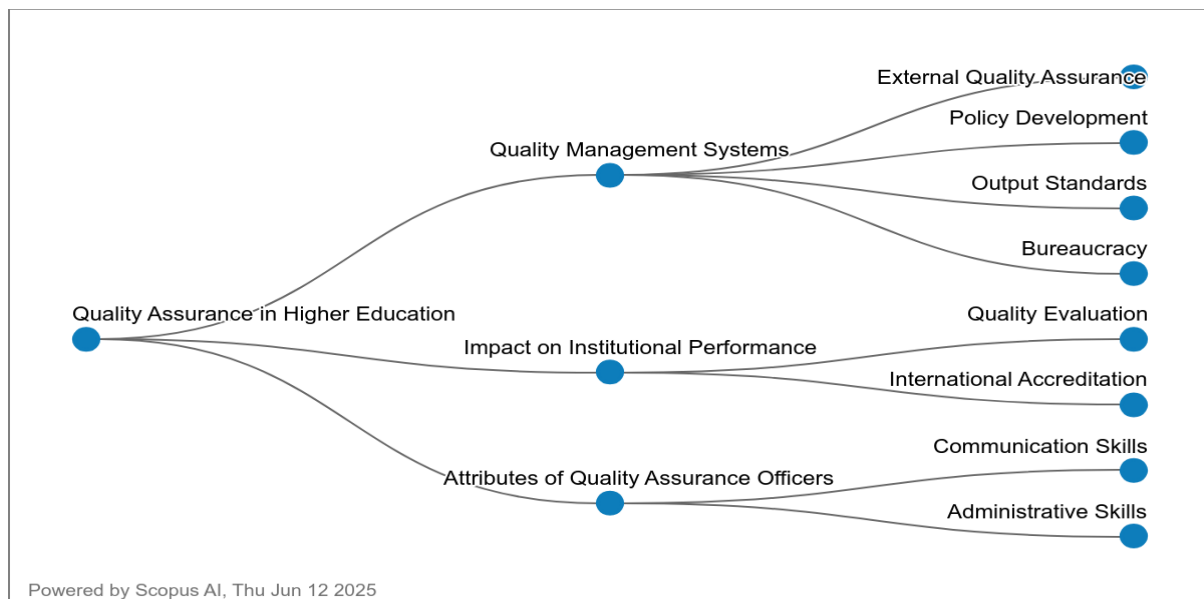
The attributes of quality assurance officers significantly influence the performance of higher-educational institutions. Effective QA practices have been shown to directly affect institutional rankings and international accreditation status, enhancing institutions' global standing (Kayal & Khalife, 2025). Quality assurance practices improve education quality, graduate attributes, and employability, thereby boosting an institution's reputation (Kayal & Khalife, 2025). Furthermore, implementing systematic and digitalized QA processes enhances efficiency and transparency, contributing to better resource allocation and consistency across departments (Kayal & Khalife, 2025). This highlights the critical role of QA officers in driving institutional innovation and responsiveness to the labor market's needs.

***Challenges and Recommendations***

Despite their clear benefits, the implementation of QA systems is challenging. The increased workload and bureaucratization associated with QA processes can strain administrative staff and resources (Dourgkounas, 2025). Additionally, a more holistic QA approach that integrates external benchmarks and robust internal practices is required (Mwila, 2025). Recommendations for improving QA practices include investing in technological

infrastructure, providing training and support to users, and ensuring data security and privacy (Jesus-Silva et al., 2023). By addressing these challenges, higher educational institutions can better leverage the attributes of QA officers to enhance their overall performance and achieve sustainable quality improvement.

In summary, the attributes of quality assurance officers play a crucial role in enhancing the performance of higher-educational institutions. Their competencies, impact on institutional performance, and challenges they face are integral to understanding how QA systems can be optimized to support continuous improvement and global competitiveness in higher education.



**Figure 1: Overview of Literature**

### The Research Question

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the publication trends between 2020 and 2025?
2. What is the overall influence and productivity of the research area?
3. Which articles are the most frequently cited in this research domain?
4. Which countries contribute the most to this field based on the number of publications?
5. Which keywords appear most frequently in the literature, indicating popular research themes?
6. What are the patterns of international collaboration based on co-authorship in countries?

### Methodology

Bibliometrics involves gathering, sorting, and analyzing data from scientific (Alves et al., 2021; Assyakur & Rosa, 2022; Verbeek et al., 2002), beyond basic metrics such as identifying publishing journals, publication years, and prominent authors (Wu & Wu, 2017). Alongside more sophisticated techniques, such as document co-citation analysis, bibliometric analysis also incorporates earlier record-based techniques. A complete literature review requires an organized and repetitive process to refine keywords, search the gathered literature, and conduct thorough analyses. This methodology supports the development of a comprehensive bibliography and enhances the reliability of the results (Fahimnia et al., 2015).

In line with this, the present study focused on high-impact publications, which are more likely to contribute significant theoretical insights to the field. Scopus was used as the primary database for data collection to ensure accuracy and consistency (Al-Khoury et al., 2022; di Stefano et al., 2010; Khiste & Paithankar, 2017). Only articles published in peer-reviewed journals were included to uphold the dataset's quality. These sources did not include books and lecture notes because they are often considered less rigorous (Gu et al., 2019). Data were obtained from Elsevier's Scopus database, renowned for its extensive coverage, encompassing publications from 2020 to 2025.

### ***Data Search Strategy***

The search string applied in this study, shown in Table 1, was designed to capture publications directly addressing quality assurance in higher education using the Scopus database. By combining terms such as "quality assurance" or "quality assurances" with institutional descriptors like "higher education institution(s)," "university," "private institution," and "public institution," the search ensures broad coverage across different types of institutions.

Limiting the search to the TITLE field helps focus on publications where quality assurance is a central theme, reducing irrelevant results. However, this approach may exclude studies that discuss quality assurance in depth but do not feature the term in the title, and it may miss work using alternative terms like "academic quality" or "institutional effectiveness." Overall, the search string offers a targeted foundation for analyzing the role of quality assurance officers in enhancing institutional performance.

**Table 1: The Search String**

<b>Scopus</b>	TITLE ( "quality assurances" OR "quality assurance" ) AND ( "higher education institution" OR "higher education institutions" OR university OR "private institution" OR "public institution" )
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The selection criteria in Table 2 further refined the search by including only English-language publications from 2020 to 2025 and excluding conference papers. After applying the filters in Table 2, the final dataset comprised 220 articles. This ensures that the review focuses on recent and accessible research, capturing the latest developments in quality assurance practices, particularly those shaped by post-pandemic challenges and shifts in higher education.

However, excluding non-English publications risks overlooking significant contributions from non-English-speaking regions, and limiting the timeline may miss influential earlier studies that continue to inform current practice. Despite these limitations, the criteria provide a clear and focused scope for examining contemporary research trends and the evolving role of quality assurance officers in higher education.

**Table 2: The Selection Criterion in Searching**

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Time line	2020 – 2025	< 2020
Literature type	Journal (Article)	Conference, Book, Review
Publication Stage	Final	In Press

### **Data Analysis**

VOSviewer is a comprehensive bibliometric software that prioritizes user experience and was developed by Nees Jan van Eck and Ludo Waltman at Leiden University in the Netherlands (van Eck & Waltman, 2010, 2017). The ability of the tool to create intuitive network visualizations, cluster related items, and produce density maps is particularly noteworthy. It also enables the examination of co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence networks, which helps improve researchers' understanding of the entire research ecosystem. The continual polish and interactive design allow seamless navigation through vast amounts of data. With its computational capabilities for metrics, rationalized manipulation for graphic depiction, and diverse bibliometric data file types, VOSviewer has emerged as a critical analytical instrument in multifaceted domains of scholarly research.

One of the outstanding features of VOSviewer is its ability to transform complex bibliometric datasets into visually interpretable maps and diagrams. The software, which focuses on network visualization, is excellent for clustering related articles, analyzing patterns of keyword co-occurrence, and creating density maps. Researchers benefit from a user-friendly interface, allowing novice and experienced users to explore research landscapes efficiently. The continuous development of VOSviewer ensures that it remains at the forefront of bibliometric analysis, providing valuable insights by calculating metrics and customizing visualizations. Its adaptability to different types of bibliometric data, such as co-authorship and citation networks, makes VOSviewer a versatile and indispensable tool for researchers seeking a more profound understanding of their research fields.

Datasets containing information on the publication year, title, author name, journal, citation, and keywords in plain text format were obtained from the Scopus database and covered the period from 2020 to 2025. The datasets were analyzed using VOSviewer version 1.6.19 software. This software facilitated the investigation and creation of maps by applying VOS clustering and mapping techniques to the bibliographic data. As an alternative to Multidimensional Scaling (MDS), VOSViewer categorizes objects into low-dimensional spaces to ensure that the proximity between two objects accurately reflects their relatedness and similarity (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). In this respect, VOSViewer is similar to the MDS approach (Appio et al., 2014). Diverging from MDS, which primarily engages in the computation of similarity metrics such as cosine and Jaccard indices, VOS utilizes a more fitting method for normalizing co-occurrence frequencies, such as the association strength ( $AS_{ij}$ ), which is calculated as follows (Van Eck & Waltman, 2007):

$$AS_{ij} = \frac{C_{ij}}{w_i w_j}$$

which is “proportional to the ratio between on the one hand the observed number of co-occurrences of  $i$  and  $j$  and on the other hand the expected number of co-occurrences of  $i$  and  $j$  under the assumption that co-occurrences of  $i$  and  $j$  are statistically independent” (Van Eck & Waltman, 2007).

### **Results and Discussion**

The results of this study are mainly presented through frequencies, percentages, graphs, and visualization maps.

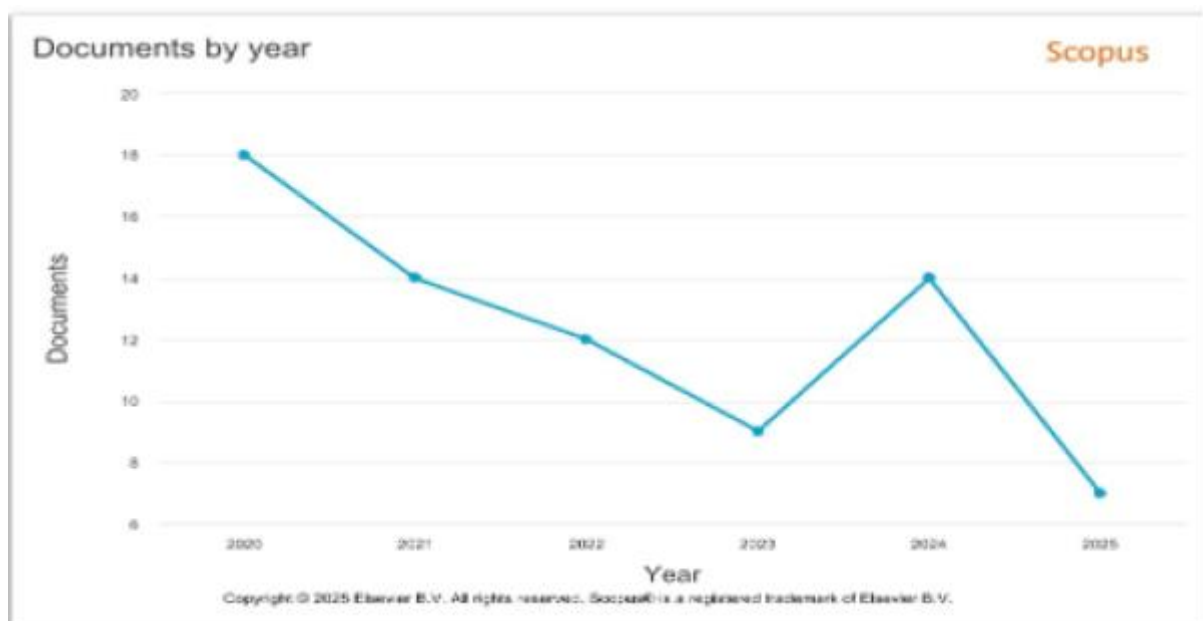
### ***Trend Analysis***

Table 3 highlights the publication trend from 2020 to 2025, showing fluctuating but sustained interest in research related to the role of quality assurance officers in higher education institutions. The most publications occurred in 2020 with 18 documents, likely reflecting the initial global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated digital learning and prompted a re-evaluation of quality assurance mechanisms. A noticeable dip followed in 2023 with only nine publications, possibly due to shifting research priorities or funding reallocations. However, consistent output in 2021 and 2024 (14 publications each), as shown in Figure 2, suggests a rebound in scholarly attention, maintaining momentum around QA topics during educational transition and digital adaptation.

The data for 2025, though not yet complete, shows seven publications, indicating continued research activity, albeit potentially lower due to the year still being in progress. This ongoing interest underscores the enduring relevance of quality assurance, especially as institutions globally navigate post-pandemic reforms, accreditation pressures, and increasing demand for performance transparency. Overall, the distribution reflects a responsive research community that aligns its focus with external educational challenges and policy shifts, reinforcing the strategic importance of quality assurance in higher education reform and sustainability.

**Table 3: Research Trend by Year**

Year	Total Publication
2025	7
2024	14
2023	9
2022	12
2021	14
2020	18

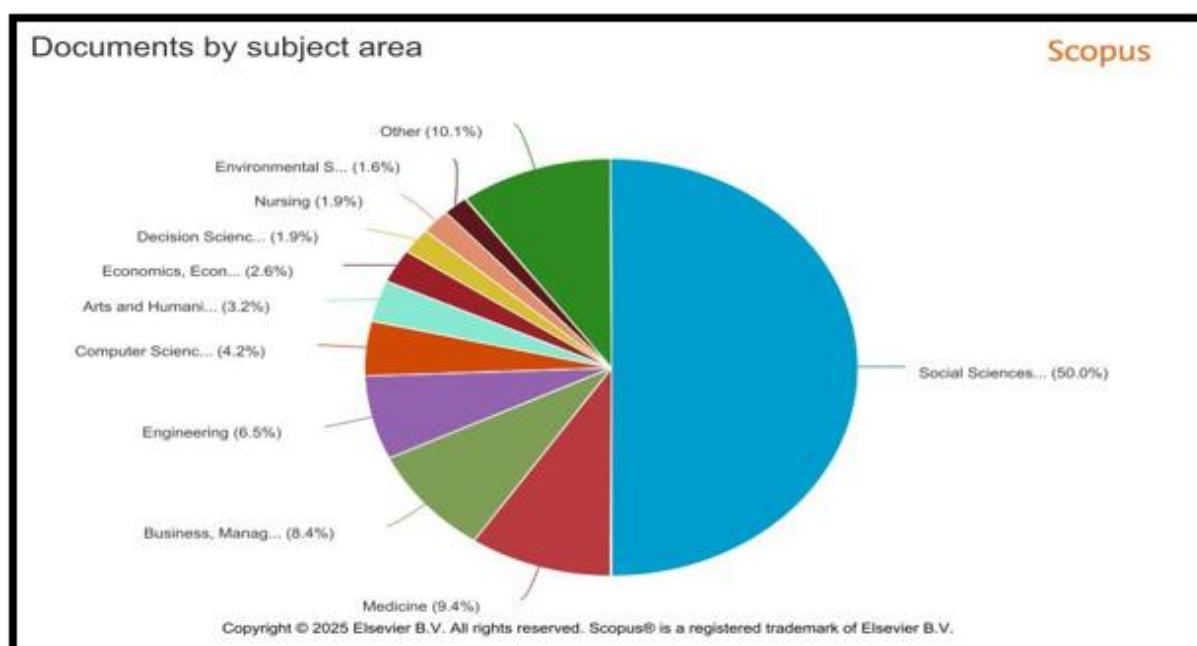


**Figure 2: Research Trend by Year**



### Subject Area

The distribution of documents by subject area reveals that research on the role of quality assurance (QA) officers' attributes in enhancing higher education performance is concentrated in *Social Sciences*, which accounts for 50% of the publications. This dominance reflects the field's focus on educational policies, institutional governance, and human factors that drive quality enhancement in academic settings. Figure 3 highlights that *Medicine* (9.4%) and *Business, Management, and Accounting* (8.4%) indicate that the discussion on quality assurance extends beyond general education to specialized fields such as medical education and business schools, where accreditation and continuous improvement are critical. *Engineering* (6.5%) and *Computer Science* (4.2%) present an interest in the role of QA in technical and digital education, aligning with the increasing emphasis on STEM disciplines within higher-education quality frameworks.



**Figure 3: Documents by Subject Area**

Minor but notable contributions from fields such as *Arts and Humanities* (3.2%), *Economics, Econometrics and Finance* (2.6%), and *Decision Sciences* (1.9%) suggest a growing interest in linking quality assurance with ethical considerations, resource management, and decision-making processes in higher education. Table 4 highlights the presence of fields such as Nursing, Environmental Science, Health Professions, and Pharmacology, demonstrating the wide-ranging settings where quality assurance practices are implemented, particularly in professional education programs that demand high standards. The limited contributions from disciplines such as Mathematics, Chemistry, Materials Science, and Physics and Astronomy suggest that, although quality assurance is broadly applicable, research on the attributes of QA officers remains concentrated mainly in social, managerial, and applied science contexts. This pattern presents opportunities for future research to explore the role of QA officers in these less-studied areas, supporting a more comprehensive understanding of quality improvement across the entire spectrum of higher education.

**Table 4: Subject Area**

Subject Area	Number of Documents	Percentage (%)
Social Sciences	154	50.0
Medicine	29	9.4
Business, Management and Accounting	26	8.4
Engineering	20	6.5
Computer Science	13	4.2
Arts and Humanities	10	3.2
Economics, Econometrics and Finance	8	2.6
Decision Sciences	6	1.9
Nursing	6	1.9
Environmental Science	5	1.6
Earth and Planetary Sciences	4	10.1
Energy	4	
Chemical Engineering	3	
Health Professions	3	
Mathematics	3	
Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmaceutics	3	
Psychology	3	
Chemistry	2	
Materials Science	2	
Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology	1	
Dentistry	1	
Multidisciplinary	1	
Physics and Astronomy	1	

***Citation Analysis***

The citation analysis of the top 10 most cited articles, shown in Table 5, highlights a strong academic interest in both the conceptual foundations and practical applications of quality assurance (QA) in higher education. The most cited work, by Anderson G. (2006) with 145 citations, examines how academics in Australian universities have responded to QA efforts, reflecting the lasting importance of cultural and institutional attitudes toward QA initiatives. Other highly cited studies, such as Hauptman Komotar (2020) and Hou et al. (2015), focus on international and comparative perspectives, exploring how global ranking systems and accreditation frameworks influence higher-education performance, particularly in Asia. The continued attention to conceptual models, as seen in works such as Boyle and Bowden (1997) and Holm et al. (2015), points to an ongoing scholarly need for frameworks that link QA with broader priorities such as sustainability and educational development.



**Table 5: Top 10 Most Cited Articles**

Authors	Title	Year	Cited by
Anderson G. (Anderson, 2006)	Assuring quality/resisting quality assurance: Academics' responses to 'quality' in some Australian universities	2006	145
Arjomandy B.; Sahoo N.; Zhu X.R.; Zullo J.R.; Wu R.Y.; Zhu M.; Ding X.; Martin C.; Ciangaru G.; Gillin M.T. (Arjomandy et al., 2009)	An overview of the comprehensive proton therapy machine quality assurance procedures implemented at the University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center Proton Therapy Center-Houston	2009	49
Hauptman Komotar M. (Hauptman Komotar, 2020)	Discourses on quality and quality assurance in higher education from the perspective of global university rankings	2020	47
Hou (Angela) Y.-C.; Morse R.; Ince M.; Chen H.-J.; Chiang C.-L.; Chan Y. (Hou (Angela) et al., 2015)	Is the Asian quality assurance system for higher education going glonacal? Assessing the impact of three types of program accreditation on Taiwanese universities	2015	39
Boyle P.; Bowden J.A. (Boyle & Bowden, 1997)	Educational quality assurance in universities: An enhanced model	1997	38
Holm T.; Sammalisto K.; Vuorisalo T. (Holm et al., 2015)	Education for sustainable development and quality assurance in universities in China and the Nordic countries: A comparative study	2015	37
McSherry C.K. (McSherry, 1976)	Quality assurance. The cost of utilization review and the educational value of medical audit in a university hospital	1976	32
Aburizaizah S.J. (Aburizaizah, 2022)	The role of quality assurance in Saudi higher education institutions	2022	31
Zuhairi A.; Raymundo M.R.D.R.; Mir K. (Zuhairi et al., 2020)	Implementing quality assurance system for open and distance learning in three Asian open universities: Philippines, Indonesia and Pakistan	2020	30
Marciniak R. (Marciniak, 2018)	Quality assurance for online higher education programmes: Design and validation of an integrative assessment model applicable to spanish universities	2018	29

However, many cited articles have addressed QA from a practical or technical standpoint. For instance, Arjomandy et al. (2009) discussed QA procedures for proton therapy in a medical context, reflecting the expansion of QA concepts into clinical and technological fields.

Similarly, Marciniak (2018) and Zuhairi et al. (2020) explored QA in online and distance learning, aligning with recent trends in digital education. More recent contributions, such as Aburizaizah (2022) and Zuhairi et al. (2020), are gaining traction, suggesting a growing interest in regional perspectives, especially from developing countries. The citation landscape demonstrates a balanced blend of theoretical discourse and practical applications with increasing global diversity and digital relevance in QA research.

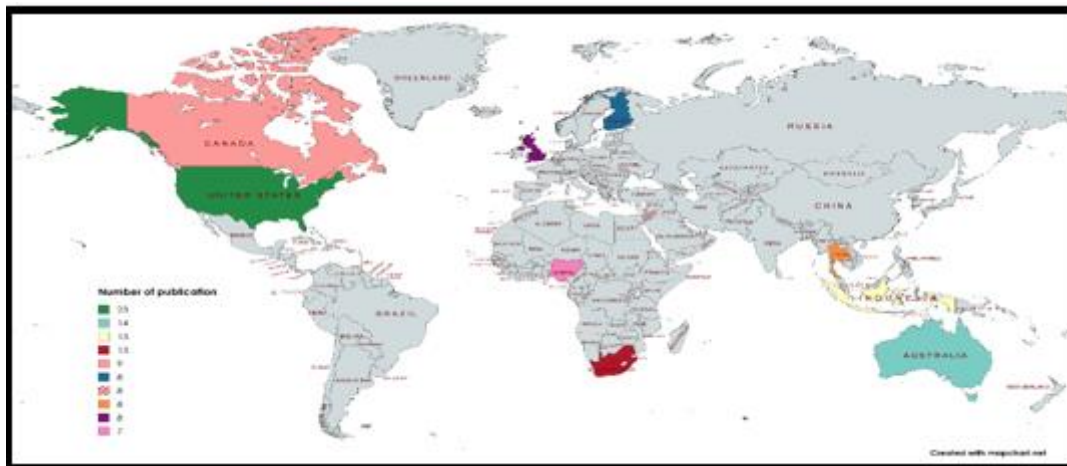
### ***Most Influential Countries***

The distribution of publications by country, as presented in Table 6, reflects widespread global academic interest in the role of quality assurance officers in higher education, with the United States leading the contributions with 23 documents (10.45%). This dominance reflects the country's extensive higher education system and strong emphasis on institutional accountability and accreditation standards. Australia follows with 14 publications (6.36%), consistent with its long-standing engagement with quality assurance frameworks in higher education. Indonesia and South Africa tied for third place, with 13 publications each (5.91%), highlighting the increasing research activity in emerging economies, where educational reform and quality assurance are vital to national development goals.

Figure 4 highlights the presence of Canada, Finland, Jordan, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and Nigeria, each contributing between 7 and 9 documents, indicating a diverse geographic spread of research interests. Including countries from Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East suggests that quality assurance in higher education is not only a Western concern but a global priority, influenced by regional needs for accreditation, performance metrics, and institutional competitiveness. Notably, countries such as Jordan and Nigeria signal growing contributions from developing regions, possibly driven by international collaboration, policy reforms, or the push for global university rankings. This diverse authorship landscape supports a more inclusive and representative discourse on educational quality assurance.

**Table 6: Top 10 Countries Based on the Number of Publications**

Country/Territory	Number of Documents	Percentage (%)
United States	23	10.45
Australia	14	6.36
Indonesia	13	5.91
South Africa	13	5.91
Canada	9	4.09
Finland	8	3.64
Jordan	8	3.64
Thailand	8	3.64
United Kingdom	8	3.64
Nigeria	7	3.18



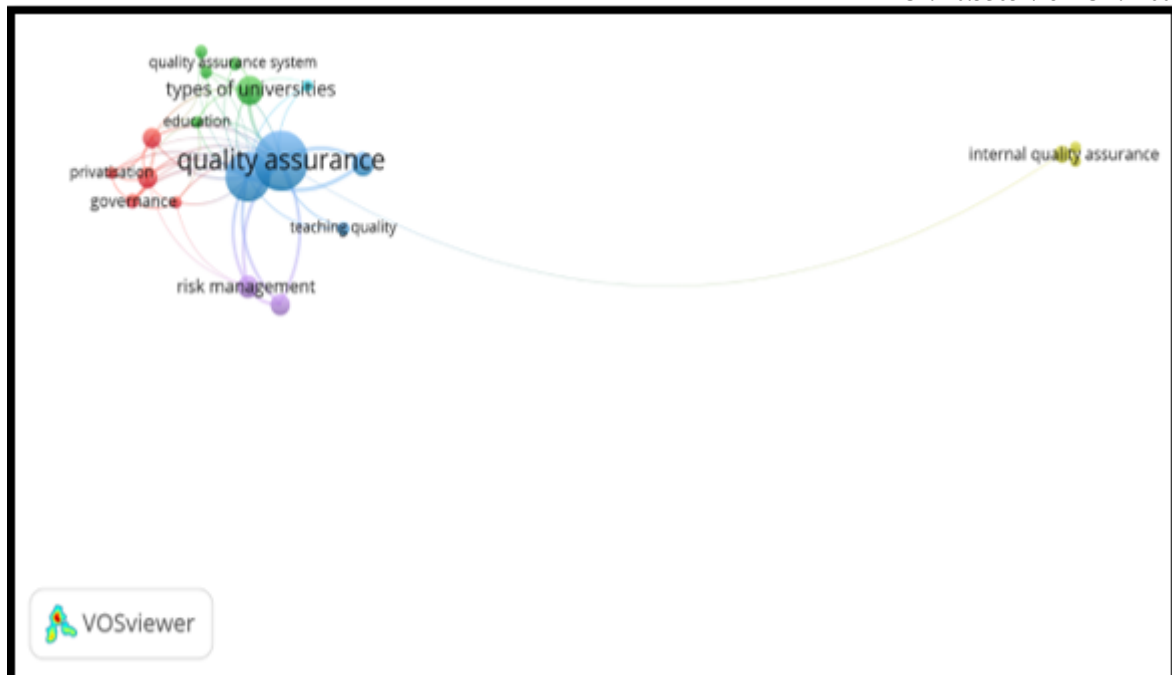
**Figure 4: Top 10 Countries Based on the Number of Publications**

### ***Keyword Analysis***

Figure 5 presents the keyword analysis from the bibliometric data, which provides clear evidence that "quality assurance" and "higher education" are the central themes in the literature, with 105 and 71 occurrences, respectively, and the highest total link strengths (155 and 148). This highlights that most scholarly discussions on the role of quality assurance officers are grounded in the broader context of higher-education performance, accountability, and institutional improvement. Their strong link strength also indicates that these terms are heavily co-cited with many others and are foundational in shaping research themes and theoretical frameworks in multiple studies.

Mid-tier keywords such as "risk management" (16 occurrences, 45 link strength), "information environment" (18, 36), and "accreditation standards" (14, 42) reveal the increasing complexity of QA practices, especially as institutions face regulatory pressures, digital transformation and evolving stakeholder expectations. Terms such as "types of universities" (26, 30) and "universities" (14, 29) suggest that comparative institutional analysis is a common approach, possibly assessing how QA functions differ by public versus private status, regional context, or educational mission. "governance" (7, 25) also reflects the integration of QA discussions with institutional leadership and decision-making structures.

Less frequently used but still relevant keywords, such as "internal quality assurance" (10, 11), "teaching quality," "quality control," and "strategic planning" indicate an emerging focus on internal mechanisms, pedagogy, and strategic frameworks for performance enhancement. The relatively lower link strengths of terms such as "quality assurance system" (6, 6) and "quality management" (6, 4) suggest that these topics are discussed but perhaps not as integrated or mature in scholarly discourse. Overall, the keyword map reveals a multidimensional and evolving landscape where foundational concepts dominate; however, there is room for deeper exploration of internal systems, models, and strategic approaches to quality assurance in higher education.



**Figure 5: Network Visualization Map of the Keyword's Co-occurrence**

### *Authorship Analysis*

The co-authorship analysis by country, as illustrated in Figure 6, highlights the diversity of the field of quality assurance in higher education, which is marked by strong international collaboration. The United States leads the publication output with 23 documents and 202 citations, indicating a strong scholarly influence. Australia, with 14 papers and 295 citations, stands out for its high citation impact, despite a lower total link strength (2). This suggests that its research is highly valued, although it collaborates less internationally (based on link strength). Similarly, Finland registered only eight documents but garnered 144 citations, indicating strong research quality, despite having no recorded link strength, suggesting minimal co-authorship ties in the analyzed dataset.

Countries such as Canada (9 documents, 62 citations), the United Kingdom (8, 115), and the United Arab Emirates (7, 83) also demonstrated both publication volume and notable citation impact. These countries reflect moderate total link strengths (3–4), implying a balanced approach between independent output and collaboration. Interestingly, Jordan and the UAE have similar total link strengths (4) but differ in citation count, possibly indicating the variation in research visibility or the focus of their collaborative efforts. Indonesia and South Africa, with over 10 publications, displayed a moderate citation impact but a relatively low link strength, signaling a strong national research capacity but limited international co-authorship.

At the lower end of link strength are countries such as Chile, Finland, and Ukraine, which show no measurable international co-authorship in this network despite moderate publication and citation numbers. This could be due to language barriers, a localized research focus, or underrepresentation in collaborative databases. Conversely, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Malaysia exhibit modest output with some collaborative engagement (link strength = 1 or 2), indicating growing but still emerging involvement in the global quality assurance discourse. The data reflect a mix of highly cited, collaboration-intensive hubs and individual country efforts contributing to a globally interconnected but unevenly networked scholarly community.



**Figure 6: Network Visualization Map of the Co-authorship**

### Conclusion

This study aimed to systematically map scholarly work on the role and attributes of quality assurance (QA) officers in enhancing the performance of higher education institutions. Through bibliometric analysis, it explored publication trends, key contributors and dominant research themes in the field. Based on 220 documents from the Scopus database, the study consistently increases research publications throughout the review period, indicating growing scholarly attention to quality assurance practices in higher education. Social sciences emerged as the leading discipline with valuable input from medicine, business, and engineering. The United States, Australia, Indonesia, and South Africa were major contributors, highlighting the global significance of QA-related scholarship.

Keyword analysis revealed recurring themes such as accreditation, governance, risk management, and institutional performance, illustrating the complex, multidimensional nature of QA work in higher education. This study contributes to the literature by charting the development of research on QA officers and offering insights into the skills and functions that drive institutional success. The findings can inform policymakers, administrators, and practitioners working to strengthen QA systems, promote professional growth, and align institutional processes with international standards. Nonetheless, the study's focus on English-language publications from Scopus within a set timeframe may have excluded other relevant works. Future research could broaden this scope by incorporating additional databases, non-English studies, and alternative bibliometric approaches to capture a more comprehensive picture. Overall, this review reinforces the crucial role of QA officers in shaping institutional performance and demonstrates the value of bibliometric tools in tracing research trends and gaps.

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