**Quality control and competitiveness**

**[Ahsan Munir](https://nation.com.pk/Columnist/ahsan-munir)**

October 14, 2021

Generally, quality control (QC) has been defined as a system of maintaining standards in manufactured products by testing a sample of the output against the specification, while quality assurance (QA) has been defined as the maintenance of a desired level of quality in a service or product, especially employing attention to every stage of the process of delivery or production. Quality management (QM) is the act of overseeing all activities and tasks that must be accomplished to maintain a desired level of excellence in quality.

Quality management follows certain standards which are defined, and accordingly, procedures are defined to meet the standards in manufacturing processes and products. Japan is considered to be the leader in QM and its products are considered to be synonymous with quality.

Every manufacturing and production concern has a quality control department, which is required to oversee the products produced. However, these departments might be biased towards their manufacturing concern in a commercial context. Thus a watchdog at a macro level is required to oversee the implementation of uniform quality standards in an industrial sector, and which conform to international standards.

[Manchester City forward Torres faces foot injury](https://nation.com.pk/15-Oct-2021/manchester-city-forward-torres-faces-foot-injury)

The Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) has been created by the Government of Pakistan to provide a one-window service for standardisation and conformity assessment. The main function of the Authority, according to its charter, is to foster and promote standards and conformity assessment as a means of advancing the national economy, promoting national efficiency and development, and protecting consumer rights. PSQCA is also responsible for facilitating domestic and international trade.

Services provided by PSQCA include accreditation, standardisation and QC labs. It regulates and registers the inspection agencies (IAs). Upon registration, the organisation is deemed to be capable of meeting standards of quality, performance, technical competence and professional judgment. It further awards the ‘Certification Marks Scheme’, which indicates that the product conforms to an acceptable standard to a potential customer. PSQCA also boasts of ‘enforcement of standards’ and claims to do periodic quality inspections of industrial products available in the market.

[French court orders state to fix climate damage](https://nation.com.pk/15-Oct-2021/french-court-orders-state-to-fix-climate-damage)

PSQCA claims to have prepared and disseminated the standards to different industrial sectors. But how their standards’ dissemination has improved industrial sectors’ performance is yet to be quantified. For instance, we have a thriving consumer industry related to fridges, air conditioners, deep freezers, TVs. However, there are no visible ‘Certification Marks Scheme’ on various refrigerators and related products in the market. Further, there are no results on PSQCA’s website of its inspections of various consumer products in the market. Moreover, when the websites of famous local brands—which are generally franchises of international brands, are visited, no visibility of any adherence to international or local quality standards (defined by PSQCA) is available. These websites boast of a wide range of products they are selling, services being provided but the essential ingredient of what these companies are offering in terms of quality to their customers in return for their money is missing.

[Prices of petroleum products in Pakistan likely to increase from October 16: sources](https://nation.com.pk/15-Oct-2021/prices-of-petroleum-products-in-pakistan-likely-to-increase-from-october-16)

Thus, despite thriving in the local protective environment for a long time, the industry has failed to improve upon quality aspects which has also affected its capacity to export. Domestic products are not of minimum quality and generally do not conform to any minimum international standards to compete with similar products in the international market. Furthermore, core technologies such as compressors, condensers are imported, mainly from China, which results in a trade imbalance and affects foreign exchange reserves. Thus, consumerism based on imports instead of local production is also causing inflation.

Since PSQCA is also responsible for international trade, it should therefore see how adherence to international quality standards be made in important industrial sectors so that local buyers get value for their money and our economy benefits from the export of these products.