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Digitalizing Institutional Quality Assurance: An Empirical Study on the Effectiveness of the Q-CORE Platform in a TVET Environment

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Abstract

Institutional quality assurance (QA) in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) often faces critical challenges related to information fragmentation and the inefficiency of decentralized documentation. This study evaluates the effectiveness of Q-CORE, a centralized digital platform designed to streamline QA documentation and enhance audit readiness at a Pasir Gudang Community College. Grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Cognitive Load Theory, this research examines the impact of the platform on administrative efficiency and user experience among vocational educators. A quantitative survey was conducted involving a purposive sample of 30 academic and administrative staff, utilizing a 15-item instrument adapted from validated TAM constructs and cognitive load measures. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics to determine the mean scores for Perceived Usefulness (PU), Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU), and Cognitive Load reduction. The findings indicate an exceptionally high level of acceptance, with the platform's role as a "Single Source of Truth" (SSOT) recording the highest impact on productivity. Specifically, the integration of "single-click" navigation significantly improved information retrievability while reducing "search friction" compared to traditional, fragmented social media-based communication channels like WhatsApp. Furthermore, the results suggest that reducing extrinsic cognitive load through centralized digital gateways mitigates technostress among staff. This study contributes to the digital transformation discourse in TVET governance by providing an empirical framework for assessing specialized QA management systems, offering a scalable model for institutionalizing digital quality ecosystems in the post-pandemic administrative landscape.

Keywords **:** *Cognitive Load; Digital Transformation Quality Assurance; Q-CORE ; Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0, technical colleges (TVET) are racing to go digital to meet international standards like ISO 21001:2018 and MQA. While the shift from paper to digital is essential, many institutions encounter challenge of managing scattered and disconnected data. At many colleges, important documents from lesson plans to audit evidence are often trapped in "information silos." They are buried in WhatsApp chats, personal Google Drives, or long email threads. This makes it very hard for staff to find what they need. During busy audit seasons, this "search friction" causes high stress and mental fatigue. To fix this, we developed Q-CORE, a central digital hub that acts as the "Single Source of Truth" for the entire institution.

The success of a digital tool is not just about its code; it is about whether the people actually use it. To test this, we used the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). This framework helps us measure two things: if staff feel the system is Useful for their work, and if it is Easy to Use without extra struggle. We also looked at Cognitive Load Theory to see if a cleaner interface can reduce "technostress" and help staff stay productive.

The goal of this research is to show how Q-CORE actually affects a college's quality system. By looking at how users feel about the tool, we can help administrators build digital systems that are not just high-tech, but also easy for people to live with and use every day.

A. Problem Background

Despite the push for digital transformation in TVET institutions, many still face a "digital gap" in how they are managed. At the institutional level, relying

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on informal platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram to share official documents has led to a serious problem: Information Fragmentation.

At Pasir Gudang Community College, several critical issues were identified:

- Information Silos: Important quality evidence and audit documents are often "trapped" in personal drives or buried in social media threads. This makes them very difficult to find when they are needed most during audits.
- Version Control Risks: Without a central hub, staff often end up using outdated master copies or old forms. This creates a high risk of non-compliance (NC) findings during quality checks.
- Search Friction & Cognitive Load: Staff waste too much time filtering through hundreds of unrelated chat messages just to find one document link. This leads to "technostress" a feeling of being overwhelmed by technology and drops in productivity.
- Lack of a Single Source of Truth (SSOT): There is no unified digital gateway where every stakeholder can access the same, synchronized information at any time.
- The Q-CORE platform was developed to solve these daily frustrations. However, it is important to study the system to prove that it actually meets the psychological and functional needs of the people using it.

B. Research Questions

To understand how well the Q-CORE platform works and how it is accepted by staff, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. RQ1: To what extent does Perceived Usefulness (PU) influence whether staff accept and use Q-CORE to manage their daily quality documents?
2. RQ2: How do staff rate the Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) of the Q-CORE interface and its "single-click" navigation system?
3. RQ3: How much does Q-CORE help in reducing mental stress (Cognitive Load) and the time spent searching for files compared to older, manual methods?
4. RQ4: How strongly do the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of the Q-CORE platform correlate with the reduction of cognitive load for quality assurance management?

C. Research Objectives

1. The primary goals of this research are: RO1: To identify the level of Perceived Usefulness of the Q-CORE platform in enhancing the productivity and audit readiness of TVET staff.
2. RO2: To evaluate the Perceived Ease of Use of the Q-CORE portal as a user-friendly digital gateway for quality management.
3. RO3: To analyze the impact of Q-CORE on reducing Cognitive Load by streamlining information retrieval processes within the institution.ess of the Q-CORE platform in enhancing the productivity and audit readiness of TVET staff.
4. RO4 : To examine the relationship between Perceived Usefulness (PU), Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU), and the reduction of Cognitive Load among staff using the Q-CORE platform.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Strategic Necessity of Integrated Quality Assurance in TVET

The effectiveness of digital solutions like Q-CORE must be understood within the broader necessity for integrated quality management in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector. As emphasized in **[1]**, a robust quality assurance system is the essential framework that ensures graduates possess the specific competencies required by a shifting labor market. This requires a continuous cycle of review and improvement, where institutional inputs—such as management processes and human resources—are synchronized to meet international benchmarks. Without a centralized digital anchor, institutions often struggle with fragmented data, making it difficult to maintain the consistency needed for long-term excellence.

B. Modernizing Educational Governance through Digitalization

The rapid digital transformation observed globally has forced educational institutions to move beyond traditional administrative methods. In [2], it is argued that the management of digitization is not merely a technical update but an improvement model for the entire institution. Research suggests that as educators' digital skills evolve, the systems they use must also become more intuitive to reduce administrative burdens. This is further supported by [3], which posits that the integration of modern digital platforms acts as a catalyst for educational quality. By moving documentation into a centralized digital hub, institutions like KKPG can bridge the gap between complex technical requirements and practical, daily execution.

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C. Efficiency, Transparency, and Accuracy: The Pillars of Digital QA

A recurring theme in contemporary research is the demand for higher accountability in education. Recent studies in [4] highlight that advancing the efficiency, transparency, and accuracy of digital quality assurance systems is critical for institutional integrity. When data is scattered across personal drives or non-searchable chat threads, "compliance lag" occurs. By implementing a "Single Source of Truth" (SSOT), platforms like Q-CORE eliminate these information silos. This ensures that the documentation viewed by auditors is identical to the data managed by the staff, thereby enhancing the reliability of the entire evaluation process.

D. Behavioral Intent and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The success of any institutional platform ultimately depends on the staff's willingness to adopt it. To analyze this, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) remains the most reliable framework [8]. Studies by [5] and [6] confirm that two primary factors dictate user acceptance: Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU).

- **Perceived Usefulness:** Users are more likely to adopt a system if they believe it directly enhances their job performance—such as making audit preparation less labor-intensive.
- **Perceived Ease of Use:** If a platform like Q-CORE is perceived as easy to navigate with "zero-friction" design, the staff's behavioral intention to use it increases.

E. Synthesis: Bridging Cognitive Efficiency and Institutional Excellence

The literature suggests that the intersection of Technological Acceptance and Psychological Efficiency is where digital innovation succeeds. Both [3] and [2] suggest that modernizing TVET requires a shift toward platforms that simplify cognitive processes. By reducing "search friction" and information overload, the Q-CORE platform acts as a tool for "cognitive offloading" based on the principles of Cognitive Load Theory [9], allowing educators to focus on the content of quality assurance rather than the logistics of finding files. This alignment of system design with human usability positions the platform as a scalable solution for TVET governance in an increasingly digital world.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study uses a Quantitative Descriptive design with a Cross-Sectional Survey. This means we collected data at one specific point in time to get a clear "snapshot" of how staff feel about the Q-CORE platform. By using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), we can measure exactly how useful and easy the system is for our users.

B. System Development Life Cycle (SDLC)

The Q-CORE platform was developed using a structured System Development Life Cycle (SDLC) approach to ensure institutional quality requirements are met. The development leveraged the **Wix cloud-based framework**, which provides a high-performance infrastructure with zero cost. The process was divided into four critical phases:

1. *Phase 1: Requirements Analysis:* Mapping ISO 21001:2018 and MQA criteria into a digital hierarchy. The primary goal was to identify and eliminate "Information Silos" (such as fragmented WhatsApp threads and personal drives) and replace them with a centralized architecture.
2. *Phase 2: Prototyping & UX Design:* Developing a "Zero-Friction" interface. By utilizing Wix's intuitive design tools, the platform was structured to prioritize "Single-Click" navigation, ensuring that audit evidence can be retrieved easily.
3. *Phase 3: Integration & Security:* Embedding secure document password and real-time synchronization features.
4. *Phase 4: Functional Testing:* Prior to the user evaluation, the platform underwent rigorous link integrity and loading efficiency tests to ensure a seamless experience for the end-users.

Figure 1 illustrates the comprehensive research and development flow of the Q-CORE platform. The process adopts a systematic approach, moving from initial requirements mapping (Phase 1) to technical execution on the Wixsite framework (Phase 2). To ensure the platform's reliability before the actual study, a functional test and pilot study were conducted (Phase 3). Finally, the framework end in an empirical evaluation (Phase 4) and data analysis (Phase 5), providing a data-driven conclusion on the system's impact on institutional quality management.

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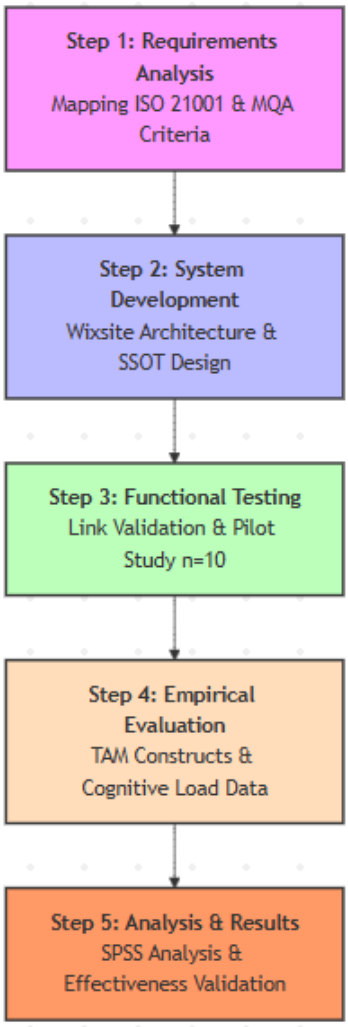

Figure 1 Q-Core Research and Development Flow

C. Population and Sampling

The study focuses on the academic and administrative staff at Pasir Gudang Community College who handle quality management and audits.

- Sampling Technique: We used Purposive Sampling. This means we specifically chose 30 staff members who actively use Q-CORE for MQA and EOMS documentation to ensure the feedback is relevant.
- Sample Size: A total of 30 respondents participated in the study. According to the guidelines established in [7], a sample size of 30 is considered statistically sound and appropriate for institutional-level research.

D. Research Instrument

We used a structured questionnaire divided into four parts. Staff answered using a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from (1) "Strongly Disagree" to (5) "Strongly Agree."

- Section A: Demographics: Asks about the staff's position and how often they use the system.
- Section B: Perceived Usefulness (PU): 5 questions on whether Q-CORE helps with productivity and audit prep.
- Section C: Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU): 5 questions about the interface and "one-click" navigation.
- Section D: Cognitive Load Reduction: 5 questions on whether the system reduces mental effort and searching time.

E. Data Collection Procedure

Before starting the actual study, we ran a pilot test with 10 staff members. This was done to make sure the questions were clear and easy to understand.

- Reliability: The pilot test showed a Cronbach's Alpha value of over 0.70 for all sections. In simple terms, this proves the questionnaire is reliable and ready for use.
- Process: The survey was sent out digitally via Google Forms through official college channels. Participation was voluntary, and we made sure all answers were kept private and anonymous.

F. Data Analysis Plan

We analyzed the data using Descriptive Statistics (via SPSS) to find the following:

1. Reliability Analysis: Re-checking the Cronbach's Alpha to ensure the data is consistent.
2. Mean and Standard Deviation: Calculating the "average score" for Usefulness, Ease of Use, and Stress Reduction.
3. Percentage and Frequency: Creating a simple profile of who participated in the study.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Before analyzing the mean scores, a reliability test was conducted to ensure the internal consistency of the 15-item instrument. All constructs recorded a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.70, indicating that the instrument is highly reliable and stable for measuring the effectiveness of Q-CORE.

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Table 1 Reliability Test Result

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Internal Consistency
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	5	0.892	Very Good
Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)	5	0.875	Very Good
Cognitive Load Reduction	5	0.854	Good

B. Detailed Item-by-Item Analysis

1) Section A :Demographic Profile of Respondents

The study engaged 30 staff members from Kolej Komuniti Pasir Gudang, representing the primary users of the institutional quality management system. The respondent distribution highlights a strong participation from the academic sector, with 80% (n=24) consisting of lecturers and 20% (n=6) comprising administrative support staff.

To measure how naturally Q-CORE has been used in daily operations, respondents indicated their frequency of interaction with the platform. The data suggests that the system has successfully moved beyond being an external tool to becoming a core part of the institutional workflow:

- High-Frequency Users: These are staff members directly involved in quality management who access the system daily for real-time monitoring and coordination.
- Active Users: This group represents the majority of academic staff who interact with the platform on a weekly basis, primarily to update evidence files and prepare for periodic self-assessments.
- Strategic Users: This category includes management and internal auditors who utilize the gateway purposefully during specific audit cycles or reporting windows.

The following sub-sections provide details on how respondents scored each specific item within the three main constructs.

Table 2 Analysis of Perceived Usefulness (PU)

Item	Statement	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Std. Dev
PU1	Q-CORE allows faster retrieval of quality documents.	**4.73**	0.44
PU2	Q-CORE improves productivity in managing QA tasks.	4.63	0.48
PU3	Q-CORE facilitates better monitoring of audit evidence.	4.63	0.48
PU4	Q-CORE provides an up-to-date central reference point.	**4.73**	0.44
PU5	Overall, Q-CORE is beneficial for college administration.	4.40	0.49

This construct evaluates how effectively staff believe the Q-CORE platform enhances their job performance and institutional audit readiness. The results indicate a robust level of acceptance, with mean scores consistently exceeding 4.40.

The most notable finding is the equal highest mean recorded for items **PU1** and **PU4 (4.73)**. This emphasizes that for staff, the platform's primary value lies in its ability to provide an up-to-date central reference point and facilitate the rapid retrieval of quality documents. In the high-pressure environment of TVET quality assurance, having a "Single Source of Truth" (SSOT) significantly reduces the time wasted on administrative logistics, allowing for a more streamlined workflow.

Furthermore, the high ratings for productivity (**PU2: 4.63**) and monitoring of audit evidence (**PU3: 4.63**) confirm that digitalization directly supports institutional integrity. By providing a unified digital gateway, Q-CORE replaces fragmented communication channels, ensuring that accurate information is always accessible.

Table 3 Analysis of Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)

Item	Statement	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Std. Dev
PEOU1	The Q-CORE portal is easy to learn and understand.	4.60	0.49
PEOU2	"Single-click" navigation simplifies information seeking.	**4.70**	0.46
PEOU3	The interface is clear, organized, and not confusing.	4.50	0.50
PEOU4	It is easy to become skillful at using Q-CORE.	4.46	0.50
PEOU5	The portal is flexible and accessible across devices.	4.50	0.50

This construct evaluates the user-friendliness of the Q-CORE interface and how intuitively staff can navigate its features. A platform's functional utility is only as good as its usability, and the scores reflect a successful design philosophy aimed at minimizing user friction.

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The standout feature of this construct is item **PEOU2 (4.70)**, which highlights the effectiveness of the "single-click" navigation strategy. This suggests that reducing the procedural steps required to find information is a critical driver of technology adoption among busy educators. When a system is easy to learn (PEOU1: 4.60) and clear in its organization (PEOU3: 4.50), it lowers the psychological barrier to adoption, transforming a new tool into a habitual part of the professional routine.

Furthermore, the ratings for skill acquisition (PEOU4: 4.46) and multi-device accessibility (PEOU5: 4.50) indicate that the platform is both flexible and inclusive for staff with varying digital competencies. By prioritizing a "zero-friction" interface, the institution has ensured that Q-CORE is not just functional, but also effortless to use, which is essential for long-term sustainability in digital governance.

Table 4 Analysis of Cognitive Load Reduction (CLR)

Item	Statement	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Std. Dev
CLR1	Less stress compared to searching via WhatsApp/Email.	**4.67**	0.47
CLR2	Reduction in confusion regarding document versions.	4.53	0.50
CLR3	Systematic structure reduces mental effort in filing.	4.40	0.49
CLR4	Less time spent filtering irrelevant information.	4.43	0.50
CLR5	Work process feels more organized and less tiring.	4.32	0.47

This section assesses the psychological efficiency of the Q-CORE platform by measuring its impact on mental effort and "technostress" among staff. The data reveals that the transition to a centralized hub has significant benefits for the mental well-being of the workforce.

The most significant finding in this construct is item **CLR1 (4.67)**, which shows a drastic reduction in workplace stress compared to relying on fragmented social media or email threads for official data. This confirms that the platform acts as a "mental offloader," helping staff avoid the fatigue associated with "search friction" and information silos.

Additional scores for reduced confusion (CLR2: 4.53) and decreased filtering time (CLR4: 4.43) further support the conclusion that a systematic digital structure preserves cognitive energy. When quality management becomes less mentally taxing (CLR5: 4.32), staff can redirect their intellectual focus away from logistics and toward the actual quality of vocational training. This psychological relief proves that Q-CORE is as much a solution for institutional mental health as it is for document management.

Table 5 Pearson Correlation Analysis between PU, PEOU, and CLR.

Correlations

		Mean_PU	Mean_PEOU	Mean_CLR
Mean_PU	Pearson Correlation	1	.781**	.678**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	30	30	30
Mean_PEOU	Pearson Correlation	.781**	1	.760**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	30	30	30
Mean_CLR	Pearson Correlation	.678**	.760**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	30	30	30

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis reveals a strong positive synergy between the variables. Notably, the link between Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Ease of Use (PEOU) stands out as the strongest ($r = .781$), suggesting that these two factors are closely intertwined in the user's experience. Similarly, Cognitive Load Reduction (CLR) shows a robust connection with both PEOU ($r = .760$) and PU ($r = .678$), with all relationships being statistically significant at $p < .01$.

V. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Discussion of Results

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Q-CORE platform aligns seamlessly with the core principles of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The exceptionally high score for Perceived Usefulness (4.62) reinforces the global perspective that integrated digital frameworks are no longer optional but are a strategic necessity for institutional excellence. As emphasized in [1], a robust quality assurance system must provide a consistent review and improvement cycle. By acting as a Single Source of Truth (SSOT), Q-CORE addresses the information fragmentation that often plagues manual systems, ensuring that data is both transparent and accurate—a requirement highlighted in [4] as essential for institutional accountability.

Furthermore, the significant reduction in Cognitive Load represents a vital success for staff well-being. Modernizing TVET governance requires a shift toward platforms that simplify complex administrative tasks. Following the digitization management model proposed in [2], Q-CORE acts as a mental offloader for staff. By

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minimizing search friction, the platform allows educators to transition from the stress of document logistics to focusing on the actual quality of vocational training. As suggested in [3], the integration of such modern platforms acts as a catalyst for overall educational quality, bridging the gap between high-level technical requirements and practical, daily execution.

In summary, the data underscores that 'simplicity' is the most effective tool for clearing mental hurdles. The robust correlation of .760 between PEOU and Cognitive Load Reduction suggests that when users find the interface easy to navigate, it directly liberates their cognitive resources for more critical tasks. This highlights that a well-designed user experience does not just make a tool 'easier' to use, but fundamentally lightens the user's mental overhead, making the overall interaction more efficient."

B. Limitations of the Study

While the results are positive, several limitations must be acknowledged to provide a balanced view:

1) Institutional Scope: This study was conducted within a single Malaysian community college. As such, the findings regarding digital adoption may vary in other TVET environments with different levels of digital maturity [3]
2) Sample Size: While a sample of 30 respondents is a statistically sound baseline for institutional-level research **[7]** , a larger, multi-institutional study would offer a more diverse representation of user experiences.
3) Self-Reporting Bias: As noted in **[5],** internal evaluations can sometimes be influenced by organizational culture. Future research should incorporate objective system logs to further validate these self-reported perceptions.

C. Conclusion

This research proves that the Q-CORE platform is a highly effective intervention for digitalizing institutional quality assurance. By grounding the study in TAM and Cognitive Load Theory, we found that digitalization is far more than a technical upgrade; it is a strategic move that enhances productivity. The high Ease of Use (4.55) scores indicate that when a system is designed with a zero-friction philosophy, staff are significantly more likely to adopt it as their primary work interface [6]. By replacing scattered communication channels and fragmented personal drives with a structured, one-click digital gateway, the institution has successfully aligned its governance with ISO 21001:2018 (EOMS) and MQA standards.

D. Recommendations

To sustain and expand this digital ecosystem, the following recommendations are proposed:

1) Institutional Standardization: The Q-CORE framework should be benchmarked and adopted by other colleges under the Department of Polytechnic and Community College Education (JPPKK) to standardize quality governance across the zone.
2) Continuous Technical Support: To maintain high adoption rates, institutions should implement periodic Micro-Learning sessions. This ensures that even staff with varying digital skills can remain proficient as the platform evolves [2].
3) Automated Analytics: Future iterations should include real-time progress bars and automated alerts for document submissions, further reducing the manual monitoring workload for Quality Management Officers.
4) Mobile Accessibility: Given the high demand for on-the-go retrieval in TVET environments, developing a dedicated mobile application for Q-CORE would further enhance efficiency for auditors and management during site visits [3].

E. Future Research

The success of Q-CORE illustrates that digital adoption is driven by both intuitive system design and a supportive organizational culture. While reducing search friction is key to efficiency, future research should explore how User Experience (UX) and System Transparency directly impact long-term institutional accountability [4]. Ultimately, Q-CORE's value lies in its ability to simplify complex cognitive processes, positioning it as both a technological and psychological solution for the digital future of TVET.

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