

REAPPRAISAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

No society has prospered without significant and sustained investment in education. In the ongoing world where the interconnectivity between the countries is on the finger tips of human being, Higher Education plays the pivotal role in the development and honing of intellectual faculties of an in particular and nation in general thus paving the way for development and economic prosperity of a nation. History is testimony of the fact the nations who have shown sincerity in the acquisition and planning of education have always remained at the forefront of world. Since its inception Pakistan had a checker board history. Despite being the land housing immense potentials, talent and quest to excel in every field, inconsistency in policies remained the major hurdle in its way to reach to the desired ambitions. Education sector was one of the major sufferer in this regard. Decade of neglect have drawn Universities in Pakistan and in particular the Higher Education sector to levels which are incompatible with the ambitions of the country to develop as a modern society and competitive economy. Lacks of commitment, conviction and dedication have brought the Higher Education to a level where the students seemed ill prepared for the challenges lying ahead. Although every Government aimed at to develop this sector but it remained only to lip service. The problems are well known, the diagnosis is identified and well documented but what lacks is the sheer will and execution.

Key Words: Challenges of Education in Pakistan, Policy Analysis of Higher Education, Viable Proposals for Enhancing Efficacy of Higher Education.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE / REVIEW OF PAST POLICIES

1.1 DEFINITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

¹Higher Education is defined as any of the various types of education given in post-secondary institutions of learning, and usually affording, at the end of a course of study, a named degree, diploma or certificate of higher studies. Higher Educational institutions include not only universities and colleges, but also various Professional Schools that provide preparation in such fields as law, medicine, business, art, music, and engineering. The terms Higher Education, tertiary education and post-secondary education are used interchangeably.

1.2 SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

It is divided into five levels: [primary](#) (grades one to five); [middle](#) (grades six to eight); [high](#) (grades nine and ten, leading to the [Secondary School Certificate](#)); [intermediate](#) (grades eleven and twelve, leading to a Higher Secondary School Certificate); and [University](#) programs leading to [graduate](#) and [advanced](#) degrees. All academic education institutions are the responsibility of the [Provincial Governments](#). The [Federal Government](#) mostly assists in curriculum development, accreditation and some financing of research. ² In Pakistan, Higher Education generally corresponding to the age bracket of 17-23 years. It is estimated that Pakistan presently has a population of 18 million in this category, and the number is expected to increase to 25 million by 2010. Of this segment of the population, 2.6 % (approximately 475,000) are enrolled in institutions of higher education. This proportion is one of the lowest in the World. In India and Iran the figures are 6.2% and 12.7% respectively.

1.3 ³THE PURPOSE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

- To support and enhance the process of economic and social development.
- To enable individuals to achieve excellence;
- To create specialized expertise like in agriculture, medicine, nuclear, space, chemical, and energy fields.

¹ <http://www.wikipedia.com>

² UNESCO statistical year book

³ <http://www.higher> education in Pakistan.com

- To inspire education at different levels.
- To coordinate at the national level.
- Human Resources development.

1.4 ⁴MAJOR EDUCATION POLICIES AND COMMISSIONS

Since independence various governments have made efforts to develop education system in consonance with the national, social, ideological needs but the proposals made by them were not implemented in letter and spirit. Recommendations made by Commissions are appended below:-

1.4.1 Pakistan Educational Conference, 1947

It called for scientific and technical education in order to build the future economic life of the country, and to instill in the people the highest sense of honour, integrity, responsibility and selfless service to the nation.

1.4.2 Commission on National Education, 1959

The Commission was given the mandate of evolving national system of education which would reflect the spiritual, moral and cultural values of independent Pakistan. The Commission work was however not supported sufficiently by funds and political will.

1.4.3 New Education Policy 1970

It was a forward looking and well conceived policy. Unfortunately, it suffered a premature demise as a consequence of political disturbances and change of Government.

1.4.4 Education Policy 1972

This policy made recommendations similar to the new Education Policy 1970. What made it radical with far reaching consequences was its recommendation for nationalization of all privately managed institutions.

⁴ . Usman Ali Isani, —Higher Education in Pakistan (PhD diss., National University of Modern Language, 2001).

1.4.5 National Education Policy, 1979

The policy aimed at harmonization of education with the concepts of Islam and the ideology of Pakistan. The major change introduced through this policy was the use of the national languages as the medium of instruction.

1.4.6 National Education Policy, 1992

The policy envisaged a qualitative shift for Higher Education from supply to demand oriented study programs, and placed a heavy premium upon research. Unfortunately, this policy too fell victim to the political expediency and instability.

1.4.7 ⁵National Education Policy, 1998-2010

- To achieve universal primary education.
- Diversify, with a view to transforming the system from supply oriented to demand oriented.
- Prepare students for the pursuit of professional and specialized education.
- Achieve comparability with international standards by upgrading the teaching, learning and research processes.

1.5 REVIEW OF THE PAST POLICIES

In nutshell the review of past policies / plan indicates towards the following major problems:-

1.5.1 Lack of Implementation of Education Policies

Despite the fact that all the education plans and policies were aimed at for the betterment of education standard in Pakistan and quite colourful yet once it came to implementation, they did not match the aims set forth.

1.5.2 Lack of Political Will

⁵.Government of Pakistan, National Education Policy (1998-2010). Ministry of Education Islamabad 1998.

Regardless of how effective and meaningful the policies and plan looks on the paper yet it needs a definite and synergetic will by the government to implement. Unfortunately this aspect has been missing in our case.

1.5.3 Quality of Education

The issue of raising the quality of education has been highlighted in all of the Five-Year Plans yet whatever funds were available to the education sector were used for quantitative expansion and not for qualitative improvement.

1.5.4 Implementation across the Board

The need for admission tests at the Universities and colleges has been highlighted in almost every Five-Year Plan. The Public Universities have not adopted this policy although funding was not an issue.

1.5.5 Official Language

Private schools were permitted to use English as the language of instruction, since they intended to prepare students for foreign examinations. This policy in effect led to the operation of two different systems of education in the country, one for the elite and another for the rest of the country.

PROBLEMS AFFECTING HIGHER EDUCATION INCLUDING QUALITY ASSURANCE ASPECTS

2.1 STRUCTURAL ISSUES

2.1.1 Divergence of Secondary Higher Education from Degree Classes

All over the world, Higher Secondary Education is a part of School Education, whereas in Pakistan it is part of College Education. Both the levels of education have divergent missions and administrative control, which leads to diversion of resources

meant for Higher Education to lower levels and loss of quality of education.

2.12 Short Duration of Bachelor's Degree

Another problem is awarding of two-year Bachelor's level general degree course at the end of 14 years of schooling. Except for England, Australia, India and New Zealand, which have a 15 years course for Bachelor's degree, the rest of the world follows a 16 years Bachelor's degree course.

2.13 Affiliation Issues

The other structural problem is the University tradition of affiliation and examination. Historically and traditionally, the University charter in Pakistan has been confined to teaching and affiliating functions and conducting examinations at network of colleges.

2.14 Governance and Management

Another structural problem relates to University governance which suffers from tracheotomy. As highlighted in the ⁶World Bank Report, no single authority is in charge of universities, degree and intermediate colleges, or research institutions. As a result, the Higher Education and Scientific Research Sector in Pakistan is devoid of accountability.

2.2 FUNCTIONAL AND INSTRUCTIONAL PROBLEMS

2.2.1 Tilt Towards Arts Education.

⁷At present the ratio of arts and science students is approximately 70:30. The present subject balance, therefore, shall have to be changed to ratio of 50:50 for real progress of the country.

⁶ World Bank, Higher Education and Scientific Research; Strategy for Development and Reform, 1992

⁷ Ministry of Education, Report of Task Force on _Improvement of Higher Education in Pakistan: Challenges and Opportunities, Jan 2002

222 ⁸Shortfalls of Functional/Organizational Structure of Universities

The organizational structure has following tiers which have direct impact on routine functioning of Universities:-

- The Chancellor is required to perform the functions which ordinarily are performed by the Governing Board.
- The Departments lack in expertise and vision for Higher Education besides have very little interaction with day to day working of Universities.
- Although Senate has a broad based membership, it is too large to discharge any executive overseeing responsibilities.
- Syndicate is the executive body of the University, responsible for all matters except for changes in the Statutes.
- Academic Council is a council of over 100 members that considers all curricular matters.
- Selection Board is convened whenever needed to consider appointments and other personal matters.
- Treasurer is the chief financial officer of the University, *appointed by the Chancellor* and is responsible for ensuring that all the financial rules are followed.
- Controller of Examinations manages the examination system.
- Registrar enforces administrative policies and prepares institutional reports.
- Deans are *appointed by the Chancellor*, and have mainly the academic functions.
- Heads of Departments *are appointed by the Syndicate*, and have both academic and administrative powers.

⁸ ibid

223 Quality of Education

Quality refers to the attainment of standards of re-sourcing and provision in Higher education Sector, and the achievements or outputs of an institution or System. A more detailed look into these factors can make us understand the reasons for this lack luster performance of our Universities:-

2.2.3.1 Qualified Faculty Staff

Shortage of qualified teachers continues to hinder the progress of Higher Education towards achieving international standards. ⁹At present approximately 25% of the current faculty members hold Ph D degrees.

2.2.3.2 Lack of Suitable and Supportive Infrastructure

At present the Universities especially public lack in terms of availability of books, journals, scientific equipment, consumables, teaching aids and high speed internet connectivity as well as sports and other facilities like access to research grants and post doctoral training programs, poor accommodation and administrative facilities.

2.2.3.3 Out of Merit / Inadequate Admissions

With the establishment of large number of Private Universities, we find that there exists lot of dichotomy in the admission mechanism of various institutions.

2.2.3.4 Outdated Curriculum

Curriculum of a subject is said to be the throbbing pulse of a nation. There exist no system to manage the curriculum related activities in line with the modern needs.

2.2.3.5 Accreditation of Institutions to Ensure Quality Control

⁹ <http://www.hec.gov.pk/Quality Assurance/Statistics/Faculty.htm>

There are number of Universities, Campuses and DAIs which operate illegally, claiming to be the affiliates or subsidies of foreign institutions.

2.2.3.6 Inadequate Research

Universities in Pakistan have confined their role to teaching and examinations and research function is rather limited. This has therefore stopped the growth process in any discipline.

2.2.4 Inadequate Distant Learning Institutions

Higher Education through Distant learning is gaining currency now-a-days as it is easily manageable, affordable and economical for the students of different age groups. Unfortunately, in Pakistan only one such institution exist i-e Allama Iqbal University which awards degrees through correspondence courses.

LATEST REFORMS AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY BEING FOLLOWED BY HEC AND ITS ANALYSIS

3.1 ¹⁰STRATEGIC VISION OF HEC

Transformation of our institutions of higher education into world class seats of learning, equipped to foster high quality education, scholarship and research, to produce enlightened citizens with strong moral and ethical values that build a tolerant and pluralistic society rooted in the culture of Pakistan.

3.2 THE ROLE OF THE HEC

HEC has figured out as a key driving force for the provision of accessible and world class higher education, so that it can serve as an engine for socio-economic development through linkages with industry, agriculture and defense, thereby enhancing the quality of education and life. The key roles are:-

- To evaluate, improve and promote Higher Education.
- To balance the priorities in line with the challenges.

¹⁰ <http://www.hec.gov.pk>

- To build institutional capacity, with a particular focus on promoting quality in educational institutions.
- Maintain a balance between the excellence in teachings, knowledge transfer and research works.
- Promote harmony amongst Universities and industries
- Continue to determine the equivalence, validity and recognition of local and international degrees
- Continue to implement mechanisms for the evaluation of performance of faculty as per the international standards.
- Continue to ensure that curricula are modern, challenging and progressive and in line with the modern needs.
- Support innovative ways of delivering life long learning.
- Continue to ensure that resources available are used at best by ensuring proper accountability.

3.3 ¹¹MEDIUM TERM DEVELOPMENT PLAN (MTDF)

The MTDF is a five years plan, formulated and issued in early 2005 by the HEC. It identifies the major issues faced by the higher education sector with the aims of addressing the issues in a long term manner.

3.3.1 Strategic Aims

The framework is organized around four strategic aims:-

- Faculty Development
- Improving access and learning.
- Excellence in research
- Relevance to National Priorities

3.3.2 Other Core Aims

There are three other supporting aims which have been formulated and these are:-

- Leadership, Governance and Management
- Quality assurance: Standards, Assessment, Accreditation

¹¹ HEC, Medium Term development Framework 2005-10

- Infrastructure development.

3.3.3 Faculty Development

To improve upon this aspect following major programs have been initiated by HEC:-

- Initiation of short duration training programs.
- Addressing the existing faculty deficiencies through hiring from abroad.
- Rehiring the faculty members on the basis of productivity.
- Increasing the rewards for excellent teachings.
- Institutionalize ¹²-tenure track system for appointment of faculty members with complementary attractive salary packages.

3.3.4 Improving Access

To attain greater access, major programs under taken by HEC are:-

- Provide incentives and encourage private sector both inside and outside the country to open quality institutions.
- Increasing access to 5% and 10% in next 5 and 10 years respectively by enhancing the available infrastructure.
- Widening the scope of higher education through distant learning/virtual Universities.
- Reducing the burden of expenses on students through the assistance of donor agencies like USAID.
- In collaboration with the renown Universities, encourage opening up of their Campuses in Pakistan and to develop external degree programs.

¹² This system requires that initial appointment of faculty be on contract, whereas a permanent tenure is only granted upon the recommendations of a group of renowned international peers. The holding of Ph.D is mandatory for the appointment in tenure track system.

- Initiate University Mega projects.

3.3.5 Promoting Excellence in Learning and Research

Some of the major programs initiated in this field were:-

- Awarding research grants to creative researchers to enable them to conduct R&D.
- Strengthen laboratory facilities.
- Make available digital library facilities as well as physical books and journals.
- Support Sabbatical leave fellowship programs.
- Support schemes to strengthen Science and Technology labs and libraries.
- Establish Hi-technology centralized Resource Laboratories.
- Enhancing the number of national and international research grant recipients.
- Institute annual awards for the best research publications in various disciplines.
- Provide opportunities for faculty members to pursue Ph.D.-level education.
- Implement transition towards 4 years undergraduate program.

3.3.6 Ensuring Relevance to the Economy: Industrial Linkages

This objective is being achieved by:-

- Establishment of a technology triangle of Universities, industries and R& D Organizations.
- Provide internships in industry and engage business managers in Higher Education decision-making.
- Promote dissemination and application of research findings.
- Make mandatory the creation of –Career Centres for students.

- Facilitate interaction between Academia and Industry.
- Launch the National Technology Incubator (NTI) Project.

3.3.7 Developing Leadership, Governance and Management

The programs under taken in this field are:-

- Training of young faculty at various Universities on teaching, research and administrative skills.
- Management courses designed for educational institutions by professional organizations.
- Management and Support Staff development and training.

3.3.8 Enhancing Quality: Quality Assessment and Accreditation

Major Programs are:-

- Collect extensive statistics on all aspects of institutions in implementation of the programs initiated.
- Establish criteria to ensure quality at the departmental level.
- Continuously revise curricula.
- Take measures against institutions that overstep the legal bounds.
- Universities to undergo ISO 9000 Certification program.
- Maintain comprehensive web site to inform the public on approved and unrecognized institutions.
- Establish an Accreditation Council responsible for accreditation of degree programs.
- Implement a mechanism for the ranking of local Universities against certain basic criteria.

3.3.9 Physical and Technological Infrastructure Development

Major programs under taken are:-

- Ensure that the recurring and development needs of various public sector Universities are provided for.
- Review development projects proposed by Universities through appropriate authorities.
- Fully deploy the Pakistan Education and Research Network (PERN) to connect all Public and Private sector Universities.
- Provide funds for establishing a computerized infrastructure.
- Complement PERN program by several digital TV channels.

3.4 ANALYSIS

3.4.1 Faculty Development

Seeing the overall low quality of faculty and the shortfall of Ph Ds in various Universities, HEC initiated faculty development programs such as research support, Masters and PH D training in Pakistan and abroad for current faculty (e.g tenure track system) and support for post doctoral fellowships.

3.4.2 Improving Access

Increasing access to 5% in next five years and 10% in next ten years again seems an ambitious step owing to the financial and infrastructural constraints.

3.4.3 Promoting Excellence in Learning and Research

Research needs are predominantly focused on science and technology, whereas development of social sciences as a subject and developing the basic infrastructure like laboratories at college level has not been given its due treatment.

3.4.4 Developing Leadership, Governance and Management

This objective is aimed at providing more autonomy to the

Higher Education Institutions. However, no such measure is suggested/planned whereby these institutions either work separately or in true coordination with the Provincial and Federal government.

3.4.5 Infrastructural Development

It houses two major aspects within itself. One, to have physical infrastructure in terms of accommodation, equipment etc to address the growing enrolment and second, to develop a scientific, networking data base for research related activities.

3.4.6 Outdated Curriculum

Despite outlining various objectives for the uplift of higher education, much is still desired in the curriculum related aspects. At present the universities/colleges are still following the outdated curriculum which at times does not focus on the upcoming needs.

3.4.7 Institutional / Program Accreditation / Recognition

HEC has set various accreditation bodies like QAA and Accreditation Councils to carry out institutional as well as program accreditation under the federal government control as per Higher Commission Ordinance, 2002 (Section 10).

3.4.8 Financing/Fee Infrastructure for Students

Though various types of scholarships have been introduced for the students, however a deliberate and student supportive fee structure is still missing.

3.4.9 Assistance to Colleges

Most Pakistani students in higher education (about 0.8 million) study in about 700 colleges. These colleges receive pitifully small funding as compared to Universities.

3.4.10 Distance Learning

The rapidly increasing population of Pakistan and the rising number of students seeking admissions in institutions of Higher Learning makes Distance Learning an attractive proposal. The

Open University experience has been successful, and needs to be properly guided and administered.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

4.1 UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

To make the system more accountable and transparent, following is suggested in this regard:-

- The Syndicate should include distinguished individuals from academia, industry, public service, faculty, students and alumni.
- The office of Chairman and the VC under no circumstance be held by the same person.
- In order to increase transparency, bi-annual budgets should be published by the Syndicate on the performance of the administration and the University.
- VC should appoint principle officers of the University, such as Registrar and the Pro-VC, by recommending them to Syndicate. _

4.2 ISSUES OF SUSTAINABILITY

In Pakistan, on one hand, we need Higher Education for sustainable development and on the other hand, we need sustainable development in the Higher Education. Both of them supplement and complement each other. The sustainability issue is also having a direct linkage with the political will and financial commitment of the leaders to the cause of raising the standards of Higher Education for a sustainable growth of the economy.

4.3 REVIEW OF PAST POLICIES/MEGA DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS

Based on MTFD 2005-10, HEC initiated number of projects/programs to achieve the desired goals. However, with the appointment of new Chairman and the change of Government, there are chances that the ongoing projects may not receive the desired support.

This may result into lot of wastage of resources and effort if the on going projects are delayed/not implemented.

4.4 FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Following can be done in this regard:-

- The targets set by HEC be revised to make them more practicable and realistic.
- Entire process of revamping the faculty be under taken gradually with certain time lines.
- It must be also ensured that equal attention is given to develop the faculty of Private sector.

4.5 EMPHASIS ON SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES SUBJECTS

HEC in its quest for improving higher Education has mostly focused on science subjects which are relevant to market economy. Pakistan may depend on advanced IT, more Ph Ds, more foreign scholarships for its scientists and engineers, but producing good social scientists is also very crucial for national integrity and social stability of the nation. We have to come out from this one-directional approach and look for producing students who are not only good citizens but also have social awareness, brotherhood and national spirit to serve the nation.

4.6 EMPHASIS ON DISTANCE LEARNING

Following steps are also required to be taken in this regard:-

- The Regional Centres of the Open University must be better staffed and equipped.
- Quality concerns must be addressed by the Allama Iqbal Open University, so that its degrees are at par with other Universities
- Efforts be made to open Distant learning Institutions in each Province.

4.7 PROMOTING EXCELLENCE IN LEARNING AND RESEARCH

Although much has been done by HEC to promote research activity, however following must be required to bring it to a level where it proves a worthwhile activity:-

- Research laboratories should be established in areas with a pre-dominance of emerging technologies.
- The criteria for faculty promotion and salaries be linked to performance in research.
- Infrastructural development in term of laboratories and libraries etc be given more attention.
- Above all there is a dire need to address the awareness amongst the students for originality of ideas.

. 4.8 FUNDING PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Some measures which can be taken are:-

- Making use of surplus land held with Universities for commercial projects.
- Extending expertise to commercial/industrial sectors thus earning worthwhile donations for research projects.
- Creation of endowments.
- Progressive enhancement in fee structure.
- Getting rid of un-useful staff and departments.
- Economy and control of expenditure.
- Expansion of Self Financing Scheme.

4.9 COLLABORATION WITH PRIVATE SECTOR

To encourage the Private sector, following must be done:-

- Simplifying existing system of grant of charters.
- Necessary financial assistance in term of endowment fund.
- Provision of state land on reduced prices.
- Relaxation in taxes for any educational related imports.
- Exemption of tax duties on Import of all equipment.

4.10 INTERNAL EVALUATION MECHANISM

It is felt that the Universities are still avoiding carrying out internal academic reviews of departments, programs and faculty at their own, outside accreditation process to ascertain their educational quality

standards. HEC should encourage Universities more vigorously to undertake this practice.

4.11 IMPROVING QUALITY STANDARDS OF COLLEGES

As already highlighted that Colleges doesn't fall within the authority of HEC but since they are very important link from transition higher Secondary Education to Tertiary Education, therefore there is a need to expand quality assurance to the colleges at some time in future.

CONCLUSION

The educational development in Pakistan is almost as exciting as the social and economic development since its inception. The projected demand for Higher Education in Pakistan and the objectives being set forth by the HEC dictates growing realization at all levels. However, the need now is to learn through experience of past 7 years, refine the rough corners, bridge the existing gaps, rationalize the priorities and than work with sincerity to train our generation in a way enabling them to face the challenges in a befitting manner squarely.

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