

Higher education in pakistan



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In this chapter we will spotlight on higher education and reform trends in Pakistan. It starts with text picture of Pakistan and goes on to explain the re-orientation and changes of higher Education in Pakistan, particularly in the context of globalization. One of the aims of this chapter is to highlight the reforms and expansion movement started by the HEC(Higher Education Commission of Pakistan), since the beginning of the new millennium, HEC is currently reshaping the structure of higher education system in Pakistan. . Finally, the chapter presents an overview of Higher education reform phenomenon in Pakistan. It will also look at the causes while discussing the current initiatives and efforts undertaken by the HEC in order to transfer Pakistan into a “ Knowledge Based Society” but much of the discussion and analysis will be in chapter 4 of this study

Higher Education sketch during Post-Partition Era

At the time of Independence, in 1947, the newly born Government of Pakistan inherited a conceptualized system of education and administrative setup from the united Indian Government under the British rule. However, during that time the educational profile of the country was extremely low, as participation rate at primary level was 19%, the literacy rate was only 13% the totally available budget for education was Rs. 30 million (MoE: Educational Development 1993: 2). Likewise, the situation of higher education was also unstable as Pakistan inherited only 2 universities in 1947. Among them one was a fully established and functional university (i. e. The University of the Punjab) which was established in 1882 during the British rule in India. This university functioned more or less on the pattern of the Indian Universities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, which were founded in

1857 on the pattern of London University (Chinnappa 1988: 74). The other institution was the University of Sindh (regarded as the second oldest university in Pakistan) established in 1946 just a year prior to the independence but was not properly functional at the time of Independence (Khawaja 1996: 139). There were, however, 17 professional colleges (4 Agriculture; 1 Medical; 4 Engineering; 1 Animal Husbandry; 3 Law; 3 Education; and 1 Tibbia(Medical related term) or Alternative medicine college) and 42 non-professional colleges (Arts, Science and Commerce) including 5 colleges for women (MoE: Review of Education Policies 1986: 18; MoF: Economic Survey 1993-94: 189).

Due to this dismal situation, attempts to speak about the entire educational system up to the needs and aspirations of the country started right after the independence when All Pakistan Educational Conference was held in Karachi from 27 November to 1December 1947 under the directives of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah - the Founding Father of Pakistan. Laying out the broad contours of Pakistan's education policy, Mr. Jinnah emphasized that,

We must bring our education policy and program on the lines suited to the genius

of our people, consonant with our history and culture and having regard to the

modern conditions and vast development that have taken place all over the world..... we have to compete with the world, which is moving very fast in this

direction. Also I must emphasize that greater attention should be paid to technical

and vocational education (Mol: Proceedings of Education Conference 1947: 5).

In this Conference, Mr. Jinnah stressed the importance of education as an instrument of any nation's socio-economic change. The Conference produced a strong philosophy of modern education and a number of ambitious recommendations indicating the future goals of education in Pakistan. Sadly, the untimely demise of Mr. Jinnah, in September 1948, did not give him the time to guide the newly founded state on to the road to progress and development. Since then, various governments have made efforts to reorient the educational system in harmonizing with national, social, ideological and economic needs of the country. For this purpose, appointment of different Commissions on Education and Policies were formulated from time to time, although the implementation of these policies was not matched with the many significant recommendations (MoE: PTF 2002: 17) made by various governments. Some of the noteworthy events in the history of Pakistan educational development are:

Educational Conference (1951); Six Year Development Plan (1952);
Commission on

National Education (1959); Commission on Student Problem and Welfare (1966); National Commission on Manpower and Education (1969); New Education Policy (1970); The Education Policy (1972-80); National Education

Policy (1979); National Education Policy (1992); and National Education Policy (1998-2010); (White Paper-Revised 2007: 77; Ullah 2003).

Alongside these education policies, the then Governments produced eight Five-Year Plans, implemented from 1955 until the second half of 1990s, which, according to The Boston Group (or TBG), “ were documents that set unrealistic targets” (2001: 17). In this regard, TBG report clearly notes that,

Although the Five-Year Plans and the Education Policies..... were riddled with

serious flaws, even with all their glaring defects, had even a small percentage of

policy recommendations been implemented with the requisite earnestness, it would have dramatically improved the situation of higher education in Pakistan.

Nevertheless, there is also an extensive collection of aborted reform efforts – and all these reforms “ were unsuccessful even in meeting their ostensible and proximate goals” (TBG 2001: 15) – because they were proposed too hastily, without sufficient research being done, and because they were incompatible (Khalid & Khan 2006: 310). This situation drastically

affected the educational system as well as the standard of education in the public sector. However, quality education was limited to only a few institutions, many of which were private, profit-making and beyond the reach of all except a very small upper (or elite) class (Ravitch 2006: 8). Therefore,

reorientation of higher education and change in educational policies were needed so as to end the apartheid system, which threatened to disrupt Pakistani society.

Efforts for Reorientation of Higher Education: The Need for Change

For over 50 years, the state of education in Pakistan remained woefully unsatisfactory, and Pakistani educational system faced very severe problems that had a direct impact on the development of higher education. According to Hayes (1987) the problems plaguing the educational system of Pakistan are multidimensional like population explosion, lack of resources, non participation of the private sector, scarcity of qualified man power, inconsistency in the policies of various regimes, political instability, inefficient educational management system, wastage of resources, and poor implementation of policies and

programme etc. (cited in Haider 2008: 2). Although, with a current population of over 160 million people and per capita GDP of US\$925 (DFID 2007), the country is struggling to deal with reconciliation, addressing inequalities and poverty, and building democracy while under pressure to globalize.

For a developing country like Pakistan, the major challenges include contributing positively to economic growth and eradicating poverty; and institutionally the challenges include quality and curriculum reform, brain-drain, proper evaluation system as well as accreditation mechanisms and transferability among universities. Pakistan is still facing these problems and challenges and is, therefore, constantly in a state of change - in reorienting

the education system - driven particularly by the impact of accelerating globalization. According to Prof. Dr. Atta-ur-Rahman, Chairman of HEC, the World Bank (WB) in 2003 had assessed that Pakistan was at least 35-40 years behind East Asian countries and 10-15 years behind the

South Asian countries in education and therefore it was high time to rectify this anomaly

(HEC-Press Release 2006).

In order to improve the quality and promote scientific education in the country, Musharraf's regime started investing heavily in the education sector while adapting to the many changes engendered by globalization. According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan (2006-07: 168), over the past four years the Government has increased the budget for higher education more than sevenfold, to about US\$449 million, which amounts to 0.5 % of Pakistan's GDP. Additionally, the total spending (recurrent + development) by the HEC grew by more than 344 % in real terms from 2001-2002 to 2005-2006 (World Bank 2006: iii/12; Green Papers 2006: 26). In Science and Technology, Pakistan has also increased funding for university research by eight thousand percent (Thulstrup et al. 2006: 22). Besides, in cooperation with several European countries (such as: Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and The Netherlands) the HEC has launched a US\$15 billion Pak-European initiative designed to create nine world-class engineering universities, over the next 10 years, staffed with European faculty and Administrators. Moreover, the HEC will also facilitate the European Commission (EC) in dissemination of its Asia-Link program and will provide

all assistance to the EC in helping the development of the education sector.

The EC could

provide facilities for various areas such as PhD scholarships, Post-Doctoral training and

Establishment of new institutions in Pakistan (Mian 2006: 10; Education: News & Events 2006; MoF: Economic Survey 2006-07: 168). This development and the massive increase made for higher education had brought about qualitative change in the universities, their faculty and standard of education in Pakistan. These exemplary steps are, therefore, planned to put the house in order to reorient the higher education system and take Pakistan forward in order to become a developed country. Despite all the political, economical, and socio-cultural changes taking place in Pakistan, it can be observed that, the country is witnessing a positive development in the education sector (Kazmi 2005: 102) and making a 'transition' towards knowledge-based economy (Atta-ur-Rahman 2007). and market-oriented system with a rapid progression in ICT Such 'transition' is also happening in many other countries as their respective governments have been discussing ways to redefine the role of the state (Maassen & Cloete 2002) and the implementation of "marketisation policies" (Jongbloed 2003) in higher education. According to Gallagher (2000: 49), with the shift to market orientation, "the relations of the state with universities are shifting from directive to facilitative policies and mechanisms but with a stronger emphasis on accountability for outcomes." However, any such arrangements can only be successful if the traditional steering relationship between state (or "government") authorities and higher education institutions is changed

dramatically (Maassen 2003; Enders et al. 2003). However, across the OECD member countries, one can observe that a similar shift has taken place in many different fields from government to “ free market”, and the use of “ marketisation” (for instance: competition, the price mechanisms) of various kinds has also become more common. As” changes in systems of higher education tend to follow international trends” (Aarrevaara & Maruyama 2008: 7), in this context – when viewed from the perspective of globalization – Pakistan is also undergoing a transitional period. Its educational system has undergone a major institutional transformation and profound change in ideology, policy and positive reform process. Thus, the reorientation of educational priorities – as part of the process of redressing the legacies of educational apartheid and transforming the systems – has been an imperative of higher education policy discourse since the beginning of the new millennium.

Move towards Change in Higher Education

The importance of higher education in developing (or “ low income”) countries was brought out in the World Bank-UNESCO (2000) report prepared by the “ The Task Force on Higher Education and Society.” Higher education experts from 13 countries concluded in their 135- page report “ Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise” that without more and better higher education, developing countries (i. e. home to over 80% of the world’s population) will find it increasingly difficult to benefit from the global knowledge-based economy without improving the efficiency and resources for higher education. The Task Force ‘ Peril and Promise’ put a strong emphasis on higher education and suggested that,

Urgent action to expand the quantity and improve the quality of higher education

in developing countries should be a top development priority [.....] each developing country make it a national priority to debate and determine what it can realistically expect its higher education system to deliver (WB-UNESCO 2000: 10).

The report broadly outlines the case for higher education reform, addresses the barriers and suggests various ways of overcoming them. While 'Peril and Promise' generally identified the situation of higher education in developing countries, the report prepared by The Boston Group (2001) - an informal think tank of US-based expatriate Pakistani scholars - as its 'Contribution to the Task Force on Improvement of Higher Education in Pakistan' highlighted the section of problems in Pakistan's higher education sector. TBG report on 'Higher Education in Pakistan: Towards a Reform Agenda' relies in considerable measure on the ideas presented in 'Peril and Promise' and makes a useful contribution by focusing on the situation in Pakistan (Johnstone 2006: 82).

TBG identified three key areas for reform

- Institutional Reform: the challenges of governance;
- Curricular Reform: the challenges of pedagogy;
- Fiscal Reform: the challenges of fiscal solvency (TBG 2001: 9-14).

It also presented a bulk of recommendations and lists the strategic and tactical steps in order to operationalise these recommendations (ibid: 52-56), though some of its recommendations may be contested. Finally, the report advocated the establishment of a Higher Education Support Commission (HESC) – as an independent and transparent statutory body – to mobilize financial, technical, human, and social resources for enhancing the quality of educational institutions, and for facilitating the reform process initiated within these institutions.

After reviewing TBG report, in April 2001, the Federal Cabinet immediately formed a Pakistan Task Force (PTF) with a mandate to analyze the condition of the higher education sector and to suggest necessary changes. In this regard, the objectives assigned to the PTF were,

“ to review higher education in Pakistan and recommend ways of improving qualities”

(MoE: PTF 2002: 6).

The PTF conducted an extensive field exercise and workshops with all stakeholders to identify the needs and the issues in education service delivery. The PTF in its final report, namely: ‘ Task Force on The Improvement of Higher Education in Pakistan: Challenges and Opportunities’, proposed a lot of changes – calling for a complete overhaul of systems and attitudes in the present structure of universities – which ranged from the governing bodies to the overall change in the service structure of teachers. The 78-page report was submitted to the Pakistan Ministry of Education (MoE) in March 2002, and based on the recommendations of the Task Force,

<https://assignbuster.com/higher-education-in-pakistan/>

which – according to Bloom (2002: 9) relied on an “entrepreneurial model” – persuaded the President Pervez Musharraf to initiate a process of reforms in the higher education system. Finally, this led to the establishment of Higher Education Commission (or HEC) in September 2002, which “has an extremely wide range of functions and its chair has ministerial status” (Fielden 2008: 15). Since then, Pakistan has witnessed the transformation of its higher education from a highly selective, elitist system to a more accessible, multi-purpose mass education system with a strong quality control mechanism in place. All the ongoing policies of educational reform and decisions of HEC have significantly transformed in ways that make them more harmonized to the realities and requirements of globalization.

Reform and Expansion of Higher Education

Pakistan was one of the first countries, in the developing world, to support the Task Force recommendations and considered how it could be applied to the local context. According to D. Bruce Johnstone, many of the recent (i. e., 2002-2005) elements of higher educational reform in Pakistan were contained in the influential Task Force Report (2002) (Johnstone 2006: 82). Since its inception in 2002, as a fully autonomous and powerful body, the HEC has successfully launched a “unprecedented number of systematic reforms directly aimed at the worst and most immediate issues plaguing the higher education sub-sector (HESS), or, more exactly, universities” (WB 2006: ii/9). These reforms can be classified under the following categories: Quality Assurance, with an emphasis on human resource development (e. g.,

expansion of the indigenous and foreign PhD programs), introduction of a new service structure for faculty members (tenure track system), definition of criteria for establishing HEIs, standardization of the four-year undergraduate, MPhil, and PhD programs, computerization of universities, and creation of the digital library;

Equity, with a substantial scholarship program and support to institutions located in less-developed areas;

Relevance, with a focus on engineering, science, and technology programs;

Research, with the research grant program, the fellowship program, and the university linkage program; and

Resource Allocation (funding formula). In order to expand the quantity and improve the quality of higher education system, HEC also developed a Medium-Term Development Framework (MTDF) for 2005-2010 - a systematic process of implementation of the five-year agenda - to respond to the growing demand of the 21 century in the wake of globalization. In this regard, HEC reform agenda identified the following key areas for improvement:

1. Faculty Development,
2. Improving Access,
3. Promoting Excellence in Learning and Research, and
4. Ensuring Relevance to the Economy.

For each of these four core strategic aims/targets, the MTDF defines clear objectives and lists relevant programs (or physical targets) to achieve them,

accompanied by appropriate Indicators (will put in the appendix at the end). Likewise, these strategic aims/targets are also supported by well-integrated three cross-cutting themes:

1. Developing Leadership, Governance and Management
2. Enhancing Quality: Quality Assessment and Accreditation, and
3. Physical and Technological Infrastructure Development (HEC-Achievement 2004- 2006; HEC-MTDF 2005-10: 7; WB 2006: 8; Atta-ur-Rahman 2007).

With regard to student access in higher education, quantity of enrolment is Pakistan's weak spot. In the past, little attention has been paid to address the issue that higher education success largely depends on students entering higher education institutions. Until 2001, the higher education enrolments in Pakistan represented a very low 2. 6% GER, of students aged between 18 to 23 years, which was although high across MENA countries (Perkinson2006: 4).

unfortunately, the country was ranked as lowest in the world, in terms of access to higher education, as compared to 10% in India and 68% in South Korea (HEC-MTDF 2005- 10: 25). However, since the establishment of HEC, the gross enrolment ratio has increased to 2. 9% in 2005 and 3. 8% in 2007 respectively (MoF: Economic Survey 2004-05: 144; 2005-06: 168; 2006-07: 168).

Despite this progress, the requirements of the knowledge-society- all over the world – clearly point to the need for a much higher GER (about 40-50%) in higher education from the current level of 3. 8%. In this regard, HEC has

shifted its attention towards improving access and has set a target to “double enrolment in higher education over the next five years by increasing the capacity of the existing higher education institutions and also establishing new ones” (MoF: Economic Survey 2005-06: 168; ICG Asia Report 2004: 7), whilst bringing about significant improvements in the overall quality of education. In recent past, the country has welcomed more innovative approaches to mass education initiatives and has also witnessed a spectacular growth and expansion in the number of chartered universities and degree awarding institutions (DAIs) both in public and private sector (see Appendix C). It can be noted that there is a significant increase of 35 universities during the period 2001-02 to 2004-05 including 13 new public and 22 new private universities. At present, there are a total of 124 universities/DAI's in the country - 67 in the public sector and 57 in the private sector.

Within these universities some 11, 000 faculty members are working, about 3, 000 of which hold PhD degrees, and of these only about 600 are active in research (Garib 2008; Jamal 2008). This is due to the fact that universities in Pakistan have traditionally been conceptualized as teaching institutions, with research occupying a very subordinate role. Unfortunately, Pakistan produces about 300 PhDs per year while India, in 2000, “produced 11, 000 PhDs of which 5, 300 were in science and engineering” (Parikh 2003: 18; Daily Times 2006).

According to the Chairman of HEC, Pakistan needs to have at least 300-400 PhD level faculty members in each university and 50-100 PhD level researchers in each research institute, before it can be regarded as a “

genuine university” (Atta-ur-Rahman 2006c: 35). He further mentioned that, the advanced countries have 2500-3000 scientists/engineers per million population, whereas Pakistan has only about 120 scientists/engineers per million population engaged in Research and Development (R&D). Therefore, Pakistan needs to target a similar per million population figure (a total of 500, 000 PhD level scientists by 2025) in order to participate in a knowledge economy. To promote R&D activities, the HEC have launched massive scholarship programs and have also awarded 5, 837 (indigenous and foreign)

PhD scholarships over the past four years (MoF: Economic Survey 2007-08: 179). About 2, 600 scholars have already been sent to top world universities (for example in USA, Europe, and China) and 69 scholars have proceeded abroad under Cultural Exchange Programme in year 2007-08. Thus, the government is targeting 1500 PhDs every year by 2009-2010 (Education: News & Events August 2006) in order to create a force of researchers needed for promoting excellence in learning and research that could improve the future quality of students, faculty and institutions.

All these initiatives indicate that, higher education in Pakistan has only recently received more ambitious emphasis than ever before and, over the years of reform, has also gained more certain directions and objectives targeted towards training and development of faculty members in different areas. As all development starts with human development, recent researches revealed that investment in faculty development (for example; pedagogical methods, technology-based teaching tools and basic research skills) improves the performance of student as well (see Trigwell et al. 1999; Kember 2000; Mann 2001). In this regard, HEC has also taken an important

task of professional development on its agenda through the establishment of ' National Academy for Higher Education' (NAHE) and ' English Language Teaching Reforms' (ELTR). This is a major effort by HEC, under its ' Learning Innovation Division' that was established in 2003,

to develop comprehensive teaching-learning material according to international standards in order to facilitate and professionally empower the local faculty.

In short, the realization of the Government, regarding the importance of higher education, has ultimately begun the reform process and " these positive reforms already have benefited the universities" (WB 2006 ii/10) in creating a viable culture of scholarly inquiry. HEC has brought a revolutionary change through helping universities to nurture the teaching and research culture by fostering a learned international community. On the whole, the massive investment in higher education is the strategy adopted by the HEC, which could enable Pakistan to meet the future demands of the global knowledge-economy, while responding better to the contemporary challenges posed by globalization.