

QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

By

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Abstract

This research was carried out regarding the study of quality of higher education in Pakistan. The objectives of the study were to critically analyze the importance and role of higher education in economic development of Pakistan to evaluate human resource development programmes of higher education and find out the impact of human resource development on the quality of higher education. The population of the study was postgraduates who have passed their examinations in the last five years and presently doing doctorate in public sector universities of Pakistan. Moreover, Ph.D. scholarship holders of Higher Education Commission and all the stakeholders of higher education was the population of the study. To achieve the objectives of the study, questionnaires were constructed; pilot tested and administered. Research done by the scholarship holders is productive from economical point of view for Pakistani scholars. More budgets for procurement of books and journals will demonstrable positive effect on quality of teaching and research. In the context of education, quality has been placed high on the agenda of educational leaders, policy makers and practitioners, and is in line with consumers' ever-increasing demand for quality education. In many countries, stakeholders have been placing high expectations on their educational systems, compelling institutions to produce higher quality products. (Iqbal). [4]

Introduction

Higher Education needs to focus on access, quality and relevance. Standards make an enormous contribution to many aspects of our lives. Without them, it would not have been possible to compare, judge and use many of the products and services worlds over. It is only the absence of standards when its importance is realized. When products meet our expectations, we tend to take it for granted. Higher Education and more education, has to be the way forward for developing countries like Pakistan. Higher Education is like an axle of

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economic development of a country and can bring real changes within the lifetime of a generation. That is why a lot of heed is being paid to higher education throughout the world. The economists are of the view that those countries trying to create successful higher education systems, need to diversify their income and be more flexible. Some universities are trying to find out new funding methods and forging links with private companies. The human touch is much more vital for higher education than high technology. Education is about learning, arguing and reasoning, which is best done in the community of scholars.

To change the educational system is tantamount to change the orbit of the planet. It needs courage to stand up and bring about a radical change in our higher education. We are confronted with a predicament out of which there seems to be no way. The most recent report on higher education, The Task Force Report on Improvement of higher education in Pakistan in 2002, summed up the views of employers, parents and students in which all of them agreed that the universities are sub-standard and need improvement (Govt. of Pakistan) [3].

Higher Education in Pakistan needs improvement in the following specific areas:

1. Identification of organizational strengths and weaknesses for human resource development.
2. Identification of probable advocates of quality.
3. Identification of customers, of both internal and external i.e. universities, colleges, teachers administrators and students etc.
4. Establishment of base line against which the improvement in quality may be measured.

Quality is the mean through which an institution can give guarantee, confidence and certainty that the standards of its educational provision are being maintained and enhanced. Quality in higher education is a dynamic and complex idea, which depends upon quality of faculty, students, infrastructure, research learning environment, good governance and strategic planning.

The first step in quality assurance in higher education is benchmarking. It is important for at least two reasons. First, it raises expectations and high expectation is the foundation upon which quality is built in any setting. Secondly, without benchmarks there may be a tendency to be self-serving and preserving of the status quo. Stated more bluntly, comparisons of ones students or programmes with those from other universities are the best antidote for the inertia that plagues most universities (Mishra) [5].

The teachers having quality are crucial for quality education. The critical role of the teachers and parents should have their key role in taking responsibility of education. Higher Education should be tailored according to the needs of the nation provided on merit.

Human resources of a country depend upon the economic and social development. The development planning is the attempt of any Government to coordinate economic and educational decisions, which are made to achieve the set of goals. Comprehensive programmes to develop the competence of the work force are, therefore, necessary but such programmes must be cost-effective and geared up towards achieving identified, verifiable and targets. In other words, universally agreed and independently assessed higher educational standards are necessary/vital for any nation to progress and compete in the world.

Revolutionary changes are taking place at higher education and grass roots level. Faculty development programme, at Higher Education Commission, Islamabad focused on enabling the university/ college lecturers to become more effective mediator, facilitator and a guide with modern methods of teaching.

The higher educational standards specify the standards of performance that people are expected to achieve knowledge and skills they need to perform effectively. They can be seen as benchmarks against which the actual performance of individuals can be compared and assessed as competent or not competent. The higher educational standards are also used as a template against which a number of human resource development strategies and practices such as training and learning programmes, establishing job descriptions, curriculum development, improving physical facilities can be referenced.

The main function of the universities is to impart knowledge and produce knowledge. The production of knowledge and its applications is accomplished through research. The main purpose of research is to contribute to the socio-economic development of the country, strengthen institutional infrastructure, train highly qualified manpower and improve the quality of higher education.

Higher Education

In a society having full diversity, ideologies and opinions, higher education means different things to different people. There are four predominant concepts of higher education. According to Barnett [2], higher education is associated with the following main features:

1. **Higher education as the production of qualified human resources:** In this view, higher education is seen as a process in which the students are counted as “products” absorbed in the labour market. Thus, higher education becomes input to the growth and development of business and industry.
2. **Higher education as training for a research career:** In this view, higher education is preparation for qualified scientists and researchers who would continuously develop the frontiers of knowledge. Quality within this viewpoint is more about research publications and transmission of the academic rigour to do quality research.
3. **Higher education as the efficient management of teaching provision:** Many persons strongly believe that teaching is the main task of educational institutions. Thus, higher education institutions focus on efficient management of teaching-learning process by improving the quality of teaching, enabling a higher pass out rate.
4. **Higher education as a matter of extending life chances:** Higher education is seen as an opportunity to participate in the development process of the individual through a flexible, continuing education mode.

Objective of the Study

The objectives of this study were:

1. To critically analyze the importance and role of higher education in economic development of Pakistan.
2. To evaluate human resource development programmes of higher education in Pakistan.
3. To find out the impact of human resource development on the quality of higher education in Pakistan.

Quality and its Assurance in Education

Quality teachers are the one who with great effort continue to further improve the level of education and process of learning day by day. These teachers not only help their pupils to realize what education is all about, but also play an important role in reshaping their character that helps them in their daily life. These committed teachers are significant agents that play an essential role in social development, which brings tangible results. Thus, without their contribution, no society can ever achieve development, social harmony and peace.

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Quality in US Higher Education

The US system of higher education is the best in the world. According to a survey the American universities came top of the class and looked at the secrets of their success amid a whirlwind of change spurred by global competition and growing numbers heading into higher education.

The survey results showed the most significant development in higher education was the emergence of a super league of global universities.

The United States was an excellent example of a system that featured elite universities and higher education access for the masses. The Economist said. Seventeen of the world's top 20 universities are American, according to the widely used global ranking by the Shanghai Jiao Tong University. Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was considered the world's best, with Stanford in California listed third and the nearby University of California at Berkeley in fourth place. The University of Cambridge in England was ranked second. The success of American higher education is not just a result of money (The News, September 2) [7]. Rather, it is a result of organization; American universities are much less dependent on the states than their competitors abroad. They derive their income from a wide variety of sources, from fee-paying students to nostalgic alumni, from hard-headed businessmen to generous philanthropists". However, many institutions worldwide, particularly in Europe, were struggling to cope with massive change due to interfering governments, declining staff salaries and a reluctance to make allowances for greater numbers.

Higher Education in Pakistan

Higher education is generally understood to cover teaching, research and extension. If critically analyzed the different concepts of higher education, can list the various roles higher education plays in the society. Higher education is the source or feeder system and therefore supplies the much-needed human resources in management, planning, design, teaching and research. Technological advancement and economic growth of country are as dependent on the higher

education system as they are on the working class. Development of home grown technology and capabilities in agriculture, security and other industrial areas are possible because of our world-class higher education infrastructure. Higher education provides opportunities for lifelong learning, allowing people to upgrade their knowledge and skills from time to time based on the societal needs. The following are the possible roles of the universities:

- To cultivate new knowledge, to engage with full of energy and fearlessly in the pursuit of truth, and to interpret old knowledge and beliefs in the light of new needs.
- To provide the right kind of leadership in all walks of life, to identify gifted youth and help them develop their potential to the full by cultivating physical fitness, developing the powers of the mind and cultivating right interests, attitudes and moral and intellectual values
- To provide the society having with necessary skill and knowledge the men and women trained in agriculture, arts medicine, science and technology and various other professions, who will also be cultivated individuals.
- To promote quality and social justice, and to reduce social and cultural differences through diffusion of education.
- To encourage the teachers and students, and through them in the society generally, the attitudes and values needed for developing the 'good life' in individuals and society (Mishra) [5].

Factors Affecting the Quality of Education

If Pakistan is to achieve meaningful improvement in the quality of education in its universities, the following issues must be taken care of:

- a. The selection of the teachers and other staff should be done on merit. Political considerations should not be brought to bear on the universities.
- b. The universities must be a subject, both to external and internal academic audit. Funding must be related to the results of such an audit.
- c. The university staff should be well paid, to secure quality. Public sector universities are paying wages in accordance with scales for other public services. The salaries of teachers should be delinked from government grades, and fixed in accordance with the market demands for each discipline. Fortunately, the private sector universities are already doing this. The public sector needs to adopt this practice.

- d. The libraries and laboratories of colleges and universities must be strengthened.
- e. Curricula of universities are being revised periodically by the University Grants Commission and now by the Higher Education Commission. The process needs to be more dynamic and acceptable to the teachers on campus. The modernization of curricula is not a difficult process. However, it is the teaching of those curricula that needs to be strengthened.
- f. Teachers need to be retrained. Books and journals need to be provided and other teaching aids should be made available to teachers. Teachers must be required to produce quality textbooks and books of readings and reference.
- g. Total working hours in a year in Pakistani universities are not adequate. There are too many holidays and other interventions, planned and unplanned. The working hours are very short and need to be increased (Rao) [6].

Human Resource Development in Higher Education

The department must know how they can provide better experiences in order to meet their goals, and select what subjects must be included in order for students to obtain this knowledge. The subject matter may include recruiting and staffing, learning and development, performance and rewards, developing a role effectively. Faculty will play an important role on how to teach Human Resource Development (HRD) students effectively.

The second part is technology that can be useful as supplementary teaching aids. Technology must integrate into every course. In the IT society managing human resources by computers is one of the most exciting and significant trends in the HRD field since computer can provide timely, relevant, and accurate information. The computer can perform important jobs such as generating reports, preparing career development, or training and development programs that human resource managers can utilize in the field of HRD. Without knowing technology, no one can survive (Dearing) [2].

The fundamental questions will help any department of an organization decide what objectives should be established and designed for students while they study on campus. The concept of student development will assist students as individuals on how to think, focus, acquire flexibility, and discover themselves in HRD. With the help of technology as an instrument, it will help to connect HRD students to the world of HRD professionals around the world. They will learn and experience working with computers in a variety of activities such as

the Internet, and design training programs on computers. To work effectively in the field of HRD in Pakistan, these components are required.

Methodology

Desk review for literature survey, Identification of broad areas for development of institutions for trainees, trainers, students, faculty members and scholarship holders. Development and pilot testing of instruments (5 in number) on likert scale. Administration of the instruments personally by the researcher as well as through mail and internet. The participants were university teachers, Ph.D research scholarship holders, trainers of faculty development programme and HEC management.

Data Presentation

Table – I
Table shows the opinion of postgraduate students on quality of teachers in the institution
N=50

S.No	Parameters	Students responses					Sum of agree and strongly agree responses	Sum of disagree and strongly disagree responses
		SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA		
1.	Teachers teaching regarding current situations	32%	44%	16%	8%	0%	76%	8%
2.	The teachers completed whole course	32%	44%	0%	16%	8%	76%	24%
3.	Teachers provided additional material alongwith textbooks	8%	16%	24%	44%	8%	24%	52%
4.	Time management on the part of teachers was satisfactory	16%	68%	16%	0%	0%	84%	0%
5.	Teacher's behavior was friendly	52%	40%	0%	8%	0%	92%	8%
6.	The students were provided qualified teachers	32%	44%	0%	24%	0%	76%	24%

7.	Level of awareness about the quality of education on the part of students	0%	60%	24%	16%	0%	60%	16%
8.	The students have awareness about the human resource development	0%	40%	8%	44%	8%	40%	52%
9.	There was a system to assess the teaching quality	0%	24%	8%	52%	16%	24%	68%
	Mean	61.3%		0.7%		28%		

Table I shows that 76% give opinion that teachers teaching regarding the current situations and 76% think that the teachers completed the whole course while 52% think that teaches did not provided additional material alongwith the textbooks. 84% think that time management on the part of teachers was satisfactory. 92% opine that teacher's behavior was friendly whereas 76% think the students were provided qualified teachers. 60% students opine the level of awareness about the quality of education on the part of students was satisfactory while 52% think the students have no awareness about the human resource development. 68% students opine that there was not a system to assess the teaching quality. Mean of agreed responses is 61.3% and mean of disagreed response is 28% while 10.7% undecided.

Findings/Conclusions

1. Research done by the scholarship holders is productive from economical point of view for Pakistani scholars. There will be no need of foreign faculty hiring programme when our Pakistani scholars completed their studies and get jobs in Pakistani universities.
2. Government of Pakistan is concentrating more on higher education from financial input point of view. More budgets for procurement of books and journals will demonstrable positive effect on quality of teaching and research.
3. Ph.D scholars are fully satisfied for their teacher's method of teaching. University teachers have better knowledge and used latest strategies during teaching so the students are satisfied by their method of teachings.
4. University teachers provided time properly to the postgraduate students for guidance of research work in Pakistani universities.

- The university teachers guide the students friendly and provide proper time for the postgraduate students during any difficulty.
5. Methodology of training which provided to the university teachers in the professional faculty development programme (PFDP) at Higher Education Commission is decided in advance. Methodology training programme and course contents for the training of university teachers by professional faculty development programme and national academy of higher education at HEC decided advance well in time.
 6. Course material of Professional Faculty Development Programme was updated for the trainees of university teachers. The latest course and teaching methods used during training of university teachers. They interact discussed with each other and provided chance to work in groups and individually to achieve the objectives of the training programmes.
 7. Resource persons of the Professional Faculty Development Programme are well experienced teachers. The resource persons of the university teachers programme are called by the management of professional faculty development programme are well qualified and experienced university teachers and they deliver the lectures effectively.
 8. Training programmes of the university teachers are well planned and administered on ideal basis. The administration of the training for university teachers is effective.

Recommendations

1. There may be a system to assess the teaching quality at the universities during the postgraduate studies.
2. Teaching methods used by the university teachers may be encourage the postgraduate students for higher education studies in the universities.
3. Resource persons of university teachers training programmes need training in IT use.
4. There may be a quality assurance system for course revision in the training programmes of university teachers.
5. Scholarship holders may be provided ideal information technology facilities for research work in the universities.

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