



Situational Analysis of Higher Education in Pakistan (With Special Reference to University of Sargodha)

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Abstract

The study aims to highlight the problems and challenges facing Pakistan's higher education system of University of Sargodha, Punjab. This study is qualitative, and primary data was collected from the participants. The data was collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The group was comprised of five students, five members of the teaching staff, and five members of the non-teaching staff of the University of Sargodha, Sargodha. The present study found that the factors affecting the system are numerous, including ineffective administration, a poor examination system, a lack of libraries and laboratories, inadequate research facilities, and large-scale financial deficiencies. Despite certain weaknesses, academic results do not match internationally accepted norms. The government should provide funds, scholarships, relaxation, and facilities for students and teachers to achieve the desired ends. This study suggested that it is a collective failure and pivotal to taking measures at various levels; the government should revisit its education policies and impose educational emergencies.

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Introduction

In every society, education is considered a fundamental need to survive. The progress of a country can be improved socially, scientifically, and technologically with its enthusiastic education system. The development of human resources in a country is based on the excellence of education imparted to the people. (Saeed et al., 2009). People apprehend their rights and duties through education. Through this awareness, political stability befalls the country. Thus, a realistic environment came into existence to implement the policies with active participation and cooperation among people. Production and efficiency of people increase through education. As a consequence of the good education system, people would become able to participate in the economic development of the country by crystallizing their basic skills (Rehman & Khan, 2012). In fact, the economic development of a country is at the mercy of the education provided to its inhabitants. Education enables people to seek their moral obligations and shapes their personality for the benefit of society. Higher education is provided at college and university level. It is admitted that higher education is different from other types of education below the intermediate level (Zubair, 2008).

At present, higher education is acknowledged as a core foundation and utmost important factor for the development of a country from an economic and social perspective. It is the responsibility of institutions to equip their individuals with advanced knowledge and skills so that they can hold the required positions to run government and non-government affairs (Mughal & Manzoor, 1999). Quality-based higher education not only economically develops a country but also improves socio-cultural life. Some factors and challenges of higher education directly influence its future development in the 21st century, such as institutions of distinctive nature, national and

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international mobility within and outside the country, access of students to advance computer skills to conduct research, scholarships, and economic globalization (Zubair, 2011).

Study Objectives

To analyze the current situation of higher education in university of Sargodha, Pakistan.

To explore the problems and challenges faced by higher education in university of Sargodha, Pakistan.

To suggest suitable measures for improvement.

Literature Review

Higher education does not simply mean providing knowledge in certain fields; it is based upon meaningful and purposeful objectives. The objectives may be based on personal, economic, social, and cultural dimensions. A suitable and supportive environment is essential for education. A better education system infuses historical, religious, moral, and cultural tenets into a country's people (Zubair, 2008).

History of man proved that prosperity or poverty depends on a quality-based updated education system; moreover, the standard for the success of a nation is considered the quality of education available to inhabitants (Saeed et al., 2009). Those countries are progressing and have taken ample steps to improve their higher education standard. In Pakistan, some possible efforts have been made by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to elevate educational standards. However, some major obstacles are still faced in the research and development culture (R&D), such as a scarcity of adequate funds and competent faculty. Mohanty (2000) predicts that the R&D culture and motivation of faculty to upgrade their knowledge through research are essential for a quality-based education system.

In detail, Pakistan is facing some serious problems in its higher education system. Although, since independence, several policies and plans have been presented, even then, the education sector could not be improved, and problems still exist for solutions. As a result, a comparison of world universities among 50 plus public universities in Pakistan does not even come close to the world ranking. Even compared with India and Iran, the quality of teaching and research is much inferior in Pakistan at a higher level. In most universities, the teaching amount is based on notes dictation, which the teacher had copied in his/her student life; there is no student discipline, the examination method is merely to test memory, and academic fraud is rampant by the staff without punishment, and classics are missed excessively by the teachers. In many universities, teaching days are less than half a year, which is officially required. There is an acute need for rational plans and policies and an adequate implementation system to cope with these problems (Pervez, 2009).

Methodology

For scientific communication, research methodology creates a medium of instruction for conducting a study properly (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992). The most common research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research. In the current study, this is a qualitative method of research.

According to nature, there are two types of data: primary data and secondary data. In the present study, primary data is used. The data was collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The group was comprised of five students, five members of the teaching staff, and five members of the non-teaching staff of the University of Sargodha, Sargodha.

Many efforts have been made to improve the higher education system in Pakistan, but it is still lacking to meet the needs of society. Different research indicates that Pakistan's education system, in general, is not satisfying. (Memon, 2007). There is an immense need to trace the factors responsible for the current vulnerability. However, these factors include faulty curricula, poor quality of teaching, dual means of instruction, cheating culture in examinations, and congested classrooms (Rehman & Khan, 2012). Although efforts are being made to modify curriculum according to ideology, moral and cultural values are our national requirement in various disciplines, i.e., science,

medicine, agriculture, agriculture, technology and engineering, etc. (Zubair, 2011). Pakistan's higher education system is facing several challenges from an economic, political, and social perspective, and its future depends on the people's response to these challenges (Rao, 2003).

Findings and Discussion

According to the data collected from respondents, the major problems in higher education were highlighted. For example, problems and challenges of higher education in academia, poor quality of education and outdated curriculum.

Problems and Challenges of Higher Education in Academia

Insufficient Educational Institutions

Despite the shortage of resources, quantitative growth has increased amazingly since independence. The educational institutions have increased in bulk amounts, but the enrollment of students in higher education also increased exceptionally as well (Zubair, 2008). With this high rate of student enrollment, the number of higher institutions is not enough to fulfill the present need. The demand for higher education is increasing over time with its entire dearth in quality and consolidation in structure, and it will continuously grow in the post-period.

People's aspirations and other social, political, and economic factors are influencing the trend towards higher education. The role of higher education was recognized well in the post-independence period in all disciplines of human advancement, especially in science and technology (Mohanthi, 2000).

Table 1

Universities and Degree Awarding Institutions (DAIs) in 2013

	Federal	Punjab	Sindh	KPK	Balochista n	AJK
Public	24	20	16	19	06	04
Private	06	22	28	10	01	02
Total	30	42	44	29	07	06

Source: <http://www.hec.gov.pk/Ourinstitutes/pages/Default.aspx>

Table 1 shows the number of universities and other degree-awarding institutions (DAIs) in Pakistan in 2013. Although the number of higher education institutions increased compared to past decades, it is still insufficient to meet the present-day demands. The total number of universities and degree-awarding institutions is 158 in Pakistan, which is not enough to fulfill the requirements of the rapidly growing population of the country (HEC, 2013).

Poor Quality of Education

Education is a fundamental source of help in reducing poverty and enhancing social development. Poor quality of education is one of the basic obstacles to the development of a country. In Pakistan, education, from a quality perspective, is on the brink of decline. It is shown by several research findings that higher education has reached its lowest level and requires it to improve on an urgent basis. It includes different types of problems, such as an acute shortage of qualified teachers, ill-equipped and poor laboratories, and little relevancy of curriculum with present-day needs.

A society cannot progress in the true sense only by producing goods and services, but it needs to have quality-based resources. It is rightly observed that human beings have innate characteristics that allow them to attain a higher standard of quality in life and the need for brilliance to attain a higher stage of development (Rehman & Khan, 2012).

Zubair (2008) elaborated that a variety of programs have developed and have been implemented in the last few decades to improve teaching quality and expertise in the discharge of responsibilities and duties. For the improvement of faculty, financial assistance is being provided by

the higher education commission so that teachers may achieve the latest developments in their field area and conduct research by interacting with experts on their subject (Hassan, 1990). The purpose of these programs is to improve the professional competence of teachers so that they can play their role and contribute significantly to raising the higher education standard in underdeveloped countries (Rehman & Khan, 2012). In Pakistan, more emphasis is laid on quantity rather than quality, which makes things awful in the education structure.

Outdated Curriculum

The curriculum in Pakistan has not been well organized to compete with modern needs. The basic problem with curriculum is that it does not promote student's interest in practical work and scientific knowledge (Memon, 2007). Our course and curriculum of higher education are not designed according to world educational standards. The instability can be traced to some important courses, and there is no connection between courses of related knowledge. Zubair (2011) considers that many modern and important courses are not taught at higher levels of education. Besides, the syllabus is not written in detail to fulfill the requirements and is left at the mercy of the professor's interest, experience, or likeness (Zubair, 2008).

Rehman & Khan (2012) mentioned that the course is not well designed to fulfill students' needs and interests, and it is not organized well or properly supervised by the department of concern. Zubair (2011) explained that workshops are not enough for training at a high level because equipment, techniques, space, and other necessary materials are not in accordance with the required standards. Old equipment is not reliable for specialized experiments in the laboratory (Rehman & Khan, 2012). Varghese (1980) recognized that invariable changes in syllabus and low standard of courses lead to laziness of mind, and as a result, the standard for higher education is demolished.

Freedom in Academic Affairs

Gibbons (1998) determined that universities should have the freedom to make professional appointments, salary scales, tenure research, and other academic decisions. University autonomy and academic freedom are sometimes placed as synonymous, although they go beyond with many points, but in actuality, both are quite different concepts (Taylor & Tashakkori, 1997).

Rao (2003) said that the functions are the core of the development and progress of administrative endeavors as well as higher education. Moreover, Rehman and Khan (2012) deliberated that it is an essential function of colleges and universities to transmit knowledge, preserve, criticize, augment, and promote creative capacities. To pursue these functions, community scholars should perform their role; they must be free to exercise their independent judgments and implement their educational responsibilities (Saeed et al., 2009).

A university may, unfortunately, face difficulty in gaining academic independence and retaining independence in a new shape, where some or most of the university's cost is the direct responsibility of the government (Siddiq, 1978). Qureshi (1997) enlightened that it is the responsibility of the board of trustees to be highly concerned with all those matters affecting the university's relations with the general policy and the usual administrative work.

Rao (2003) stated that decisive action and realistic planning are the only means to avert educational plans from deteriorating into occasional responses to unpredicted necessities. The aim of the university should be to enhance the structure that will provide its own long-lasting renewal through its annual operation (Zubair, 2008).

Table 2

A Comparison of allocation of education budget in 2012-13 and 2013-14 (% of total Gross Domestic Product)

Years	Pakistan (%)	Federal (%)	KPK (%)	Punjab (%)	Sindh (%)	Balochistan (%)
2012-13	1.8	0.3	0.2	0.7	0.4	0.1
2013-14	1.9	0.3	0.3	0.7	0.5	0.1

Source: Federal Budget 2012-2014

Table 1 shows that the government's efforts are not up to the mark; the poor allocations of the education budget are not enough to fulfill the requirements of education as it is the need of the hour to impose an education emergency so that education can be boosted at large. The comparative analysis of 2012-13 and 2013-14 unveiled that there is no increase in the education budget of two provinces, Punjab and Balochistan, and in the federal Islamabad region. It shows that education is not among the top priorities of the government. Impressively, KPK province makes little effort as the worst terrorism-hit province, and this increase in the budget can be appreciated. Lastly, analyzing the total budget of Pakistan, the situation is not far better; a slight rise, from 1.8 % to 1.9%.

Conclusion

A comprehensive study reveals that the problems of higher education are a big challenge for authorities in Pakistan and other developing countries. Zubair (2008) stated that there are no set rules and real plans to evaluate teaching or the effectiveness of teaching. Due to the lack of competent and professional faculty members, the quality of higher education has declined as a whole. Compared to the international standard, the current size of available faculty is extremely small. The current education system is lacking talent creation and development of thinking and reasoning as a whole. It is preparing parrots instead of imparting useful knowledge. Numerous problems are prevailing in the higher education system of Pakistan, i.e., lack of sufficient funds, poor examination system, inadequate material facilities, lack of effective educational policies, aimless education, no free education, especially at higher levels, political interference, outdated curricula, corruption, poor management, poor supervision, secular form of education, lack of research, low efficiency for implementation and monitoring, and lack of institutional transport for students. It is still a long way ahead to have a well-equipped and updated higher education mechanism in Pakistan.

Additionally, Punjab has a higher ratio of, i.e., 49.95 percent among all provinces, which shows the average curability of the zakat system; Balochistan has a lower ratio of, i.e., 30.94 percent, which shows the lower credibility of the zakat system. After that, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has a ratio of 47.70 percent, which is considered second in comparison and also has average credibility. Sindh has a ratio of, i.e., 31.78 percent, which is slightly better than Balochistan, but both provinces have lower credibility. In light of the findings, the core reasons for lower statistics are bad governance, lack of skillful people, and lack of welfare spending.

Recommendations

- There is a gap between educational budget needs and supply. Therefore, the Educational budget should meet its needs.
- Qualified teachers and well-equipped libraries are in demand. , Attractive incentives can make the availability of qualified staff possible. Thus, competent personnel will handle the problems effectively.
- In order to get competent teachers, it is necessary to expand the network of teacher training and workshops.
- Favoritism and political interference in university recruitment are harmful. Therefore, transparent processes should be adopted.
- The examination system should be reformed by reducing the powers of the teachers in the semester system because merit is totally at the examiner's mercy.
- Education is a fundamental right of citizens. The government should provide funds, scholarships, relaxation, and facilities for students and teachers.

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