



THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE MUSLIM WORLD: A CASE STUDY OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

In today's information economy, nations' growth is directly related to individuals' creativity, critical thinking abilities, and ability to explore and use knowledge. Since these nations have recognised the value of higher education in their socio-economic growth, universities are places where individuals learn to think critically and creatively push the frontiers of knowledge. The educational system of a country determines its overall position. In addition to its economic importance, a high-quality higher education system is vital to the social growth of a person, his or her views and values as well as the nation's overall viewpoint. This article's main goal was to reveal the level of education in the Muslim world and to assess higher education in Pakistan. It also aims to showcase government efforts.

Keywords: higher education, Islam, Muslim world, Pakistan

Introduction

The foundation of any community or nation is built on the principle of education. Without a well-functioning educational system, economic progress and social transformation are impossible. A considerable expansion of the educational sector is essential for the success of any national development strategy, and it cannot be ignored. As the quest of knowledge and education flourish in a free, democratic and equitable society, so does education itself. There is a sense of repression throughout the Muslim world's political landscape. There is little hope for an educational Renaissance in our midst unless all of us commit to removing all barriers to unrestricted inquiry. - Aiming to harmonise the educational system in the Muslim world with worldwide standards is therefore a noble goal to strive for. In the Muslim world, there is a crisis in education. What we see now is the result of a long period



of time without visionary leadership. As a result, educational resources are underfunded, teachers are unenthusiastic, and pupils are suffering from a general lack of self-awareness. Some of these problems have been addressed by the Muslim educational community, although in a piecemeal fashion. Comparatively, few studies have looked at how educational standards have declined across the Muslim world. Thus, the overall scholastic production of Muslims remains at or below the global average. (Abusulayman, 2007)

The worth of higher education has been decided by the financial returns earned by the owners of private higher education institutions since the 1950s, and neither socially valuable information nor a fundamental human right have been accorded to it (Kauppinen, 2013). By offering degrees at a range of price points, private higher education institutions attempt to maximise their market share and create the most profit possible, at the expense of quality. As a result of the establishment of Pakistan's Higher Education Commission (HEC) in 2002, the number of higher education institutions in Pakistan has grown exponentially in recent years. Higher education was evaluated, improved, and promoted in Pakistan by the Higher Education Commission (HEC). This was done mostly by encouraging a research and development mindset among educational institutions. As a result, Pakistan's Higher Education Commission (HEC) is responsible for developing laws, policies, principles, and goals for Pakistan's higher education institutions (HEC Ordinance, 2002). In addition, private higher education institutions in Pakistan, which have no interest in the overall welfare of society, advertise higher education as a commercial commodity at various price levels, in defiance of the regulatory laws and norms of the Higher Education Commission. Since then there have been several doubts and concerns concerning the privatisation of Pakistan's higher education system. To replace higher education as a public good, commercialisation as a private commodity with an intrinsic value determined only by financial gain is rapidly taking hold. To get financial advantage, the product's quality is sacrificed. More than that, the privatisation of higher education has turned educational institutions into profit-making businesses that sacrifice ethics and morality for the sake of short-term financial gains, instilling in society a sense of individualism, instrumental rationality, selfishness, greed, and superiority (Ball, 2004; Tilak, 2006). "Education has been changed into a commodity, like many other essentials of life, that can be purchased and sold purely for the goal of making profit," as stated by Khan (2015) To put it another way, "drastically changing shifts have taken place in how societies evaluate a person's need for information, and how it is passed on to him or her" A case study of Pakistan's shift from a public benefit to a commercial commodity is examined in this paper, as well as the ramifications for society.

Purposes of Higher Education Commission



In order to make the ideal of a knowledge-based economy a reality, higher education is considered to be a critical driving force. It also contributes to the achievement of humanity's social goals, such as fostering togetherness and developing good human beings. In this way, higher education serves three important functions: supplying a trained work force, generating new knowledge, and providing service to society. Higher education has a direct impact on sustainable economic growth and a socially ordered society (NEP, 2009). Tradition has it that education also contributes to the formation of a society's moral, ethical, and economic foundations. According to this viewpoint, Jandhyala (2008) proved the following purposes of higher education, which were also accepted by the other researchers who have been cited.

- The fundamental and critical goal of higher education is to develop the nation's builders by raising awareness, offering modern intellectual thinking, and serving as think tanks for both the public and commercial sectors (NEP, 2009).
- One of the most essential functions of higher education is to generate and disseminate new knowledge through high-quality research, since higher education institutions are seen as scientific and social laboratories for the generation and dissemination of new information (Marginson, 2004).
- When looking at higher education from a purely economic standpoint, it should be able to satisfy the needs of business by producing higher-quality human resources with professional and technical abilities.
- Higher education institutions are often expected to help students develop moral character by instilling ethical and moral ideals, as well as attitudinal features that will aid in the socialisation of people and the protection and growth of society values.
- The ability to deal with global difficulties (Ali & Tahir, 2009) is another crucial purpose of higher education, and this is accomplished through providing feasible and pragmatic answers to national and worldwide concerns and problems.
- Basically, according to Jandhyala (2008), higher education must serve the public interest from all angles, including socially and economically, culturally, politically, and so on, in order to be useful.

As a result, higher education becomes an honourable public service. Higher education institutions are seen as beacons of learning, and it is thus possible to say that the main goal



of higher education institutions is to create a society where the majority of students are skilled and higher education institutions can produce new knowledge.

Framework of HEC

There have been a number of significant developments in Pakistan's higher education system since it was founded. In 1947, there were only two public sector universities in Pakistan: the University of the Punjab, a teaching institute in Lahore, and the University of the Punjab, a research institute in Islamabad. As yet another educational establishment in Karachi, the University of Sindh opened its doors in 1951. It was then transferred to Hyderabad, Pakistan, where the University of Karachi had been. Many skilled instructors and experienced staff members from Pakistan's Hindu population left their employment after partition and migrated in India, leading to the formation of these two universities in India, which initially met the educational demands of the Hindu community throughout Pakistan (Hood BhoY, 2009). As a federal regulatory body with constitutional power, the University Grants Commission (UGC) was established in 1947 at a national education conference presided over by Quaid e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on the recommendations of various academics and other stakeholders. During this national education conference, several development efforts were undertaken, leading to the formation of several committees for elementary, secondary, and adult education.. UGC increased its role in higher education in the 1960s, giving degrees to existing institutions and setting up full-time research organisations at public and private universities, with the federal government's permission (Isani, Major Education Policies and Commissions).

As a result of the conflict with India, which led in the creation of Bangladesh, a new education strategy was devised at the federal level that included a nationalisation scheme. State-owned two-year schools were reclassified as universities, and all privately-owned institutions were nationalised as a result of this strategy. During this time period, the number of students attending colleges and universities grew at an exponential rate. While President Zia ul Haq's "National Education Policy" emphasised the integration of Islamic values and national ideology into higher education, he also reversed his predecessor's ban on all private higher education institutions in Pakistan in 1979. (Isani, Higher Education, and Five-Year Plans). As a result, Pakistan became the first government in South Asia to sanction the development of private institutions in 1983 and 1985, with the establishment of Aga Khan University and Lahore University of Management Sciences. There are several sources (Agarwal, 2008). As a result of Nawaz Sharif's leadership in 1992, Pakistan's National Education Policy was developed to streamline the process of obtaining higher education.



Many contemporary issues have been accumulated due to inconsistencies in appropriate policies, inadequate funding, implementation issues and the mismatch between industry, economic realms, national and global emerging practises, among others, based on the foregoing snapshot of higher education and the absence of long-term policy infrastructure. In 2002, President Pervaiz Musharraf established the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in the purpose of advancing and promoting higher education, and the traditional University Grants Commission was incorporated into the HEC at the same time. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) was founded to guarantee that all aspects of higher education promotion and quality were carefully regulated. As a controlling authority, it was established to serve educational institutions by creating policies, regulating principles, accrediting concerned institutions, advising federal and provincial governments on the issuing of charters to public and private educational institutions, and providing technical assistance (HEC, Ordinance 2002). The global need for higher education has expanded dramatically in the twenty-first century as a result of the expansion in human resources, technical improvements, and innovation in manufacturing, service, and operations approaches. There is a large profit margin in the higher education market throughout the world, as well as a rapid development in the private sector in Pakistan during the last two decades.

HEC and Private Sector

Private higher education institutions have seen explosive growth in recent years in several countries throughout the world. In the previous two decades, more private colleges and universities have been established than governmental institutions of higher education, with the bulk of them situated in South Asia and the Middle Eastern countries (Agarwal, 2008). When a task force on higher education in poor countries was created by "The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)" and "The World Bank Group" at the beginning of the twenty-first century, several nations in South Asia embraced it at the same time (Task Force, 2000; page.9). 13 nations' worth of experts came together to form the Task Force on the Future of Higher Education in Developing Nations in order to discuss the state of higher education in these regions. When it came to providing practical answers for the advancement of higher education in poor countries in terms of governance, resource availability and financial support, the Task Force succeeded admirably. The Task Force realised that there were various difficulties to overcome while working toward this goal, and they advocated that the combined strength of the public and private sectors be utilised in order to give strong and coordinated support with the cooperation of the worldwide community.



MTDF found that the quality of higher education in Pakistan is deemed to be extremely poor, as is evidenced by the country's lack of research contributions and participation in international conferences. (The World Bank (MTDF), 2006; page 28.) Thus, Pakistan was launched in 2002 with the establishment of the Pakistan Higher Education Commission (HEC) to streamline higher education institutions in both the public and commercial sector. As a result, once the embargo was abolished, the number of private higher education institutions rose dramatically, as described in the Education Policy of 1972, which was adopted by UNESCO. Pakistan's national and provincial legislatures passed laws in favour of the programme, according to World Bank (MTDF), 2006, page 41. Even though the World Bank and UNESCO advocated for the privatisation of higher education in Pakistan, its implications for the country's educational system were never fully realised. Has this industry ever been made aware of the detrimental repercussions of granting it the status of a commodity on the commercial market? The question is whether private colleges and universities are promoting education or only maximising profits. Is it correct to say that private colleges and universities are more concerned with offering high-quality instruction than they are with quantity? This investigation aims to shed light on this phenomenon. The previous section laid a solid basis for Pakistani higher education going back to the country's inception.

Conceptualization

Qualitative research is the focus of this investigation. For data gathering, document analyses, focus group talks, and semi-structured interviews have all been employed, as has been the case. The advantage of using a qualitative approach is that it allows for a more in-depth knowledge of social phenomena in their context. In many cases, the output of this process is perceived as delivering significance through the collection of "rich, deep data" (Bryman, 2004). Documents are reliable sources of information since they are readily available to researchers and can be quickly accessed (Merriam, 1998). Interviews are beneficial to the researcher since they allow him to have a better understanding of the respondents' opinions while also recreating situations in which he is not directly involved or participates (Patton, 1990; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). National Education Policies were implemented in 1947, 1959, 1972-1980, 1992, 1998-2010, and 2009, for a total of five years. Annual plans, Higher Education Commission annual plans and reports, conference reports, and associated research have all been reviewed and discussed in detail.

The concept of higher education as a commercial product, on the other hand, is built on the concept of instrumental reason in the service of cultural ideals, which is discussed more below. The definition of instrumental reason offered by Taylor (1991) is as follows: "When we determine the most cost-effective application of means to a given purpose, we are



applying a type of rationality called economics. The optimum cost-to-output ratio, or maximum efficiency, is the yardstick by which it measures success ". One of the distinguishing characteristics of this method is the application of reason to determine the best or most effective means of accomplishing a certain goal. This commercial commodification of knowledge has been the most significant structural transformation in the sphere of higher education, in which educational degrees are treated in the same way as other commodities on the market, as well as other commodities on the market (Kauppinen, 2013). In the minds of some, this corresponds to viewing colleges less as a place to learn social knowledge and more as a place to determine how much immediate material advantage they will provide to the investor. Following that, the historical context of instrumental reason is addressed, as well as its relationship with higher education as a commercial commodity in terms of process and product, as well as the implications of this association.

A) Analysis of Documents

Analysis of National Education Policies between 1947 and 1959, 1972-80, 1992-2010, and 2009-the educational plan-has shown the following facts:

1. It has been revealed that decisions and plans are not being taken seriously enough, both in text and spirit.

2. Failure to follow through on government objectives, lack of political will, and odd government reforms like Marshal Laws are all big impediments to success. When educational institutions were nationalised by the previous administration in 1972, for example, it was not effectively followed through on by that government in order to achieve the stated objectives.

3. The administration and governance issues in Pakistan's higher education institutions are also a major impediment to the growth of higher education in Pakistan. Furthermore, worries regarding the quality of higher education are being raised by the uncontrolled scenario in which private institutions are establishing and being recognised by the proper authorities, particularly in light of the revolutionary inclusion of virtual higher education.. Universities are being forced to reconsider the old higher education paradigm by disruptive technologies that have allowed for commercial and non-profit organisations to participate in virtual education. Some unaccredited private universities in the private sector are having financial problems as a result of a lack of funding (Christensen & Eyring, 2011).

Study findings show a steady increase in the number of students and educational institutions, but the amount of money available for education has not grown at the same rate.

B) Analysis of Perspective



As the most important aspect of contemporary western civilization, instrumental reason is regarded to be the most important feature of ancient society, and it can be traced back to when considerable increase in human reasoning ability was discovered in the aftermath of the scientific revolution. Weber (1949) further emphasised that one of the most essential characteristics of this sort of organised thinking is that it ends in a solution that is reached by reasonable analysis. Approaches based on means-ends reasoning that are used to attain objectives or complete everyday chores are frequently found to be highly helpful and effective in many situations. There are several applications for this strategy, including the achievement of goals by the most efficient and effective ways. The utilitarian method and marginal utility revolutions of the 18th century led to the birth of this paradigm, which emphasises the efficiency and efficacy of means as the predominating picture of rational thought and behaviour.

There are several outstanding philosophers who have written volumes on the possible hazards and harms to society that might emerge from this calculating thinking, including Habermas and Gorden (1987). According to these critics, they feel that instrumental reasoning is a strong tool for contemporary society's rational administration. They argue that the apex elite class of society is using this technique for their own benefit and that it is well-suited to the powerful parts of society (Malkinson, 2015).

Regardless of social standards, ethical conventions, or religious considerations, businesses and organisations throughout the world are led by the idea of rational thinking, also known as calculative thinking, thanks to extensive implementations of neoliberal policies. This idea appears to be helpful when applied to material resources or in order to obtain economies of scale, but it is not equally applicable in other spheres of life. An educational business model similar to that of private higher educationists has been employed to maximise profits by using resources economically and effectively for the attainment of stated objectives. As a result, they discovered that treating higher education as a commercial commodity and profiting from the product, or outcome, of that process were both profitable. This logic and correlation might lead to the conclusion that private education merchants face an undesirable and eye-opening predicament in that higher education is regarded purely on the basis of its instrumentality. Higher education can be linked to instrumental or calculative thinking. This idea emphasises the pursuit of utilitarian maximisation as the ultimate objective of an individual's social actions, basing them only on a material cost-benefit analysis. Pursuing monetary gain via higher education comes at the price of ethical ideals, social equality, and societal well-being as a whole. It also compromises the general public good and human well-being in society.

System of Monitoring



The Higher Education Commission's monitoring system may be modernised in order to provide effective verification and monitoring of the quality of education provided by the institutions in the country. Following is an excerpt from Pakistan's Education Policy (1998-2010): "Pakistan public universities are governed in accordance with their relevant rules and regulations, which stipulate the laws providing for the establishment and control of the universities, as well as their governance, administration, and other associated purposes." There must be an extremely strong HEC monitoring unit in order to achieve this goal; this unit should be responsible for both external and internal oversight of HEC's operations. This includes monitoring of faculty recruitment and public funding, but it should also be responsible for internal oversight of academic matters such as student admissions or curricula.

Development and Research

Higher education includes research and development as an intrinsic part of its curriculum. Innovation may be produced via the investment of time and resources in research and development (R & D), which also covers the commercialization phase. The development of new technologies in the country is facilitated by a healthy research environment. Because of their patents and other research activities, universities in advanced nations produce a major amount of the revenue available for the government. While the quality of higher education in Pakistan is mostly dependent on government financing, Mohanthy (2000) argues that a research and development culture and the existence of academics who are willing and competent to carry out research are critical to the improvement of current knowledge. Access to additional resources for higher education should be ensured in order to speed up research activities, which will ultimately improve university income while also equipping the country to confront global concerns.

Scholarship Programmes

The merit scholarship programmes (both domestic and international) may be streamlined to provide a greater advantage to eligible candidates. According to Rauf (2004), the HEC has set up sufficient funds for the provision of scholarships to deserving students wishing to pursue PhD programmes at both foreign and domestic institutions. As a result, at the end of 2010, over 2500 scholars were studying in other countries, while approximately 5000 scholarships were awarded to PhD students studying in Pakistan. The number of scholarships available for all programmes of study in general, and for PhD and Post-Doctoral studies in particular, will be increased in the near future. Students who are accepted into PhD programmes at one of the top 150 institutions in the world may be eligible to get financial assistance to cover expenses such as tuition and other fees. It is



possible to provide adequate allocations to cover all of the demands of brilliant kids, so removing poverty as a barrier to their educational pursuits altogether. It may be possible to develop a process that ensures that higher education facilities in other countries are used to their full, speedy, and judicious advantage. It may also be necessary to take steps to guarantee that Pakistan reaps the full benefits of the competences and abilities of these students when they return to their home countries after completing their doctoral studies in their home countries. They may be offered positions at public sector institutions and research and development companies that are comparable with their qualifications. According to reports, the Higher Education Commission is considering establishing a special monitoring cell that would ensure that scholarships awarded to students are properly completed and utilised.

Recommendations for New HEC Policy

1. The promotion of a free-thinking, self-governing higher education culture in conjunction with Islamic principles is possible. Fully stated by Fullan (2001) and Folwer (2000), "Public policies are the processes through which problems in the public domain are resolved. Successful policy implementation necessitates the involvement of citizens at the grassroots level. As a result, people are better equipped to deal with new situations." Increased inputs in all areas of life have the potential to improve the performance of institutions in all sectors. In order to achieve financial self-sufficiency and financial autonomy, universities and higher education institutions may be supplied with substantial financial resources. They may also be encouraged to create revenue in a variety of ways, such as through market-based research at institutions such as universities in developed nations. Individuals from all walks of life, and especially young people from all walks of life, should be given abundant opportunity to pursue education that is aligned with national and global requirements. Providing an environment that is tranquil and supportive for higher education and research may be beneficial to both the students and the professors. According to Education Policy (1972-1980), new institutions were constructed and launched, however they failed to provide the anticipated outcomes as a consequence of a lack of oversight and follow-up on their operations.
- 2.
3. It is imperative that the Higher Education Commission be bolstered in order to adequately govern research and teaching at all US universities. Vice chancellors and leaders of higher education institutions might be chosen because of their qualifications, including their expertise, experience, vision, and honesty. According to the conclusions of the Sharif



Commission Report (1959), the Vice Chancellor (VC) shall be held accountable to the Chancellor for the reasonable and appropriate fulfilment of his duties. Additionally, the vice chancellor may function as the institution's chief academic and administrative officer. One big problem with this arrangement: The Chancellor, who is supposed to be accountable to the Vice Chancellor, does not have the time or expertise to do so."

4.

3. Departments of universities that have the appropriate equipment and resources for research and development may be designated as Centers of Advanced Studies, where instructors from all across Pakistan can pursue doctorate and post-doctoral degrees. The infrastructure of higher education is enhanced by the supply of required resources such as books, journals, and equipment, among other things, in order to increase the quality of teaching, learning, and research.

Objectives for Higher Education

Objectives for improving higher education that have been proposed

1. The promotion of Islamic philosophy, the preservation of national cultural heritage, and the instillation of skills, knowledge, and moral values in the country's young are among the goals of the organisation.
2. To give each student with the most up-to-date scientific and technological information in order for him or her to make a meaningful contribution to the growth of the country.
3. Through frequent evaluations by the Higher Education Commission of the operations of all private and public universities/institutions, it is hoped that this system would guarantee that the quality of education and research at universities is maintained.
4. To raise the allocation of funding for education up to 4 percent of GDP and to increase the proportion of funds allocated to higher education.
5. To graduate male and female students with the purpose of assisting them in achieving success in their lives and professions, as well as to develop a culture of co-curricular activities in the educational establishment.



6. The establishment of interaction and relationships between Pakistani universities and top-ranked universities in advanced technological nations in order to benefit from the latest research, technology, and teaching approaches available at these institutions.
7. The revision of the curriculum creation process will allow it to be brought up to date with current demands and the inclusion of new fields of knowledge such as peace curriculum, microbiology, and so on.
8. To modernize the evaluation and examination systems in both public and private universities.

Conclusion

The following findings were obtained after a thorough review of the evidence. A lack of funding for higher education has had a negative impact on Pakistan's educational growth and has been an impediment to expanding higher education in Pakistan. UNESCO recommends that poor nations devote 4% of their GDP to education, according to a UNDP assessment from 2002, whereas Pakistan devotes less than 2.7% of its GDP to education. On an urgent basis, the government should increase spending on higher education. Another controversial issue in Pakistan is the lack of simple access for the general public to higher education institutions. Access to higher education in Pakistan may be improved via the establishment of new colleges and universities in every region of the country. As a result, the implementation of education policy in their entirety has been a major issue in the past, as well. Other researchers have found the same thing: that ineffective policies in the education sector have led to bad implications across the board for all aspects of national life since education is so crucial to a country's progress. The recruitment of qualified faculty is also a major difficulty in higher education institutions since bad induction of faculty negatively impacts the quality of teaching and research. According to the findings of Husain (2007), research is critical to the formation of new ideas, and therefore, university faculty members should devote their time and effort to research in addition to their teaching responsibilities. Low investment has been made in the training of teachers. Because of this, teachers haven't done anything useful in their position. Consequently, the role of Pakistan's higher education institutions as research and innovation contributors is also a question. Building blocks, labs, advanced libraries, and ICT resources are all lacking in higher education's physical infrastructure. In order to avoid technological disruption in the present system of teaching and learning, the policy makers and teachers of higher education institutions must be aware of the right deployment of technology. Assurance of quality in higher education is also an important concern for institutions. HEC has attempted to address this problem by establishing a quality enhancement unit in HEC, but



more efforts are needed to guarantee that research and instruction are of the highest possible standard. According to Rahman (2007), HEC has prioritised academic excellence and secured the certification of programmes currently being offered by institutions. HEC is also concentrating on long-term improvement in the institutions by conducting regular self-monitoring. There are several programmes functioning that are not accredited by the HEC, as well as some private campuses that have been acknowledged by HEC without any credence. Efforts by both the government and the country as a whole are needed to improve Pakistan's higher education system. Furthermore, Pakistan's ability to compete in the global economy and maintain its status as a great nation in the future depends on the quality of its higher education. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Pakistan's higher education institutions can play a critical role in the country's development.



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