

Higher Education in Pakistan: Challenges and Prospects

Sajida Naureen^{} and Farida Azim Lodhi^{**}*

Abstract

Higher Education has been recognized as one of the major agents of socio-economic development by all of the developed and most of the developing world. Although, theoretically this fact is very much recognized in Pakistan, yet it has not received the deserved attention and focus. The purpose of this research paper is to analyze the higher education system in Pakistan, explore the organization of higher education, and highlight the role and performance of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan. Against this backdrop the paper then attempts to evaluate the challenges faced by higher education system in the country and presents suitable suggestions for improvement.

Introduction

Higher education in Pakistan implies the education received after the schools and colleges. Universities are the repositories of higher education and play a critical role in transferring knowledge, providing opportunities for research, creating new knowledge and awarding academic degrees in a variety of disciplines. Traditionally, the universities would provide post-graduate education at level 15 and 16, however, having considered the scope of the syllabi of B.Sc/BA at the colleges too limited in comparison with the global standards, the Higher Education Commission had revised and expanded it to four years during 2006-7. Accordingly, many universities had started offering four years Bachelors' programme awarding BS degree. University education is considered essential for nurturing qualified human resource for socio-economic development of any nation state.

^{*} Ms Sajida Naureen, Assistant Professor, Department of Education, University of Balochistan, Quetta.

^{**} Prof. Dr Farida Azim Lodhi, Department of Education, Jinnah University for Women, Karachi.

Pakistan has a very peculiar history which has had an adverse effect of drag on education, indeed, on the entire spectrum of the socio-economic development. On Independence, the part which became West Pakistan comprised areas of the British Imperial India which were considered merely a frontier region to act as the buffer zone against the Czarist Russia. The British had neglected this entire region for socio-economic development. Consequently, in 1947 Pakistan inherited only one university in Lahore. Balochistan, which became a province in 1970 and is the biggest province of Pakistan, had only 9 high schools and no college at the time of Independence. The following Table clearly shows what meager educational facilities Pakistan inherited at the time of Independence and how very slowly the education facilities have grown:

Table 1
Universities and Degree Awarding Institutions (DAIs)

Year	Universities		DAI's	
	Public	Private	Public	Private
1947	1	0	0	0
1960	5	0	1	0
1970	8	0	2	0
1980	19	0	2	0
1990	20	2	3	0
2000	32	14	5	8
2007	50	37	9	18

Source: Pervez Hoodbhoy, 'Pakistan's Higher Education System — What Went Wrong and How to Fix It', *Pakistan Development Review*, 48:4 Part II (Winter, 2009), pp.581–94.

This historic gross handicap in education opportunities in general and higher education in particular is a reality which demanded exceptional emphasis for redress right from the start, but was ignored. Quaid-i-Azam said in one of his early addresses:

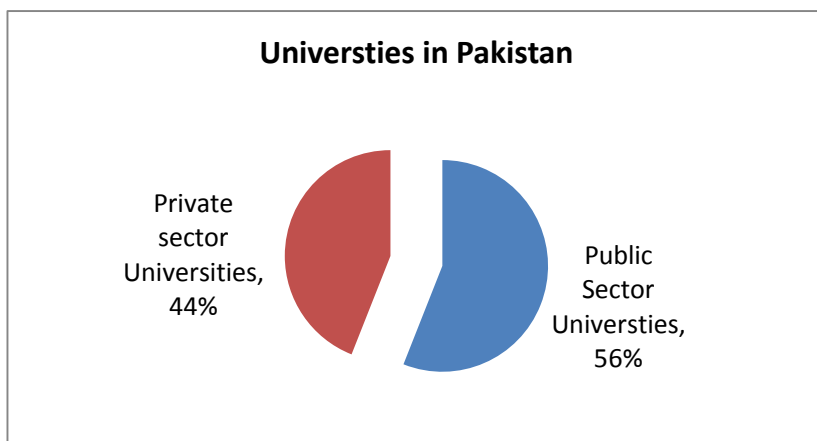
The importance of education and the type of education cannot be over-emphasized There is no doubt that the future of our State will and must greatly depend upon the type of education we give to our children, and the way in which we bring them up as future citizens of Pakistan We

should not forget that we have to compete with the world which is moving very fast in this direction.¹

However, apparently this saying was also ignored till the turn of the century.

Present status of higher education

Universities are autonomous bodies, loosely working under Higher Education Commission of Pakistan.² HEC makes efforts to basically assist universities by regulating, setting standards, improving upon syllabi through broad policy lines and arranging opportunities for scholarships. Out of the 135 universities in Pakistan, 76 (56%) are public and 59 (44%) are working in the private sector.

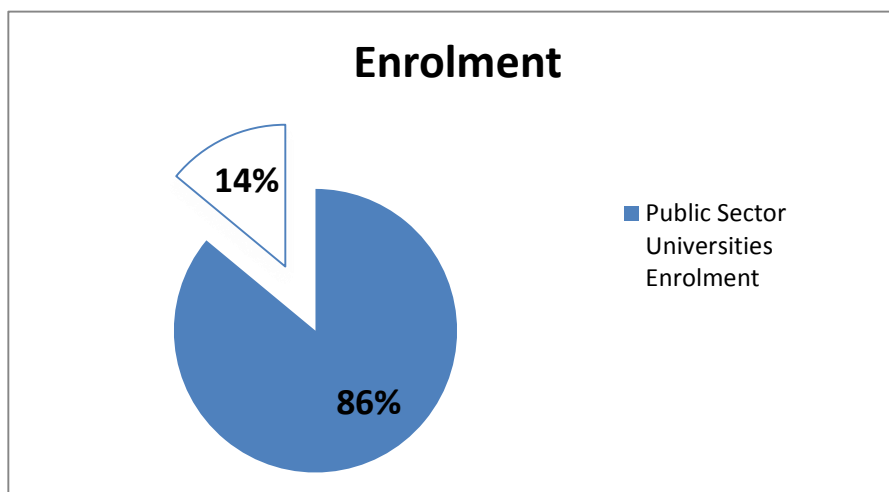


Source: Pakistan Education Statistics, 2010-2011, Government of Pakistan.

In Pakistan total enrolment at university level is 1.108 million. Out of this 86 % students are in the public universities and 14 % are in private universities, as shown in figure 2.

¹ Kaisar Bengali, *et al.*, 'History of Educational Policy Making and Planning in Pakistan', *The Journal of Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI)*, Islamabad, 1999.

² *Ibid.*



Source: *Pakistan Education Statistics, 2010-2011*, Government of Pakistan.

Both in public and private universities gender wise enrolment is 67 % male and 33% female.³ HEC is trying to promote access and quality through various initiatives. As of 2009, the access to higher education in Pakistan for the people between the age group 17 to 23 was 5.1%. Enrolment in agriculture universities and institutions was 8% whereas it was 3% in medicine for the same year.⁴ As 49.4% population of Pakistan lives below the poverty line,⁵ financial constraints, therefore, limit access to higher education. Besides, social norms and early marriages especially for girls further limit access to higher education.

As of 2009, the population in the age group of 17-23 years in Pakistan was 22 million, which is considered a very promising figure for any country as far as human resources are concerned.⁶ However, only 1.58 million out of 22 million have the access to higher education. This meager number is attributed to basically two reasons: limited capacity of the system and poor financial state of the families.⁷ The overall percentage of enrolment in higher education in Pakistan is unsatisfactory. Only 3.5% percent of the total enrolled students in secondary schools go

³ *Pakistan Education Statistics, 2010-2011*, Government of Pakistan.

⁴ *Mid Term Development Framework 2010-2015*, HEC, Islamabad.

⁵ *Human Development Indicators, UNDP, 2012*,

⁶ Pervez Hoodbhoy, 'Pakistan's Higher Education System – what went wrong and how to fix it', *The Pakistan Development Review*, 48:4, Part II (Winter, 2009), pp.581-94.

⁷ *Ibid.*

to degree colleges, 0.6% reaches the universities and a small number 1.08% joins the professional universities and higher education institutions.⁸

Role of higher education in development: literature review

Development is not a one time human achievement. As defined by UNESCO,

Development is not a stage to be attained or a goal to aim for. Rather, it is a continuous process of improvement in which education, research, and service play important roles in creating positive change in the self, the people around us, our communities, and the institutions and structures that support us.⁹

Higher education plays a dynamic role in human development.¹⁰ Higher education institutions comprise universities, formal and non-formal institutions, colleges, vocational and training institutes. Universities offer numerous options of learning and development through teaching and research. Taking higher education in this perspective is about empowering and upgrading human life where individuals can develop and continue to develop their knowledge and skills for quality life. Development is, 'About learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together'.¹¹ Therefore, learning and research at higher education level is an inevitable activity to bring positive change in individual's life and society at large. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) pointed out that higher education contributes to socio-economic development through the following:

- The development of human capital (through the process of teaching and learning).
- The construction of knowledge and skill bases (basically through research and development).
- The distribution and practice of obtained knowledge (at the end users point).

⁸ *The Education Census of Pakistan, 2005*, Bureau of Statistics, Islamabad.

⁹ *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise*, Report of the Independent World Bank/UNESCO Task Force, Washington, D.C., 2000.

¹⁰ *Escrigas 2008*, (www.ghfp.org)

¹¹ Edgar Faure (ed.), *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow*, Report by the International Commission on the Development of Education (Paris: UNESCO, 1972).

- The preservation and continuation of knowledge (storage and inculcating of knowledge).¹²

Recent trends in more than 100 developing countries suggest that more emphasis is given to higher education for poverty alleviation.¹³ Indeed, higher education enables a person to equip him or her with the skills warranting highly paid salaries, thus leading to higher living standards. Previously, it was a general concept that basic education including literacy and primary education play important role in poverty reduction in many countries across the world. However, higher education has now been forcefully linked to higher prosperity. According to Jandhyala Tilak,¹⁴

Through a regression analysis of inter-state data and a large cross-section of developing and developed countries, the analysis found a strong correlation between higher education and development. It was empirically shown that

- higher education enhances the earnings of individuals and contributes to economic development;
- higher education makes a significant contribution to reduction in absolute as well as relative poverty;
- higher education is related to human development indicators which reflect other dimensions of human poverty, as it significantly reduces infant mortality and increases life expectancy. In spite of this, development programmes in many developing countries still continue to focus exclusively on basic education, seriously neglecting higher education. Sustainable socio-economic development implies that education systems focus on human capital as well as human development, on economic growth as well as poverty reduction, on modern technologies as well as traditional methods, and on global as well as local concerns. Policy-makers must not only provide for basic education but also help to strengthen higher education. This will benefit society at large and have a positive effect on economic growth and development.

This statement is so true and so precise and any effort to paraphrase it or shrink it would reduce the full meaning.

¹² *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society: OECD Thematic Review* (Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2008).

¹³ J.B.G. Tilak, *Post-elementary Education, Poverty and Development in India and Role of Post-basic Education in Alleviation of Poverty and Development*, Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 2007.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Higher education in Pakistan

On Independence, Pakistan had only one institution of higher learning, the Punjab University and some 40 colleges spread over the three provinces of the then West Pakistan. Balochistan had no college. The government established several universities and colleges and University Grants Commission (UGC) in the same year. UGC was meant to provide primary funding, overseeing, regulating, and accrediting the higher education efforts in Pakistan. UGC was revised in 1974 and again in 2002 with additional executive reforms granted by the constitution and designated as Higher Education Commission. The HEC is made responsible for formulating higher education policy and quality assurance to meet the international standards as well as providing accrediting academic degrees, development of new institutions, and uplift of existing institutions in Pakistan.¹⁵ The HEC is an autonomous body working for the promotion of higher education through financial and technical support to the universities and providing quality assurance and accreditations.¹⁶

The higher education system in Pakistan can be divided in two main segments namely the university/degree awarding institutions and the affiliated colleges. Till the Constitution of Pakistan was amended through the 18th Amendment in 2010, the financing up to the colleges was the responsibility of the provincial governments while HEC financed the universities. HEC also disburses, albeit a meager amount of funds, to the private sector universities for research and infrastructure development.

To start with, the higher education in Pakistan had predominantly been in public sector. However, a visible shift towards private sector has occurred during the last decade or so. Universities and institutions offering virtual/distance learning program are also now a part of higher education. In Pakistan, the higher education sector enrolls less than 4% (including colleges) of the youth, while in India enrolment is at 11% and Malaysia at 32%.¹⁷ Research is undertaken both in public and private sector universities but the bulk is still being done by public sector universities.

¹⁵ Kaisar Bengali, *op.ict*.

¹⁶ Sajida Mukhtar, Ijaz Ahmad Tatlah, Muhammad Saeed, 'An analytical study of higher education system in Pakistan', *International Journal of Academic Research*, March 2011.

¹⁷ UNDP, *Human Development Index* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Higher education started receiving attention after the establishment of HEC in 2002. A significant improvement was seen from 2002 to 2008. However, after 2008 due to change in government and policies, higher education was again neglected and continues to face debilitating financial crunch.

The 18th constitutional amendment, in April 2010, did away the concurrent list of jurisdiction over 28 subjects, including education which became solely a provincial subject. Funding to universities and institutions of higher education thus became provincial responsibility. Later, the Supreme Court halted dissolution of the HEC and ordered the government to continue part-funding of the universities by the HEC also. Due to the lack of realization of the importance of higher education, political will and corruption funding from provinces has been so inadequate that even salaries of staff at higher education level often cannot be paid on time.

The role of Higher Education Commission

HEC is an autonomous, regulatory, funding and accrediting authority for higher education in Pakistan. It formulates higher education policies, provides funding to universities and institutions of higher education for functioning, research, scholarships, quality assurance for maintaining the standards of universities as far as possible according to the international standards and provides accreditation.

Access to higher education, quality and relevance are the basic challenges faced by the HEC. HEC's support programme for university-industry-technology is a very good effort meant to boost up economic development through funding, and research activities which are of immediate interest to the industry.¹⁸ However, greater efforts are still required to match the new challenges for meeting the ever growing national needs.

The history of the performance of HEC has been directly linked with the value system and characteristics of each government in Pakistan. Although autonomous, its autonomy gets re-defined every time by each government in power. The role of Commissions for higher education in Pakistan can be roughly divided into four periods:

- The first era, 1947-1971
- The second era, 1972-2002
- The third era, 2002-2008
- The fourth era, 2008- till to-date

¹⁸ HEC Annual Report 2010-2011, Islamabad, pp.88-89.

The first era, 1947-1971: Established soon after independence in 1947, University Grants Commission (UGC) started with only one university and 40 forty colleges, is helped raise more universities to cater for the needs of higher education in Pakistan. The first education conference, held by the founder of the nation, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, stressed the need and importance of education. In 1961, the then President, Ayub Khan undertook upgrading and facilitation of higher education through UGC which was declared a federal commission. This era can be termed as the era of genesis where initial steps were taken to fill up the void in higher education. The era saw creation and revision of policies and development for higher education in Pakistan with an eye on the socio-economic development.

The second era, 1972-2002: The populist regime of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto promised to spread education widely. The spread was definitely large but the nationalization of education institutions as well as the universities started degrading the quality of education across board. The government started spending about 70 % of the education budget on higher education but the resources were so meager that it did not make an impact. The succeeding government led by General Zia-ul-Haq was a period when the policy of nationalization was reserved and private sector made major strides in developing higher education. Several universities of international standard emerged. General Zia's emphasis on Islamisation, however, weakened focus on higher education.

The third era, 2002-2008: The third era began from 2002 till it ended rather abruptly with the change in government in 2008. This era saw UGC being converted into HEC in 2002 under a presidential ordinance by General Pervez Mussharaf. During this period HEC made significant efforts to raise the level of higher education up to international standards by providing unprecedented massive outlays to various new programs to reinforce research activities and raise the professional level of the teachers. There program included degree attestation, faculty development, curriculum revision, video conferences, travel grants, higher education infrastructure development, scholarships, indigenous and foreign and university industry research collaboration programmes.¹⁹ Many new universities and degree awarding institutions and several new campuses of existing universities were established. Most remarkable achievements were made in the field of education during this era.

¹⁹ <http://www.hec.gov.pk>

The fourth era, 2008-to-date: With the change of government in 2008, generous funding for HEC dried out almost overnight. Even the programmes of foreign scholarships already in progress are not being funded anymore. By the virtue of the 18th Amendment in the Constitution of Pakistan, in April 2010, education ceased to be a concurrent subject and solely became a provincial subject. The very existence of HEC was about to become history. However, happily the Supreme Court intervened and HEC survived with some role in higher education of the provinces. The provinces have established their own higher education set ups under the ministries. Nevertheless, they are ill-equipped to replace HEC. Besides, the practice of parliamentary democracy at the provincial level has yet to nurture higher education.

Roles and functions of HEC

The basic role of HEC is to facilitate universities and institutions of higher education to serve as engines of socio-economic development in the country.

Other roles and functions of HEC include:

- Formulating policies for higher education
- Working with universities and institutions to assist them in building institutional capacity to achieve quality.
- Developing a system of funding universities for enhanced teaching, learning and research environment.
- Working with federal and provincial governments to ensure quality at public and private universities.
- Supporting the efforts to link research at universities to industry.
- Determining the equivalence of local and international degrees.
- Implementing the mechanism for the evaluation of performance of faculty members at universities.
- Providing need based meritorious and foreign scholarships for equitable access to the students and faculty at higher education level.
- Curriculum development according to international standards.
- Providing funds for conferences, symposia and workshops.²⁰

Despite playing its role for betterment of higher education in Pakistan, HEC is facing challenges. The political instability of Pakistan, resource constraints and priorities of different governments have taken its toll as far as the role of HEC is concerned. Just when HEC seemed to be maturing and taking off in right direction, it was stifled. However, it will be fair to say that HEC did make a significant difference in the

²⁰ *Mid Term Development Framework 2010-2015, op.cit., pp.18-19.*

prevalence, standard and expansion of higher education. The inevitable impact of this progress on socio-economic spheres is recognized though not yet quantified. However, many problems and challenges relating to HEC still linger on. One major issue is the brain-drain as a result of scholarship programmes started by the HEC. It was correct to attempt raising the quality of academia and research by facilitating teachers to seek higher qualifications through scholarships within country and abroad. However, many such scholars did not return due to lack of lucrative job opportunities at home. As a result, the efforts and the resources have not produced the optimum results. The scholars with Ph.D. degrees need to be absorbed by the system to maximize the socio-economic benefits for the society at large. The present wobbly state of HEC and diffusion as well as orientation of provinces calls for reforms in the HEC based on long term national goal of nation building completely detached from political expediencies.

Research statement

In the light of above mentioned literature review following research statement/questions were developed.

- Is higher education system in Pakistan catering for the needs of national development?
- What are the challenges faced by the higher education system in Pakistan?

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this research paper was to analyze the higher education system in Pakistan, its role in development and to explore challenges and future prospects for the system.

Methodology

Mixed method was used to collect the relevant data from the field. Both the qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect the data.

Sampling

This research paper is a part of Ph.D. research study. Randomly selected 300 university teachers, both male and female in equal numbers, in Sindh were used as a sample. It also has expert opinion/interviews from educationists and university teachers from different universities in Pakistan.

Instrument

300 questionnaires with 30 statements were distributed among male and female university teachers in Sindh. The response was based on five options of Likert scale. 150 questionnaires to males and 150 to females were distributed through purposive judgmental sampling technique. The quantitative results were interpreted by the statistical methods of simple percentage and sample T-test analysis. Whereas, semi-structured interviews were also conducted to get the feedback from university teachers and educationists.

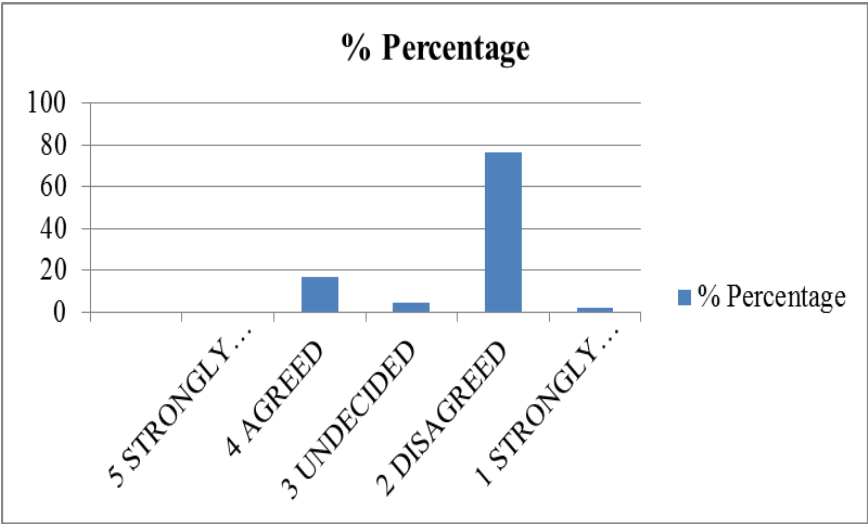
Results

Analysis of the quantitative data: The results were analyzed by using simple percentage methods and sample T-test.

The findings of one research statement/question and the results are as follows:

➤ Is higher education system in Pakistan catering for the needs of national development?

Male Total		5 Strongly Agreed	4 Agreed	3 Undecided	2 Disagreed	1 Strongly Disagreed
PUBLIC	75	0	10	2	61	2
PRIVATE	75	0	14	3	56	2
TOTAL	150					
(FEMALE TOTAL)						
PUBLIC	75	0	12	3	58	2
PRIVATE	75	0	15	5	54	1
TOTAL	150	0	51	13	229	7
%age		0	17	4.333333	76.33333	2.333333



As the above mentioned Table shows majority of both public and private university teachers disagreed with the statement that higher education system in Pakistan is catering for the needs of national development.

Sample T-Test Analysis: An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the responses of public and private university male and female teachers. There was no significant difference in the results for male ($M=2.5933$, $SD=.3.48746$) and female ($M=2.3933$, $SD=.80182$) responses; $t(298) = .685$, $p = .494$. These results suggest that majority of male and female university teachers disagreed with the statement that higher education system in Pakistan is catering for the needs of national development.

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test of Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Higher education system in Pakistan is catering the needs of national development	Equal variances assumed	1.783	.183	.685	298	.494	.2000	.29218	-.37500	.77500
	Equal variances not assumed			.685	164.709	.495	.2000	.29218	-.37690	.77690

Group Statistics

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Higher education system in Pakistan is catering the needs of national development.	Male	150	2.5933	3.48746	.28475
	Female	150	2.3933	.80182	.06547

Discussion on the Findings of Interviews

The feedback from the interviews and the results suggest that the higher education system in Pakistan is neither structured nor functioning so as to meet the challenges of national development. These challenges ought to be identified for making suitable recommendations for tailoring the system in such a way that it can then deliver qualified human resource in optimum numbers matching the national needs. The following paragraph elaborates the results:

Lowe stressed the need for higher education for sustainable, social and economic development by providing skilled and knowledgeable manpower to society.²¹ Universities are, therefore, responsible for providing intellectual workforce to the national economy. Higher education is confronted with a crisis situation in Pakistan. Not a single university in Pakistan can be considered as the world class university in terms of research and academic excellence. The efforts and energy devoted for developing the higher education sector in Pakistan notwithstanding, keeping in view the size of the population which is ever growing, general backwardness and poor socio-economic state of Pakistan much more is still needed to be accomplished.

The challenges of higher education can roughly be grouped as follows:

- i) Accessibility of higher education
- ii) Quality of higher education
- iii) Relevance of higher education

(i) Accessibility of higher education: Access to higher education is one of the major challenges faced by the higher education system in Pakistan. HEC has been making efforts to increase access to higher education in Pakistan by increasing the number of universities and institutions of higher education. Several measures have been taken for increasing the capacity of the higher education system and encouraging demand.

²¹ R. Lowe, 'Higher Education', in R. Aldrich (ed.), *A Century of Education* (London: Routledge Falmer, 2002).

However, far more efforts are needed to make higher education accessible. As of now only 1.58 million out of the population of some 22 million young people in the country have the access to higher education. The limited capacity of the existing system makes admissions restrictive and then due to poverty many prospective students fail to undertake higher education. Indeed, this is a global issue but in the developed countries, universities provide assistance at least to the bright students.²² After the 18th Amendment, financial resources for higher education are now supposed to be with the provinces. The provinces have yet to learn to prioritize and spend on education. In more backward provinces where cheating has been a norm and political appointees have been masquerading as teachers and bureaucrats, the situation is very serious. It is a perfect case of blind leading blind! One major university in Balochistan barely generates 9% of its total budget. It just cannot survive without government's dole outs. Lack of political will, corruption in selection of teachers across board, denial of required funds even for paying salaries to the university teachers and insecurity due to lack of writ of government are worsening the already poor accessibility.

(ii) *Quality of higher education:* Quality of higher education implies sound policies, effective implementation, contemporary and relevant curricula, modern teaching methods, faculty's professional development, objective and honest system of evaluation and availability of suitable infrastructure. Of course, dynamic and committed leadership at all tiers of education is simply indispensable to run the system efficiently and effectively. Majority of educationists believe that system of higher education is lacking quality in one or the other way. Some correlate the quality of education to development through numerous internal and external factors including curricula, infrastructure of the universities and institutions, research, teaching and learning environment, political situation of the country, trained academia and resources.²³ The sustainable development is said to be contingent upon the quality of education which depends upon the curriculum and skilled-based knowledge according to the dynamics of the environment and needs of the swiftly changing industrial world.

Indeed, different individuals and institutional factors also influence the quality and productivity of higher education at national

²² *Mid Term Development Framework, op.cit.*

²³ Mohammad Bilal and Imran Khan, 'Issues and prospects behind the Depressed Higher Education in Pakistan', *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 2012.

level. Individual factors consist of morale, knowledge-based skills, belongingness, commitment and work-ethos. Whereas, availability of resources, environment conducive for research, better communication system, clarity of goals, accountability and managerial support are considered to be the institutional factors contributing to quality at higher education level.

Higher Education Commission is trying to manage the issue of quality through different interventions like (i) Quality Assurance Department at HEC, Quality Enhancement Cells in each university; (ii) scholarship programs to improve the academic capability of the faculty; (iii) introduction of tenure track system; (iv) infrastructure development; (v) degree verification and (vi) curriculum revision.²⁴ However, some measures are still needed to ensure implementation of policies in letter and spirit. Some faculty members who get foreign scholarships for further studies do not come back to their parent universities and thus become part of the brain-drain due to more lucrative opportunities abroad. This is not easy to stop but suitable motivation can help. So far as the quality of private sector universities and institutions is concerned, it is a common observation that in majority of the cases these institutions get accreditation but could not maintain the quality standards demanded by HEC. The public and private universities also do not offer programmes for student's placement after awarding degrees. This results in industry not getting qualified youth. The graduates acquire degrees without knowing the demand of the job market. Content of the curriculum often do not match with the developmental needs of the country. While struggling to find a job for which they are qualified they often become old thus losing their value. Almost every graduate can only think of government jobs which are limited. They have generally no idea of being self-employed. Entrepreneurship is a novel word for most. Joblessness leads to waste of education, dissatisfied youth, stress, crime and even corruption in society. At the time students are choosing the subjects for studies, higher education must include counseling and guidance for career planning and job-market.

Yet another element working against quality of education, indeed, education itself is politics in campuses. Political parties find it expedient to have their parties' student-wings in the campuses. Students are young and emotional; their readily available street-power does not cost much which helps political parties in pursuing their respective agendas. However, it greatly degrades education effort by destroying the environment of teaching and learning. Campuses' strikes waste much of

²⁴ *Mid Term Development Framework, op.cit.*

the time of the students and create an air of indiscipline leading to waste of resources and debilitating national efforts in educating them.

Relevance of higher education: It was natural to spread higher education to enhance accessibility but quality has become the victim. Universities and institutions of higher education in Pakistan lack suitable curricula which has a contemporary global outlook. The outdated curriculum fails to develop critical, analytical thinking and reasoning among students. Reforms are needed in the curriculum of higher education to make it relevant to the needs of socio-economic development of the country and match it with the job opportunities. Higher education must not be at attempt to get a degree for the sake of it, which only promotes joblessness. Trends of the job market and international standards must be considered while developing curriculum and its contents. Relevancy, in short means that the higher education system is established according to the aspirations and needs of the contemporary society of Pakistan, preferably the world in general.

Conclusion and recommendations

Higher education in Pakistan has its strong points as well as weaknesses. The benefits of higher education system can be maximized by optimum utilization of the available resources. However, the adverse effects of the 18th Amendment ought to be addressed at the national level. HEC ought to be given back its financial autarky, role for strategic direction, quality assurance with executive authority and politics minimized from education at all levels, if not completely finished. In the name of autonomy, no university should be allowed to lower the standard of education. Far more financial resources are needed to match the ever growing needs of the higher education. The system itself need reforms to provide for easy access to education through more universities, uncompromising higher quality through improved curricula and removal of corrupt practices in education, faculty training and relevance with the contemporary environment. Technology has shrunk the world. Pakistan is part of the global village; it must educate the youth accordingly.

To improve the higher education in Pakistan, the following is recommended:

a. National Level

1. 18th Amendment ought to be amended immediately at least so far as education is concerned. Education must revert back to being a Concurrent Subject, The provinces must not be allowed to create four or more countries out of Pakistan by following separate syllabi.

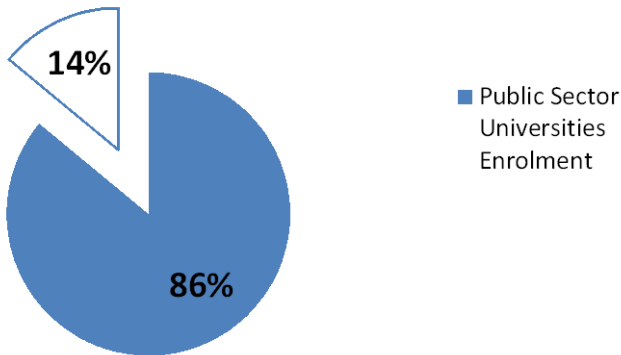
Regional politics must take a back seat when it comes to Pakistan's future.

2. Centralization is demanded when the resources are limited. Pakistan is a poor country. It can ill afford to create several mini-HECs in each province. The old HEC ought to be revived with its powers and role as during 2002-2008.
3. Provincial HECs are already trying to lower the standards. This can only be stopped if quality is demanded nation-wide by the HEC and funding made dependent upon compliance. The quality of education is a pre-requisite for a sound foundation for socio-economic development.
4. The HEC must demand from universities result oriented efforts at the faculty development, curriculum reforms, infrastructure development and take measures for providing maximum access to higher education.
5. Education must be seen as a continuous process right from the primary up to the level of higher education. Accordingly, a comprehensive plan must be made for education at federal government. To coordinate between the provincial colleges/schools and higher education at university levels a bridge ought to be made at each provincial capital for coordination.
6. Federal government must allocate suitable outlays for the growing needs of higher education to the HEC. It must also convince the political parties to end their student-wings at universities. The academic staff associations have also become political parties' agents to pressurize the sitting management/government. These too ought to be regulated to eliminate monopoly of a group.
7. A strong political will is necessary to make higher education a tool for socio-economic development. A culture of merit must be nurtured and enforced. Decisions must not be based on political expediencies.

b. Universities' level

1. Universities ought to undertake realistic and objective oriented educational planning to teach and nurture the research and development culture in the country.
2. System reforms are needed at higher education level along with other levels of education to cater for the needs of economy and society at large. The aim must be to develop individuals with contemporary relevant knowledge and skills necessary for socio-economic development.

Enrolment



established at higher education level to stop all kinds of corruption, nepotism, nurture integrity, conduct fair examinations and foster merit.

7. More resources ought to be allocated to education in general and higher education in particular. Better, effective and efficient use of available resources is needed along with generating alternate resources. Percentage of GDP to education must be increased to at least 4% and utilized fully to achieve the desired objective in national education policy through proper implementation.

There is a need to provide our youth with more access to higher education without any biases. Education should not be just for elites but should play an active equalizing role in the society.