Impact Analysis of Higher Education Research Trajectory on Governance and Public Policy: A Case Study of Four Federal Universities of Pakistan

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Abstract

The research situates link between the graduate researches in four academic institutes of Islamabad and analyzes its impact on the public policy. The study explores the relevance of graduate research trajectory followed by various academic departments of four major federal universities in Pakistan in formulation and execution of public policy. The author collected last five years graduate level dissertation titles from four federal universities and classified them by using thematic approach. An interview guide/questionnaire is prepared accordingly. Chairpersons, deans, professors, bureaucrats, and parliamentarians were approached for semi-structured, in-depth interviews. This is a qualitative study using thematic and analytical approach. The research finds a lack of cohesion between the graduate research trajectory and policy needs of the public institutions. The absence of a national research vision and collaborative framework, difference in training cultures of bureaucracy and academia, lack of logistic support system, defective learning strategies, and an overall neglect for social sciences are the major reasons for incoherence. The analytical correlation of the recorded opinions reveals opportunities to maximize the relevance of the academic research in public policy domain.

__Keywords__: Public Institution, National Research Vision, Collaborative Legal Framework

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Introduction

Universities are 'Living Labs' to engine sustainable development through social transformation.[1] Universities generate inquiry to drive societal processes. The rationalized concepts produced in universities

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[1]   W. Purcell, H. Henriksen, & J. Spengler, 'Universities as the engine of transformational sustainability toward delivering the sustainable development goals', *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print, (2019), https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-02-2019-0103

influence theoretical expertise and human workforce to strengthen public institutions. The internationalization of research, after the advent of new paradigms in global institutions, has increased the importance of pragmatic and inclusive public policy for human growth.[2] New rationales, approaches, and perspectives are challenging policy architectures and differentiating the complex variables of global governance.[3] Policy construct has now become a dynamic science. The difference in the performance of policy institutions is an astounding reason for escalated disparity among the prosperity levels of nations on the globe. Some countries enjoy high Human Development while others face abject poverty due to glaring contrast in their institutional capacities to prognosticate and counter their public policy challenges using effective analytical approaches backed by adequate research and data.[4]

        The complexity of today's transitional world and pursuit for Integrationism with rapid transformation in polities demand an objective analysis of public policy. The scientification of public policy is inevitable in emerging competitive social systems with democracy, health, environment, education, economic and social justice as top narratives in the discourse of sustainable development.[5] The academic research is an apolitical exercise characterized by scientific argument and objectivity. Therefore, the coherence between the trends of higher education research and national policy making is vital and cannot be left unchecked.[6] The optimization of public policy is based on specialized research inputs and human resource training. Knowledge-based policy is a dominant figure in the post-industrial society. A successful public policy needs critical investigation of interlinked social, economic, and political undercurrents. It is relevant to make academic research in line

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[2]   Chika Sehoole, 'Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa: A Historical Review', *Perspectives in Education* (2006), 24.
[3]   Ibid.
[4]   Daron Acemoglu & and James A Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: the Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty* (London/New York: Profile/Crown Publishers, 2012).
[5]   John Brennan, Roger King, Yann Lebeau, International research project synthesis report, The Role of Universities in the Transformation of Societies (London: Association of Commonwealth Universities, 2004). https://www.open.ac.uk/cheri/documents/transf-final-report.pdf
[6]   Meenal Shrivastava & Sanjiv Shrivastava, 'Political Economy of Higher Education: Comparing South Africa to Trends in the World', *South African Journal of Higher Education,* 67 (2014), 10.1007/s10734-013-9709-6.

with real-time public policy determinants.[7] An efficient linkage between academic research and government departments is important for sustainable growth. The linkage between policy needs and academic research boosts institutional performance which stands fulcrum of the socio-economic equilibrium. Kazakhstan is a case study to understand the impacts of higher education research planning on overall societal processes, governance, and public policy. The educational planning and a well-organized research in universities have decreased economic dependency, helped in removing class conflicts and reduced policy frictions. Research planning provided theoretical base for the workplace and appropriate skills of international standards to improve societal processes through social institutions.[8]

The public utilization of university research is envisioned in national policy documents of Pakistan. The strong emphasis on research innovation is stated in Vision 2025 document compiled by the Ministry of Planning Development and Reforms, as:

> [W]e will build a worldwide education & research network of universities which will allow institutions to initiate research through government and the private sector focused support enabling them to build an international partnership program.[9] (p. 35).

The policy guidelines for HEIs and HEC to enhance and prioritize 'Research and Innovation' in the country and its 'public connectivity' is strongly advocated in the document. Socioeconomic interventions of university research and its relevance for public institutions to address national challenges are stated as: 'Comprehensive reforms, comprising of detailed actions in the curriculum, pedagogy, technology, governance, assessment as well as social and economic relevance will be made in the educational research system'[10]. National Education Policy (NEP) 2009[11]

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[7]   V. L. Inozemtsev, 'The Modern Industrial Society: The Nature, the Contradictions, the Prospects' (Russian version) Moscow: Logos, *International Review of Management and Marketing* (2000). 2016, 6(S1) 201-207.

[8]   A. Beissenova, S. M. Duisenova, & K. S. Muslimova, 'Influence of Education on Social Structure of Society', (2013), *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences.* 82. 813-817. 10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.06.354.

[9]   Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Planning Development and Reforms, *Vision 2025*, p.35, available at:
       https://www.pc.gov.pk/uploads/ vision2025/Pakistan-Vision-2025.pdf

[10]   Ibid., 34.

[11]   http://itacec.org/document/2015/7/National_Education_Policy_2009.pdf

while expounding the core objectives of higher education research declares:

> The tertiary education sector contributes as well in the attainment of social goals of developing civic responsibility, social cohesion and a more tolerant society. For this reason, to its traditional functions of producing skilled labor force and crafting new knowledge through research, a third is being added world over, that of service to society.[12]

Methodology

Purposive sampling was used to collect data from academia and public institutions. Thirty (30) individuals from academic community and eleven (11) representatives of public institutes were interviewed. Four federal universities, COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Quaid-e-Azam University, National Defense University and International Islamic University were selected. The selection of these universities is based on the ranking done by Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. Moreover, these universities are situated in the capital which provides them a better opportunity to collaborate with central policy making institutes.

To approach the relevant public policy institutes, titles of all the thesis dissertations of MS and PhD produced by selected academic departments during last five years were collected and categorized under several themes. In-depth interviews of the faculty and representatives of public policy institutions were conducted to get a profound insight of perceptions of stakeholders about various dimensions, constraints and potential opportunities associated with the research topics.

Interview guide the respondents from academia comprised five questions, as follows:

1. The stimulus for selection of major research areas in the universities?
2. How and why they focus on those areas of research?
3. How this research is linked and communicated to concerned stakeholders in public institutions?
4. Gap between government and academic institutions?
5. Reasons for those gaps, if any, and how those gaps can be reduced?

Interview guide for respondents from public policy institutions also comprised five questions, as follows:

1. What is the role of academic research when policies are devised and implemented?

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12   Ibid., 55.

2. What is internal mechanism of your institution and how research is conducted?
3. Is there any link between your institution and academia?
4. If there is a gap, then what are the reasons of this gap between academia and your institution?
5. How we can bridge this gap?

Table 1: Selected Institutions, Departments, Population, Sample Size

S. No.	Name of Educational Institute	Selected Departments of the University	Category of Respondents	
			Deans, Chairperson, Head of Departments	Faculty Members
1	Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad	1. Politics and International Relations 2. Law 3. School of Economics 4. Public Administration 5. Sociology 6. Management Sciences 7. Gender Studies	3	5
2	International Islamic University Islamabad	1. Department of Law 2. Management Sciences 3. International Relations 4. Economics 5. Sociology	3	5
3	National Defence University Islamabad	1. Government and Public Policy 2. Peace and Conflict Studies 3. Strategic and Nuclear Studies 4. International Relations 5. Leadership and Management Studies	2	5
4	COMSATS Institute of Information Technology	1. Development Studies (Atd.) 2. Management Sciences (Atd.) 3. Centre for Policy Studies (Isb.) 4. Humanities (Isb.)	2	5

Findings and Analysis

a.   Research trajectory management in universities
Internal research administration of universities and factors motivating students and faculty to select their research topics are important to determine the impact of research on public policy and governance. The universities maintain principal policy-making bodies and advisory brains on all academic matters relating to and affecting a university's teaching, research, and educational programs. Universities, in some cases, have representation from the members of the parliament, bureaucracy, or judiciary as a part of their Syndicate, Senate or Board of Governors. The bodies like Academic Council, Dean's Council, and Board of Studies responsible for research administration, are mostly composed of senior professors. Various heads and senior professors of the sampled universities suggested the inclusion of public policy officials in such bodies to systematically gather feedback from the executive and legislative branch of the state about the cross-cutting research themes of national importance.

The Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, International Islamic University in response to a question about composition of research bodies, expressed: 'There is no institutional mechanism through which we can get feed-back from concerned institution or industry about their field requirements. University statutes need innovation to include representatives from policy institutions/ Professor-in-Practice in Boards of Study to pursue need-based expansion of the academic trajectory'. The lack of rationalization caused significant disconnect between the research and institutional preferences. Hence areas requiring research at that instant are overlooked.

The researching students are free to opt topics of their personal interest, which may or may not contribute to public policy. Owing to lack of requisite guidance, academia needs to struggle hard to pursue real-time targets to focus on requirements of the society. All research effort that is generated in the country does not account for need-based research. Instead research conducted by the students is only focused on pursuing personal goals of accomplishing the degree requirements in most of the cases. Dean Contemporary Studies National Defense University maintained: 'No one asks about the contribution of a published article/research project in socio-economic development of the society'. He added: 'Foreign impact factor journals define their thematic areas in line with the social needs of that particular society which are mainly irrelevant to be applicable in our social perspective. As a matter of fact, despite having huge number of research articles being published

in international impact factor journals related to environment, still they are unable to remove garbage dumps present around a notable university campus.'

The ex-president IIUI argued during the discussion: 'School of thoughts/ synergy groups that steer the direction of graduate research are more likely to be tradition-based than to be need-based'. Academic school of thoughts do not emerge after consultation with executing agencies of the same field, rather such schools are more focused to generate publications so that professional criterion for promotions can be achieved. It was told by eminent academics from NDU that personal growth and traditionalism both stand more relevant in selecting areas for research publication or projects by faculty members. It was asserted by Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, QAU: 'While inaugurating a new graduate program and its scheme of study, the academia is more concerned about the financial plan while putting up a PC-1 for a new academic program. Limited consultation process is involved to make trends of graduate research to be synchronized with national goals for sustainable development'.

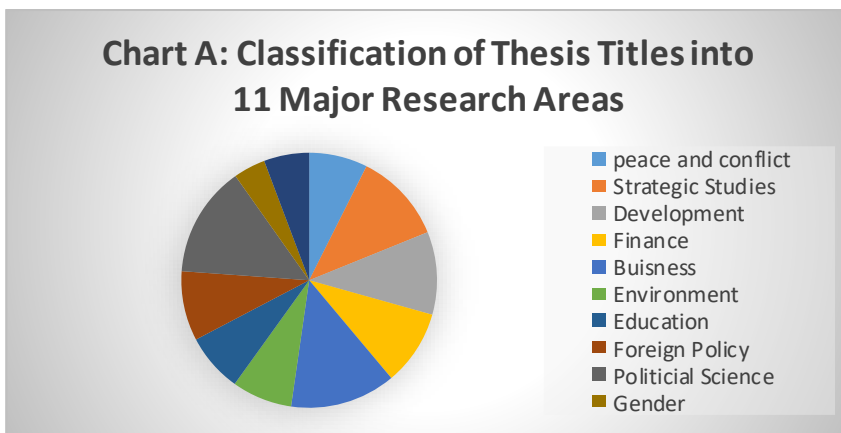## b. University's outreach to public policy and government institutes

It is interesting to note that the sampled universities have no specialized staff or any directorate to liaison with government and public policy institutes to collect and disseminate need-based research topics for concerned academic departments. The outreach of universities to national policymaking and execution is not properly institutionalized. The Office of Research Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC) have been established in the universities under the guidelines provided by the HEC. The vision is that ORIC will develop mechanism for research commercialization and will establish a Business/Technology Incubator to work closely for innovation and entrepreneurship.[13] The focus of ORIC is more towards commercialization of research and mostly they deal with natural sciences. ORICs have very limited interaction with public institutions/ state agencies to increase societal relevance and policy impact of social sciences research. Such liaisons are maintained by professors in individual capacity, which is insignificant to serve the purpose of a larger impact of academic research on governance and public policy. The established academic departments organize conferences, seminars, and workshops in which policymakers, institutional spearheads, CEOs, and members of the parliament

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[13] http://hec.gov.pk/english/services/universities/ORICs/Documents/ ORIC%20Policy.pdf. Accessed 16 November 2019.

deliberate on the published research. The recommendations are submitted to concerned state institutions or standing committees of the parliament to take policy steps accordingly. Planning Commission of Pakistan, for example, in collaboration with School of Economics, QAU organized a conference to discuss economic and cultural implications of CPEC on local industries and services. Universities initiate such ventures and submit their recommendations to relevant fora. Professors win research projects in personal capacity from national and international donor agencies. During study it was found that results of such research projects are decentralized and research operations are not consolidated to measure the public impact of these research projects with exactitude.

c. Factors driving research trajectory in academic department:
Due to lack of specialized agency to link research topics with

Chart A: Classification of Thesis Titles into 11 Major Research Areas

- peace and conflict
- Strategic Studies
- Development
- Finance
- Buisness
- Environment
- Education
- Foreign Policy
- Politicial Science
- Gender

government policy needs, it was found that the trajectory of research topics is driven by various other factors which decrease its impact on actual public policy needs. The data in Chart A shows frequency of priority subject areas estimated through last five-year postgraduate theses record collected from 21 departments of 4 universities. A general classification is made under 11 broader heads. Almost every department maintains proper record of postgraduate dissertations. There were different factors influencing the

d. Motivation of students in conducting research at postgraduate level
i.   Personal motivation: A distinguished professor from International Islamic University explained: 'Mostly students come with their own research topics. Important considerations for students before

selecting their topic are, a good supervisor, easy access to the required data and sometimes faculty advice also. They have limited access to public institutions and their research needs. The ultimate utilization of my research work is to enhance their academic credentials for good market job, higher publication index, or to fill-up the racks of the departmental library otherwise'. 'Selection of research topics are needed to be systematically linked with some broader societal agenda, or goals, instead it is most likely to be founded upon decentralized and traditional motivations', he added. The respondents form academia stated that students conduct research under their certain personal sources of motivations, which can be categorized as follows:

- Previous research available in the university or internet
- Market demand jobs (in NGOs, media, teaching, or on parents' and relatives' suggestions or aspirations)
- Passion about certain topics (rarely found)
- Economic constraints of students to complete their degree and getting job, so they pursue any topic.

ii. *Research priorities of the department*: Departmental expertise for supervision is usually in line with stated vision and academic preferences. Students find it more comfortable to opt topics from such preferred areas. The frequency of research publication increases in such areas due to defined and tested methodologies. Significant number of thesis titles collected from NDU falls under 'Strategic Studies' due to enough research supervisors being available in this area. A major chunk of thesis titles in IIUI falls under 'Islamic Finance and Banking' as the department enshrines certain established schools of thought in this area. 'Foreign Policy and International Relations' were found to be favorite areas for the students of QAU due to the same reason. QAU has one of the oldest departments of political science and international relations with many senior professors having brilliant publication record in these areas.

iii. *Personal motivation of the research supervisor*: Funded projects influence title selection for graduate research. These projects are further divided into thematic areas. The projects offer studentships to conduct research. However, most of the sampled departments lack centralized mechanisms to evaluate public or academic outcomes of these projects. State institutions, legislature or executive are rarely included in the list of research donors. However, publications play an important role in faculty profiling and promotions.

Current level of collaboration between academia and public policy institutes
The faculty has claimed linkages with policy institutions to tap needful research areas for graduate students. Feedback from field consultants and alumni is considered before approving a research synopsis through Graduate Supervisory Committee. Disconnect between policy applications and students is endorsed by most of the respondents, however, some others also appreciated the efforts of their graduate office in introducing latest research trends through field visits, open houses, workshops, seminars, and guest lectures. There is, thus, a need to address the issue of conflicting/competing priorities and develop a shared understanding. At a broader/strategic level, this seems to be one of the biggest hurdles in relation to creating impact at the national level–a clear formulation and wider and rigorous dissemination of the national priorities for research which should guide the overall HEC research framework and HEIs' research directions.

Research in public policy and governance institutes
Ministry of Planning Development and Reforms/ Planning Commission of Pakistan is the supreme planning body of the country. The main functions of the commission are:
- Preparing National Plans and evaluating their implementation
- Defining national vision and undertaking strategic planning
- Evaluating economic situation and coordinating economic policies
- Assessing the material and human resources of the country and formulating proposals for augmenting such resources
- Assisting the government in providing a conducive macroeconomic and regulatory framework
- Monitoring and evaluating implementation of major development projects and programmes
- Preparation of sound projects in regions and sectors lacking adequate portfolio.

Main functions of public policy and governance institutes
- Promoting role of the private sector as engine of growth
- Promoting and coordinating reform and innovation in government in partnership with relevant ministries / organizations
- Promoting and developing social capital with stakeholders (SDGs, poverty alleviation, social harmony)
- Promoting and coordinating economic and infrastructure initiatives towards developing regional economic integration

- Monitoring Pakistan's economic competitiveness and developing strategies for its enhancement
- Promoting development discourse in the country towards participatory and collaborative planning and development

Opinion of Executives from Public Institutes

Questionnaires filled by 12 representatives of public institutes depicted general perceptions of government institutes about the research problem. As is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Opinion of Executives from Public Institutes
(n = 12)

Scenario	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Un-certain	Agree	Strongly Agree
The policies adapted by institutions are need-based.	1	3	0	4	4
The policies adapted by this institution are research-based.	4	2	0	3	3
The policies adapted by this institution are based upon directives or traditions.	1	2	1	5	3
The policies created by institution are based on the research conducted by academic fraternity.	6	3	0	1	2
The academic researchers are consulted for policy and decision-making process of government institutions.	5	2	0	4	1
The academic research is not required as there are government think tanks already working.	4	3	0	3	1
The ideas presented by academic research are small-scaled and cannot be implemented in polices.	2	1	0	4	4

There is a lack of system that would highlight strong ideas in the research conducted by universities.	1	2	1	5	3
Academic research findings are not reliable enough.	1	2	1	4	4
The government policies are already tracking the needs of the population due to which academic research is not required.	3	2	2	2	2
There is no mechanism through which universities could identify effective research ideas and fund it for public benefit.	2	1	0	5	4

Additional secretary of Planning Commission insisted during the interview that the Commission deals with academic projects through HEC. Vice-Chancellor Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) is the member of the Commission to undertake research related matters. The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics was established at Karachi in 1957 and in 1964 accorded the status of an autonomous research organization by the Government of Pakistan. It is devoted to theoretical and empirical research in development economics in general and on Pakistan-related economic issues in particular. In addition to providing a firm academic basis to economic policymaking, its research also provides a window through which the outside world can view the nature and direction of economic research in Pakistan. 'However, this is not enough. We need a continuous and real-time feedback mechanism between academia and planning fora of the country to get maximum benefits from the research, and to provide strategic direction and guidelines to devise futuristic and impactful higher education research trajectory for the coming generation', was suggested by an associate professor of economics from PIDE. Recently we have organized a conference on CPEC but most of the papers presented in that conference were practically irrelevant mainly because the research community is not well-informed, as there is no regular liaison between the graduate schools and executives responsible for taking national decisions', he added. Strategic Policy and Planning Unit has been formulated in the Planning Commission to develop a long-term vision for Pakistan, to liaise with concerned ministries and support them in

developing effective sectoral strategies and policies. The Unit also works in capacity building to enhance strategic capabilities of various ministries. The Unit reviews the strategy and policy of Planning Commission, identifies key challenges for the Government and suggests measures to tackle these, provides policy advice in line with the priorities of the Government, develops medium-term development plan and annual plan and engages with the stakeholders and formulates framework for economic projections. 'The Unit may collaborate with Higher Education Commission to formulate a national research agenda and strategic vision to define research priorities for HIEs in line with national goals of development', was the suggestion made by the additional secretary of the planning commission.

In parliamentary system of government standing committees in both lower and upper house are responsible to check the performance of all ministerial bodies working as the executive. The committees comprised of parliamentarians as members and an elected chairman. The Standing Committees of the House play an important role of oversight and monitoring the working of the relevant Ministries of the Government. In the parliamentary democracies, the Committees are regarded as 'eyes, ears, hands and even brain of the Parliament'. Another saying about the importance of the Committee is the 'Congress in session is Congress in Exhibition, while Congress in its Committee Room is Congress at work'. (Joseph P. Haris) There shall be a Standing Committee of the Assembly for each Ministry of the Government (Rule 198). The Standing Committees examine Bills referred to them by the House and submit its reports to the House. Upon introduction, a Bill other than a Finance Bill, shall stand referred to the Standing Committee concerned with the subject matter of the Bill (Rule 122)[14]. The National Assembly Rules of Procedure contain special provisions empowering the Standing Committees to examine the expenditures, administration, delegated legislations, public petitions and policies of the Ministry concerned and it's associated public bodies and may forward its report of findings and recommendations to the Ministry and Ministry shall submit its reply to the Committee. In addition to two non-Departmental Standing Committees, viz. Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Committee on Government Assurances; and three Domestic Committees, namely Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges, House and Library Committee and Business Advisory Committee; All the Standing Committees under rule 200, their members are required to be elected by the Assembly within thirty days after the election of the Leader of the

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[14]   http://www.na.gov.pk/en/content.php?id=63. Accessed 2 June 2018

House. In addition to Standing Committees, the Assembly can constitute, in accordance with the provisions of rule 244, Select Committees on Bills and Special Committees to carry out functions specified in the motion.[15]

'Most of the policy formulation or adaptations are indigenous, proposed by parliamentarians. We do not have any mechanism to outsource our research requirements for new legislation to academia' said be joint secretary standing committees, National Assembly. He suggested to have a permanent body to liaison between university research and legislative requirements in concerned fields.' Can we rely upon the adequacy of university research mechanism, its ingenuity and precision?' He reciprocated. He added that under the Senate Administration Strategic Plan, a proposal was envisaged to constitute a forum consisting of the sitting and retired senators/ MPs, under which a Think Tank of parliamentarians was further proposed by the previous Chairman Senate. The Senate Forum for Policy Research (SFPR) is guided by rules 269-rule 276 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate, 2012, which relate to the composition, tenure and functioning of the Forum. The main purpose of this Forum is to conduct research, assist and guide the Members and the Secretariat of the Senate and recommend policy options/ solutions on questions of public importance.

The secretary briefed that a Research Cell is working under the umbrella of Senate of Pakistan mandated to undertake policy analysis, compiles background information of historical, topical and factual relevance, collects statistical data, and prepares/disseminate research briefs, comparative studies, concept notes and fact sheets on wide-ranging subjects and topics. A significant proportion of the services on offer pertains to preparation of information dossiers, position papers, country papers, speeches, statements, interventions and talking points, as well as resolutions for Senate delegations representing Pakistan at international and domestic fora, international conferences, seminars and during bilateral engagements and public hearings. In addition, Research Directorate prepares Speeches, statements and talking points for the parliamentarians, especially the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman, Leader of the House, and Leader of the Opposition. Such speeches and statements are prepared for various important occasions including national and international events. The Research Directorate has also established Parliamentary Research Data Bank containing statistics on

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[15] http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1438665672_562.pdf. Accessed 2 June 2018.

economic, social, budgetary, water, agriculture and energy indicators. It also contains data provided through answers to questions raised in the House, and working papers provided to Standing Committees. Other new products introduced by the Research Directorate include Legislative Briefs, Summary of the Reports, Committee Research Briefs, Budget Input, Economic Info-leaf, Cooperation with UN and assistance in preparation of Questions and Supplementary Questions. Research Directorate also has very strong linkages with other branches of Senate as well as with the Senate Forum for Policy Research (SFPR). Research Directorate supports the members of SFPR in all content work and new ideas that generate from the forum. 'We need to legislate to connect our academia and legislative research needs cohesively by making a permanent liaison cell. The cell can provide strategic guidance for academic institutes to set their research priorities in accordance with national needs and oversee the quality and usefulness of the conducted research' he asserted.

The research wings are internally constituted bodies. Some federal and provincial ministries hire individual consultants to run their projects. Such appointments are time bounded. Regular appointees of concerned ministries work in research wings on deputations. At policy level, the standing committee which is comprised of provincial and federal parliamentarians is responsible to devise policy guidelines in consultation with relevant ministry. The capacity of standing committees to conduct research-based exercise is questioned by many executive heads during deliberations.

Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Affairs (PIPS) was formed under an act of parliament in 2008. The institute aims capacity-building of parliamentarians by arranging training workshops, seminars, and conferences. Some Independent think thanks like South Asian Strategic Stability Institute and Institute of Policy Studies are making joint research ventures with academia and public institutions. Publications produced by these thinks tanks significantly contribute in imparting research culture in the process of policy design and implementation. Some national and international organizations, mainly NGOs, also assist public institutions in specific fields and provide research input with financial assistance as well. Focused areas for such collaborations are primary education, environment, democracy, gender issues, mother child health care and human resource building for government departments. Such collaborations, if centrally planned, proposed and evaluated, can produced well-integrated impacts on social well-being of the citizens.

Opinion of the Academia

The sample from academia included teachers and administrators. Their responses are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Opinion of the Academia including Faculty and Administration

n = 30

S. No.	Statement	Strongly disagree (SD)	Dis-agree (D)	Un-certain (U)	Agree (A)	Strongly Agree (SA)
1	The research topic selected is application oriented.	11	5	2	6	5
2	The research topics selected are practical.	9	10	0	6	5
3	There is a pre-existing list of traditional topics from which topics are being selected.	8	6	0	10	6
4	Students have the flexibility to select research topic of their own choice.	6	6	0	8	10
5	Research conducted is purely based on primary data collection.	7	5	4	7	8
6	Research results are generated based on secondary data.	6	11	6	4	3
7	The research conducted generates employment or any social activity	13	7	0	6	4
8	Significant research is trans-ferred to public institutions.	13	11	0	3	3
9	A body in faculty generates a list of ideas with consultation from the public institutions	15	9	0	4	2
10	A system exists through which public institutions extends their research requirements to academic bodies	14	9	0	5	2

'To establish linkages with public institutions is not binding for us' said by the vice-president academics, IIUI.' ORIC deals with industries and its research operations promote entrepreneurship. We need changes in statutes for including policy executives in academic bodies'.

The Director ORIC, QAU, maintains 'we focus to generate entrepreneurship. Our focus is to connect researchers with funding agencies which are mostly NGOs, international banks, multinational

R&D organizations and Higher Education Commission. The Parliament, Ministries and line agencies are rarely approached for such collaboration. We have no direct consultation with government departments to plan thematic areas and to announce funding opportunities to explore these thematic areas'.

Federal secretary for law, justice and parliamentary affairs believed that lack of interaction between academia and policy forums minimized the relevance of university research in public affairs. The national policy challenges like economic dependency, socio-strategic conflicts, legislative debates, and cultural contradictions can be analyzed more objectively by an academic mind. The gap also affects performance of state institutions in absence of properly research-based data and investigation.

Role of Higher Education Commission

The research trajectory in Pakistan witnessed significant growth after the constitutional amendment of 2002, setting up the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to replace the Universities Grants Commission (UGC), established in 1947.[16] During the subsequent years, The Commission initiated many programs like National Research Program for Universities (NRPU), Higher Education Knowledge Exchange & Entrepreneurship, Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC), Higher Education Knowledge Exchange & Entrepreneurship, and Grant to Organize Seminar, Conference & Training Workshop. The purpose of these initiatives is to expand public outreach of university research.

HEC anticipates a comprehensive framework to increase public utility of social sciences research. Higher Education Commission is a regulatory agency. Universities are autonomous to set their research priorities and linkages. HEC initiated Social Integration Outreach Program to develop a closer interaction with community, to solve local problems, to build community confidence on universities, and to develop linkages with academia and public policy. Nineteen Projects have been awarded during 2015 under this program. Proposals are invited in 2018 under the themes of 'climate change and environment'.[17]

HEC established a Committee for Development of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities in Pakistan (CDSSHP). The annual

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[16] https://tribune.com.pk/story/503545/higher-education-commission-under-renewed-threat/. Accessed 4 September 2019.

[17] http://www.hec.gov.pk/english/services/universities/SIOP/Pages/default.aspx. Accessed 29 October 2019.

International Social Sciences conference has become a permanent feature. The HEC also established an inter university consortium for promotion of social sciences composed of nine leading Higher education institutions of Pakistan. The purpose is to expedite collaborative efforts at national and international level to increase social applicability of academic research. The consortium decided to take a number of practical steps to improve the state of social sciences in Pakistan including formation of Pakistan Council for Social Sciences Research, establishing social sciences research labs, undertaking inter-university and inter-disciplinary research projects, preservation of local culture, history and tourism, collaboration with national and international organizations, faculty exchange in the disciplines of social sciences.

However, the question raised by the various stakeholders is the impact on policy development or performance of state institutions. Many of the stakeholders (cf. qualitative interviews) felt that it was difficult to see any impact so far of the research produced at such level. Some highlighted that there has been a limited connectedness between academia and state institutions to decide research priorities by thinking more real and practical, and by keeping in view the larger canvas of national development. On the contrary, some other views challenged the existing 'too much' focus on 'commercialization by HEC'. For them, the purpose of HEIs is not to commercialize but to also generate knowledge for the sake of knowledge – the traditional, noble purposes of higher education. This reflects a conflict or confusion of priorities. Moreover, the faculty representing social sciences, arts and humanities feel that there is too much focus on 'Science and Technology 'Social Sciences have been neglected (this may also be reflected in the low research outcomes reflected in terms of the publications analysis from 1996 – 2002[18]. There is, thus, a need to address the issue of conflicting/ competing priorities and develop a shared understanding. At a broader/ strategic level, this seems to be one of the biggest hurdles in relation to creating impact at the national level–a clear formulation and wider and rigorous dissemination of the national priorities for research, Research Priorities & Research Directions in Universities which should guide the overall HEC research framework and HEIs' research directions.

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[18]   hec.gov.pk/english/universities/projects/TESP/Documents/ TESA %20Report%20-%20Research%20Performance.pdf. Accessed 22 Oct 2019.

Constraints in Collaboration and Bridging the Gap

1.   Difference in research environment and characteristics

There is a prominent difference in research cultures of academia and public policy institutes, especially they have different expectations of research, different expectations of collaboration, different views on timeliness and different views on what is important in the research.

There is an understanding among public policy institutes that academic research does not provide direct answers to the questions important to formulate public policy. Academics take a laid-back attitude, are generally slow, follow a very different pattern of write-ups that is not easily understandable for the policy institutes, whereas, governance needs pragmatic and direct research methodology.

Academics do understand this very clearly and do not hesitate to admit this difference in the research priorities and research culture in general stating that the prime objective of their research in to address the broader issue and provide guidelines in broader sense, to expand knowledge base through theoretical expertise. Since they have to publish the research in international journals, so they cannot change the style of their research articles and that only too in a hope that only then their work may be admired and used by policy making institutes.

A perception was found among academia that their role is to contribute in the body of pure research/knowledge by expanding its theoretical base. Instead to address exclusive scenarios, academician insisted, that their work is to produce generalized solutions by enlarging conceptual framework of the subject. On contrary research needs of public and legislative institutions were found more problem-specific and need minor details to be properly worked out.

2.   Learning mechanism deficiencies

'The learning techniques used in Pakistani Universities are mostly traditional and typical, rather to be critical and objective' stated by the Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, QAU. He added that cut-and-paste environment in academic fraternity has kept graduate students away from being innovative and genuine in their research idea and to work hard for it. Our professors are publishing research papers ten times more than before 2002. Internet has placed at scholars 'fingertip vast referenced material to plagiarize and re-invent ideas. Social sciences research needs hard work to generate its impact. Unfortunately, innovation is seriously lacking in teacher-student interaction leading towards the state of 'intellectual stagnancy'.

The application-oriented topics need higher degree of validation due to their social significance. Doing research on a real-time issue requires responsible attitude, enquiring tendencies, creativity and hard work. Some respondents from faculty of Social Sciences, IIUI, maintained that students unfortunately, lack basic researching skills, such as to create, connect and conclude a research idea. Therefore, most of the students avoid ingenuity in research and tend to opt an easy way out to the final transcript by selecting 'easy-to-handle' research topics.

Lack of public exposure disconnects researcher's mind from real-time pulse of the society. Social engagements of professors and students are minimum. Isolation causes lack of pragmatic approach required to frame research canvas from problem-specific domain to theoretical generalization. The way forward lies in adhering to strict ethical standards, cultivating excellence, rejecting mediocrity, and nurturing a spirit of inquiry and intellectual excitement'.[19]

3.   Lack of confidence in academic research

Decades of de-link caused sense of alienation between academia and institutions. 'We cannot rely upon academic research to deal with sensitive and cross-cutting issues of the state', a senior bureaucrat from Planning Commission pleaded sarcastically. It was added by the secretary Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, that 'We need to work more seriously to formulate highly competitive but creative standard operating procedures in graduate research mechanisms, so that research output can achieve highest validation standards required to convert research into some action'. However, the State Minister of Justice, Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Government of Pakistan commented: 'We need to build confidence. Academia can guide us on various dimensions of public policy and their possible solutions by applying optimized research methodologies. Unlike bureaucratic mind, an academic mind fulfills the conditions of impartiality and objectivity in pursuit of results, which are more reliable and scientific, provided if the conditions for a good research are fulfilled by academia'.

Legislative bills are mostly initiated through political parties, or individual members of the parliament. Joint Secretary Standing Committees, National Assembly pointed that political minds are more vulnerable to incline towards inherent prejudices, and ideological positions, more importantly to look after expectations of the respective constituency, they sometimes could not anticipate the results of a policy

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[19]   https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=21_11_2015_008_001

objectively and impartially, which one can expect from a reason-driven academic mind, only looking for fulfillment of intellectual curiosity. The lack of confidence of the parliament and executive owing to the reasons already discussed, often results in loss of immense ideological suggestions which formulated after brain-storming sessions of intellectual class of the society.

The standing committees comprise elected members of the parliament, do not pay much heed to research-based inputs received from academia by declaring them 'not reliable enough'. There is a perception amongst the members of the parliament that academic research is not monitored in a proper way to make it a part of legislative process.

4. Non-regulation of academic service

It has been observed that professors officiating the research are not accountable to any regulatory body, they do not feel obliged to approach relevant agencies for seeking guidance on what aspects of the society require conduct of research. This missing link between academia and public agencies/ institutions can only be addressed through a centralized agency, tasked to regulate, prioritize and guide the academia, and steer research on 'social need bases'.

This is also important keeping in view the absence of a mechanism which is responsible to provide adequate social exposure to academia. This inhibits the training activity of professors, working on and supervising research, thus research work being conducted in the academia lacks impetus and conclusive, practically implementable solutions.

Practical research is more time-consuming than abstract/pure research and needs governmental patronage for its application. Many professors pointed out during interviews that promotion system of HEC does not appreciate application-oriented research. Academicians are more concerned about promotion-oriented publications than to public utilization of their research. Research paper publication has now become an art. Practical outcomes of the research are negligibly counted in promotions and job incentives.

'There are no additional credits for practical significance of our research in internal evaluation system', said by one of the students from department of IR, QAU, Islamabad. A senior professor from COMSATS asserted that practical research is a time- and cost-consuming exercise which in most of the cases remains unaffordable for both students and professors to work upon. Direct access to state officials and relevant data is difficult for a graduate research student whereas it would be even

impossible for a student from a remote area to deliberate with top officials of the state institutions to collect relevant data.

Due to lack of proper regulation, in most of the cases, research work does not address immediate needs of Pakistani society, thereby, it is rendered to insecure online/ web platforms meant for availability of research data, or is shelved in libraries of the universities. To accrue maximum benefits from the research work in social sector, a comprehensive conceptual framework needs to be formulated at academic institutes. It must be allocated to an autonomous body responsible to channelize research work in accordance with national policy challenges.

5. Stagnancy of methods in policy institutes

During discussions, most of the professors maintained that training procedures of executives and academicians are contrastingly different. Bureaucrats are trained to be traditional and non-adaptive. They mostly rely over departmental patterns of authority derived from rules of business and are reluctant to accommodate innovations in their procedures. Outreach tendencies of the public servants are undesirable for them. The policy institutes need more inclusive approach to undertake expert opinions. Lucrative salaries and influential postings are the top priorities for most of the public servants. By no means the research collaborations with academic bodies can help them in achieving their career goals and therefore remain irrelevant during their limited tenure of service at a position.

'There is no appreciation mechanism in promotion and posting structure for the officers who come-up with innovative ideas either by using their own researching skills or acquiring such ideas from academic fraternity. Publishing or presenting innovation is less required to hit attractive posting, perks and privileges, than other factors'. It was said by Secretary Planning and Development KPK.

Civil service reforms are inevitable to incorporate research-based mechanism in public policy design and implementation. 'Keeping in view the policy conflicts over the subject matters of law, history, strategic and cultural conflicts, ethnic and religious consolidation, foreign affairs, economic resource planning and management, and urbanization, we need to be more specific in making our challenges, weaknesses, and targets clear and comprehensive', was asserted by the Minister in-Charge for Law and Parliamentary Affairs. 'Therefore, it is needful to formulate our research priorities after taking all decision-making bodies such as universities, ministries, law-making bodies and line agencies on board', he added.

6.   Lack of financial/ logistic support for research

Purposeful research needs time, resource and access. 'We are more concerned to complete our degree in time due to job constraints than to make impact on the society,' is said by an MS research scholar from COMSATS. The quality of research depends on both, the skill of the researchers and resource they have. 'The job insecurity and financial stress is a major reason due to which students are compelled to finish their degrees without paying much heed to the quality of research and its social impact', a PhD research scholar from NDU added.

The culture for funding academic research is not appreciated amongst government institutions. Instead of conducting research to formulate a specific policy to fulfill the needs of domestic society, a solution implemented by foreign countries is gleefully accepted for implementation. This not only entails higher costs, but also renders inadequate output for the society in socio-economic arena.

The way forward

A.   *National Research Vision*: A detailed National Research Vision has to be set to bridge the chasm between university research and state institutions. Ministry of Planning Development and Reforms may envisage a National Research Vision to determine guiding principles for universities and policy institutions to further their research goals in accordance with development needs of the country. The training and service pattern of the civil services need academic intervention to encourage public servants for more participatory approach in governance in line with these research goals. Similarly, the universities will also re-constitute their research bodies by including diverse opinions from executive and legislature following the footprints of a broader vision. The ministry can seek recommendation from all concerned organs of the state to structure this broader set of research goals. The vision will fuse aspirations of legal and administrative bodies dealing with intricate policy challenges at different levels with academic research trajectory. The conceptual framework will also steer different programs initiated by HEC to foster research culture in a relevant direction. The vision will help attaining intellectual coherence between various segments of the society to deal with agreed-upon national policy challenges in the sectors like economy, environment, population, law-in-order, criminal and civil justice system, revenue, education, conflict management, urbanization, and other fields of public interest.

B. *Systematic framework for collaboration*: Formation of a collaborative legal framework to set and implement this research vision can help stakeholders to share their ideas, needs and strategies periodically under the umbrella of a regulatory body composed of distinguished members of both fraternities. The framework will oversee the research wings of institutions and intervene in different academic bodies of the universities to ensure synchronization of ideas. The target-oriented liaison activities like conferences, seminars, regular deliberations, appointments of Professors-in-Practice, synergy formulation, curriculum design and research funding for specified themes to implement National Research Vision will be the fundamental objectives of this framework. In the long-term plan, however, the collaborative framework may focus on more concrete lines to devise strategy which promotes a culture of research based, logical, and objective debate on policy needs of the country. ORICs can manage research interaction between academic departments and state institutions as a part of this framework. Capacity buiding of these directorates can help to connect institutional policy needs with research themes and to keep a record of research projects along with proper impact evaluation mechanism. This entails that academic and social sectors be adequately linked so that targeted research is useful to accrue maximum benefits for socio-economic development. Research wings of state institutions may include academic experts of relevant fields. The standing committees of the parliament may ask for rigorous research input through technical sub-committees under their own umbrella, comprised of eminent academicians of relevant fields. The regulatory body constituted under the said framework will administer all these measures with evaluation-based changes accordingly.

Summary
The research trajectory needs comprehensive rationalization with reference to the practical research considerations of public institutions. The disconnect may not only affect the ingenuity and applicability of academic research but can also slow down the harmonious growth of public institutions. Lack of critical thinking in learning mechanism, bureaucratic frictions in state institutions, absence of research feedback mechanism in universities, and uneven monitoring and reward policy in HEIs, all of these added on to the dilemma. Rationalization of national research priorities will improve the adequacy of performance tools required to increase social applicability of research like funding opportunities, academic expansion of universities and thematic grants to

their maximum utility level. It was observed after exclusive deliberations that most of the dignitaries from both academia and institutions are well-aware of the problem. Legislation is required in university model acts through which academic bodies like academic councils and board of studies can include feedback from concerned public institution before setting their research priorities.