The Future of Higher Education and Professional Training in Pakistan

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Abstract: *Higher education and professional training are crucial for development of the workforce. It has become a major policy discussion in many countries. Global economy and markets are changing rapidly with the advancements in information technology. In this situation quality higher education and professional training are vital for the economy of Pakistan and its future generation who are 65% young people. This article aims to discuss current status of the education and training in Pakistan, its important issues in higher education and professional training and the way forward for the higher education and professional training in Pakistan.*

Keywords: education, training, curriculum, human development, governance and administration

1. Introduction

Education is a human right and the Constitution of Pakistan directed the government to provide free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 5-16 years and enhance adult literacy. However, it does not address the higher education and professional training explicitly. After the 18th Constitutional Amendment in 2010 education has become a provincial subject. It is crucial time to discuss higher education and professional training in Pakistan because the year 2015 marks the deadline for Dakar Declaration (Education For All [EFA] commitment) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Pakistan lagged behind achieving both the targets. Additionally, the year 2016 marks the initiation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including education.

Education creates a ripple effect on the development of future generations. Although, the Government of Pakistan has taken step for improvement of education sector, in contrast the state of education in Pakistan is still very poor. However, the Education Statistics Report 2013-2014 acknowledged that education is one of the most deprived areas in Pakistan and the country is at the bottom on Education Development Index in the region (Malik, et al., 2015). Pakistan also has a large number of young population. Therefore; it is very necessary for Pakistan to take concrete steps for the betterment of education at all levels especially at the higher education level. According to Pakistan Bureau of Statistic in the year 2016 total population in diploma/certificate courses is 0.41%, at the graduate level is 4.38% and at the Post-Graduate level is only 1.58%, which is very low as compared to adult population in the country.

In Pakistani education system, there are six stages within a student's academic lifecycle, however out of these 3 stages are of especially significant. These stages are: middle, secondary and higher education. These stages change the student's academic path and convert it towards specialized field. These three phases are additionally critical on the grounds that they are viewed as terminal stages and numerous students end their further education. Moreover, numerous great students are additionally lost at these focuses because of money related limitations that keep them from proceeding with their instruction. These stages also offer entry point for the low–level government or clerical jobs, many students terminate their studies at this point (PEP Foundation, 1999).

On completion of the 10th grade separations in education take place for higher education and technical education. At this stage many students enroll in the intermediate colleges or to and polytechnic establishment. Universities and degree colleges in Pakistan offer higher degrees and expert education (PEP Foundation, 1999).

Although, official reports claimed improvement in education overall in the last decade. However, it is not enough due to rapidly growing population, increasing poverty, gender disparities and increasing out of school rate in the country. These socio-economic factors and issues in the education framework have consequences on the human and economic improvement (PEP Foundation, 1999). Therefore, it is a high time for analysis of the education system for higher education and professional training in Pakistan and investigating the issues and difficulties it is confronting so that doable arrangements could be recommended.

2. Current State of the Higher Education in Pakistan

Higher education is more than obtaining a degree; it is a vital contributor in human development. The Higher Education is very important for preparing a workforce to compete globally and achieve marketability. Higher education in Pakistan is delivered through the 1086 degree colleges with 1.336 million enrollments in undergraduate degree and 161 universities with 1.595 million enrolments in Post-graduate level (Malik, et al., 2015). There are 91 public universities and 70 private universities but there are more students in the private sector because the private universities offer better quality education than public universities (Malik, et al., 2015). On the other hand, the Education Statistic Report of 2013-14 has noted that there are more technical and vocational institute in the private sector than public. In the public sector there are 996 institutes and 2326 are in the private sector. However, there are 154 teacher training institutes in the public sector and only 47 in private sector (Malik, et al., 2015).

The higher education in Pakistan is not catering the needs of the country and the education statistic report 2013-2014 noted that the quality of higher education is deteriorated in last 2 decades. The (Shaikh & Khoja, 2011;World Bank, 2009; Rehman, 2008; Hussain, 2008, Boston Group, 2004), have reviewed the status of advanced education in Pakistan and they watched disintegrating scholastic wisdom, absence of vision, maladministration and fumble in higher education, deterioration, and obliviousness.

Up to this point, Pakistan either extremely ignored and gave next to no significance to advanced education, science/innovation, and research, notwithstanding the way that the advanced education enrolment rate has been continually ascending—from 3.5% in 1990 to 5.2% in 2007—and that enrollment are anticipated to twofold to 1.0 million by 2010 and triple to 1.9 million by 2015(Malik, et al., 2015).The government under the National Education Policy is paying more attention to higher education in a more concrete manner due to several reasons. First of these is a realization that the achievement of development goals is linked with the improvement in the human resource up to the international standards in terms of skills and knowledge. Secondly, research in tertiary level education is very limited and most of the universities are only teaching facilities. A formal quality assurance mechanism is lacking in the higher education system. Additional factors, such as poor quality of education at the primary and secondary levels, political interference in university administration and rival students and facility grouping also impacts the quality on higher education and professional training (Batool & Qureshi, 2006). Similarly, another issue is knowledge, training and research of the faculty in universities (PEP Foundation, 1999). They are insufficiently stimulated by advancing their own areas of study and their connection with global knowledge economy. Additionally, very limited grant is available for the research in the country for higher education. Similarly, the curriculum is not updated from decades for higher education in the Pakistan. The current teaching methods do not teach the students to think critically, analytically to question and challenge their teachers or the reading material. Overall, the higher education system has qualitative and quantitative problems. A huge part of the issue with the advanced education framework lies in the way that the present framework has not advanced to meet the changing needs of the general population and economy. Additionally, the advanced education framework has not been receptive to changes in the abilities that are fundamental to take an interest the worldwide economy.

3. Professional Training and Higher Education linkages

The human asset, the most imperative of all assets of the association, need to develop as far as aptitudes and learning. There is a positive proof in the literature on the relationship between preparing, improvement and profitability of not only the individual but rather the association in entirety. The preparation at levels of the association of the workers is essential for better exchanging of the objectives of the association. The American Heritage Dictionary explains that in any case, learning is recognition, execution,

movement, and capability of obtaining of information or ability. In the scholastic field this has been unmistakably understood that the change of HR is one of the noteworthy sources to have consistent advancement in scholarly measures. Despite the fact that there has been expanding contemplates on effect of tutoring and preparing on scholarly benchmarks in higher education.

Considering the vital role of educational institutions, it is correlated to think about the arrangements and methodologies to guarantee and upgrade the capabilities of all representatives identified with the organization. Professional training is essential for all the staff of higher education institutes from support staff, clerks, office attendants, teachers, principals and top management. To be specific to higher education institution, it is important to provide designed and focused training to all the employees from academic faculty to the administrative staff. The set of training courses presented to the employees of a firm must be cohesive in such a way that they create high level of interaction and synergy (N.E.Betz, 2006). Along these lines, keeping in mind the end goal to create fancied aftereffects of preparing and increment profitability techniques and systems of preparing ought to be arranged (Hamid, 2011; Tanneunbaum, 1992).

This is clearly evidenced that development of the senior workers' outcomes in increment association gainfulness and efficiency. The expert advancement programs enhance abilities and skills of the person. Accordingly, the maintenance of the workers increments in the association, work fulfillment improves and over all lessened the turnover (Atif, 2010; Hamid, 2011).

Regardless of the expanding acknowledgment of fitting preparing of representatives in various fields in Pakistan, the educational institutes are denied of legitimate training and skills enhancement programs. The reason of the unsuccessful training and skills building program are unaltered past practices and mentalities and absence of opportune assessment of these programs.

Here are the steps to improve Higher Education and Professional Training. As, the higher education has experienced a complete change in 2002 with the formation of the Higher Education Commission (HEC). This commission planned to encourage the change of Pakistan into a knowledge economy by enhancing both the subjective and quantitative parts of higher/tertiary instruction. The knowledge economy, as (Rahman 2007; Aziz, et al., 2014) perceived, would require youngsters to be outfitted with the authority of topic, and the capacity to think fundamentally, while endeavoring to be imaginative, open and ready to work effectively in groups. This vision of instruction has been emphasized in the National Education Policy of 2009(Aziz, et al., 2014).

The new level of centrality being given to higher education is again affirmed by the extensive area focused on the subject in the National Education Policy 1998–2010, which dives into the issues of access to, quality, capable direction, school preparing, research and workforce change in some detail(PEP Foundation, 1999).

The government's dedication to enhancing the higher education is significant. Since the articulation of this policy, 16 new private universities and institutions have been conceded contracts and more than twelve are under review (PEP Foundation, 1999). This policy has been reviewed in 2016 to address challenges in the education sector after the 18th amendment.

Likewise, The HEC has taken an agenda for reform in terms of quality and relevance (Aziz, et al., 2014). The HEC has taken a lead role in transforming knowledge economy in Pakistan and is providing scholarships for Ph.Ds. The HEC has been encouraging the universities to play a greater role in the economic development of the country(PES, 2014).

The Government of Pakistan has also set up the Ministry of Professional and Technical Training in July 2011 in the wake of eighteenth Amendment. This Ministry was renamed to Ministry of Education and Training.

The Ministry needs to work in the fields of: Higher Education and Standards in Higher Education, Technical Education and Vocational/Professional Training, Non Formal Basic Education, Adult Literacy, Coordination with Provinces/Areas, Secretariat of Inter Provincial Education Ministers' Conference (IPEMC), National Curriculum Council (NCC), National Education Policy (NEP) and International participation. The functions of the Ministry incorporate coordination, support, Technical and Financial Assistance and in addition dealing with International commitments and responsibilities.

Vision 2030 document has been developed by the Planning Commission of Pakistan and envisions to expand numbers and quality at universities in all disciplines should be maintained, and also establishing a few new engineering and technology universities with international cooperation. It is expected that enrolments in the universities in Pakistan to achieve 8 percent (2 million students) by 2015 and 20 percent of the 17-23 age group, or 7 million, by 2030.

4. Recommendation for the Higher Education and Professional Training

The future prospects in Higher education and professional training are bright however, there are several gaps. Therefore, the government has aims to reinforce and strengthen national endeavors to enhance availability and accessibility of the higher education in the country and to guarantee equity and comprehensive quality training and long lasting learning. The joint effort among United Nations Agencies such as UNSESCO and UNICEF and the Higher Education Commission are required for accomplishing the objectives of higher education. The monitoring and assessment of the education system must embrace universal measures to ensure quality. The improvement in the ability of academia's professional skills and performance of faculty should be focused and in specific institutes' principals and top administration should empower academia to convey compelling and quality learning.

The concept of Life lone learning should incorporate a broad vision of learning and developing of the professionals.

Additionally, curriculum should be revised to promote education and professional training according to international standards and adapted to the local contexts. It should be supervised by the government to ensure equality and quality. The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems should be improved so that all students can obtain appropriate competencies for decent work (UNESCO , 2015).

Governance and administration are keys to successful and effective delivery of education and training. Sufficient and powerful components for investment, straightforwardness and accountability of stakeholders at all levels of the education and training frameworks is needed(UNESCO , 2015).

There is a need to improve the research and data collection, examination and utilization of information, and the effective operationalization of Education Management Information System. It will allow timely collection and dissemination of information for the proper planning and monitoring of educational inputs, processes and outcomes (UNESCO , 2015 ; World Bank, 2009).

There is a need to build education and work linkage in the higher education system of the country. The higher education should provide skills and training for access a gainful employment.

Education ought to be the top need for government subsidizing. While government is under the essential obligation carrier for proficient, fair and feasible financing of training, subsidizing can likewise be assembled from different sources and through creative mechanisms. The globally perceived benchmark of 4-6 percent of gross domestic product or 20 percent of the total public expenditure should be allocated to education for improvement in this sector(UNESCO , 2015).

5. Conclusion

Higher education and training are very important component of the education system because they directly impact on the work economy of the country. In the context of Pakistan, there are substantial inconsistencies between the educational system and opportunities for development and work (Aziz, et al., 2014). The high rate of joblessness, the failure of youth to find meaningful and gainful employment, and the general socioeconomic inactivity of the economy result from inaccessible education especially higher education that is not tailored to either the current or projected future needs of the population(Aziz, et al., 2014). There are a lot of gaps in the higher education which are hampering the development of country. The current higher education system needs to modify and adopt curriculum, teaching methods and learning material to respond to the national and international needs to provide decent work for countries young population and for the economic and social development of the country.

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