

**TERTIARY EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN: SUCCESSES, LEADING CHALLENGES, AND STRATEGIES FOR REFORM**Abdur Rashid Khan<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Zafar Khan<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Malik Amer Atta<sup>3</sup>**Original Article**

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**Abstract**

*Nations strive for progress and prosperity through promoting Tertiary Education among their citizens. The greater a person's quality of education and talents, the more likely he or she is to succeed in life. The researcher intended to assess, successes, leading challenges, and types of strategies adopted by the policymakers of Tertiary Education for changes and reforms according to the changing needs of society. Major sources of data were the review of official records, reports, digital books, websites, newspapers' articles, and other conducted research studies in this field. For the analysis of data, a content analysis technique was used. The study found that the successes of this sector are not very good in the last five years. Secondly, there are numerous roadblocks in the way of Quality Tertiary Education that are silently weakening its performance. Thirdly the policymakers of Tertiary Education have adopted Power-Coercive and Rational-Empirical Strategies for reforms that are not effective for change and sustainability of innovation in this sector. Thus, the Tertiary Education of Pakistan seems to be gruesome and unlikely to meet the needs of society in the dynamic environment and changed international scenario.*

**Keywords:** Quality, Tertiary Education, Successes, Leading Challenges, Strategies.

**INTRODUCTION**

The wealth or poverty of a nation depends upon the quality of education. It is regarded as the yardstick by which the successes of nations are judged. In the entire educational levels of a country, Tertiary Education plays a leadership role. The quality and nature of Tertiary Education have a significant impact on a society's development. Anything that goes wrong in this sector eventually affects society. Tertiary Education produces knowledgeable, visionary, and competent people who help to improve socio-economic and human resource development. It encourages nonviolent, self-governing societies and improves people's overall well-being by developing balanced means of support (Khan and Bilal, 2012, p.157; Ghulam, 2017, p. 9). To reduce poverty and achieve economic success, quality institutes, a varied

range of choices, and easy accessibility to Tertiary Education and Research are all essential (NEP-2017-2025 of Pakistan, 2017, p.76).

The basic element in Tertiary Education is university. A university consists of faculty, students, and support staff. With the interaction of these three groups, it is supposed to propagate knowledge (teaching) and create knowledge (research) and help the students to make a contribution to the development of society in some way. A university usually offers undergraduate and graduate programs. The undergraduate programs are mostly teaching-focused and graduate programs are research-focused. People from both programs join national and international industries, research labs, and academia to do research and development (R&D) and other roles (Mian, 2019, p.1).

Pakistan is a developing country that is experiencing political and economic upheaval. This unpredictability may be seen in a variety of businesses, including the Tertiary Education sector. The government has made very limited progress in this area over the years due to important concerns such as access, relevance, and quality (Bilal and Khan, 2012, p.157). Unproductive use of limited resources, weak governance, and inefficient management structures and practices, poor recruitment procedures, inadequate promotion of staff and research support, the politicization of students, staff, and faculty are some of the challenges facing Tertiary Education in Pakistan. The most critical challenges include uncertainty about the awareness of tertiary education reforms, implementations, and maintenance. In this regard, the University Grant Commission (UGC), a body that accredits institutions, was established in 1974 with the goal of launching a common policy and maintaining a high standard of education across the country. Pakistan's Higher Education Commission (PHEC) was established constitutionally in 2002 to revive higher education by providing and overseeing enough finance, globalization, marketing of higher education by foreign universities, the creation of higher education institutions (HEIs), and approving every effort that strengthens it (Usman.2014, p.38).

The study of Hassan (2016, pp.53) states that reforms and innovations in tertiary education can provide a better future for a country's future generations. In the Tertiary Education of a country sustainable educational reforms and innovations depend on the type and effectiveness of the 'strategies for reform', adopted by the policymakers. More research is needed on the part of strategies for reform, implementation, and sustainability in Tertiary Education of Pakistan.

This study will guide the policymakers and researchers to assess successes, leading challenges, and types of strategies adopted by the decision-makers and high-ups of Tertiary Education in Pakistan for changes and reforms according to the varying needs of society.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Background

According to a report by Bilal and Khan (2012), Pakistan's Tertiary Education is administered by the Federal Ministry of Education. Education ahead of the 12th grade is referred to as Tertiary Education. The two main sectors of tertiary education are universities and the associated Colleges. The PHEC is a self-regulatory and independent organization tasked with providing Federal Funds to the above-mentioned sectors and accrediting their degree programs (p.158).

HEIs are responsible to provide intellectual capital, creative human force, mature and responsible leaders for building up a robust and prosperous nation in the global community. Higher education institutes are the primary source of competent, skilled, entrepreneurial, and gifted human resources for socio-economic development, but we are currently mired in an educational crisis. As a result, the quality of Tertiary Education falls short of worldwide standards. In comparison to neighboring countries, Pakistan's Higher Education Development Indicators remain low even after seven decades of independence due to low quality and limited access to higher education (Hui & Khan, 2021, p.214). There are present some specific issues that are silently undermining the performance of our Higher Educational Institutions and are contributing to brain drain (Mian, 2019; pp. 1-2). The teachers, courses, teaching-learning environment, infrastructure, research capabilities, governance, and effective strategies for reform are only a few of the factors that influence the quality of Tertiary Education (Ahsan, 2019). With this background, successes, foremost challenges, and the strategies for reform in Tertiary Education of Pakistan are scholarly summarized.

### A. SUCCESSES

1. **National Education Policies' actions regarding Tertiary Education and their implementation:** According to Majoka & Khan (2017, pp.108-111) the first formal educational policy was formulated in 1970. The policy's proposals were in line with the National Commission's recommendations from 1959,

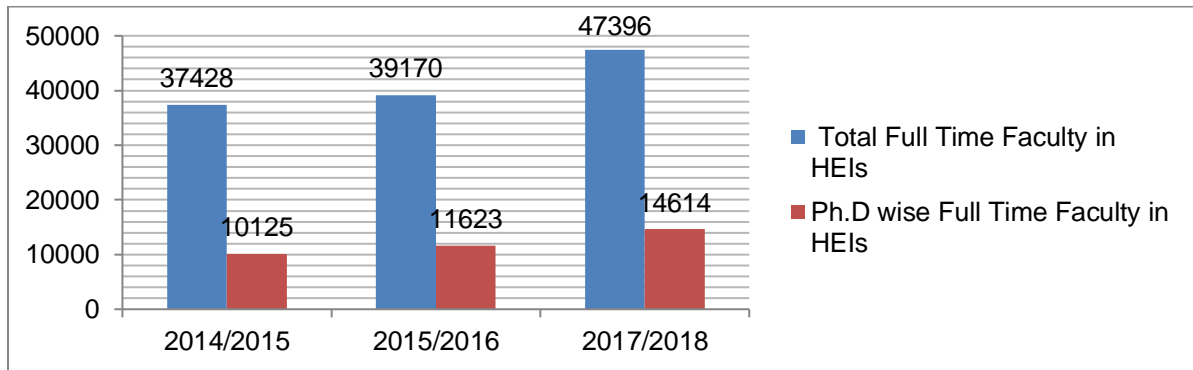
and they appear to be a significant step forward in educational growth. However, the policy could not be implemented due to the outbreak of war with India and the civil war in East Pakistan, resulting in the separation of the country's east wing and the foundation of Bangladesh as an independent country. A national education policy was created in 1979 by the military-run administration of the Zia regime, which included various recommendations in the fever of Quality Tertiary Education. One of the proposals that were carried out was the establishment of the National Academy of Higher Education to train in-service university staff. In the Second Sharif regime 1997, a National Education Policy 1998-2010 was formulated. The recommendations made in this policy regarding Quality Tertiary Education were followed as, the establishment of NTS, the implementation of the Tenure Track System for the appointment of University Teachers, the establishment of linkages with institutions in other countries, and with various industries for bringing Quality in Tertiary Education. Consequently, the Tertiary Education Sector grew significantly and quantitatively. The state's democratic government was dissolved by the military in 1999, and the new regime launched extensive reform measures in the state's Tertiary Education Sector. The no of universities increased from 42 (in 1980) to 175 (99 in public & 76 in the private sector) till 2016, considered as an increase in terms of quantitative development. The credit of the Higher Education Commission's (HEC) establishment also goes to this military regime i.e. Musharraf regime.

PHEC began offering indigenous and international scholarship schemes for Ph.D. programs in 2002. Admission to the programs was open to both students and academics. According to a statistic, there were around 4000 Ph.D. holders in Pakistan from 1947 to

2002, a period of 55 years. Since the foundation of HEC in 2002, the number of Ph.D. holders has more than doubled in ten years, from 2002 to 2012 (HEC, 2012).

After the replacement of the military government in 2007 by the democratic government of Pakistan People Party (PPP), the government formulated a new National Education Policy-2009 with a view that the previous policy failed to accomplish its goals. Integration of ICT in teaching-learning processes, extra television time devoted to providing high-quality distance education programs, the introduction of need-based scholarships for Quality Tertiary Education, and the establishment of university campuses for smooth access to Higher Education in capital towns where universities do not exist (Majoka, & Khan, 2017, p.111). A National Education Policy 2017 was established under the 3rd Sharif regime (5 June 2013-28 July 2017). Some of the proposals made in this policy for the enhancement of quality tertiary education were: By 2025, the number of public sector universities will have expanded from 99 to 195. Similarly the number of private universities in the country is expected to rise from 76 to 105, increasing the total number of universities to 300. The percentage of faculty with advanced degrees (Ph.Ds.) will increase from 27 percent to 40 percent. HEIs must be strengthened in order to make a meaningful contribution to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

**2. Academia and Outcomes (Ph.Ds.):** A university is the most basic component of Tertiary Education. Faculty, students, and support staff make up a university. A university's faculty is its heart and soul, and significant advancement in this field will be difficult without a vibrant and well-qualified faculty (Mian, 2019, p.1; Ghulam, 2017, p.10).

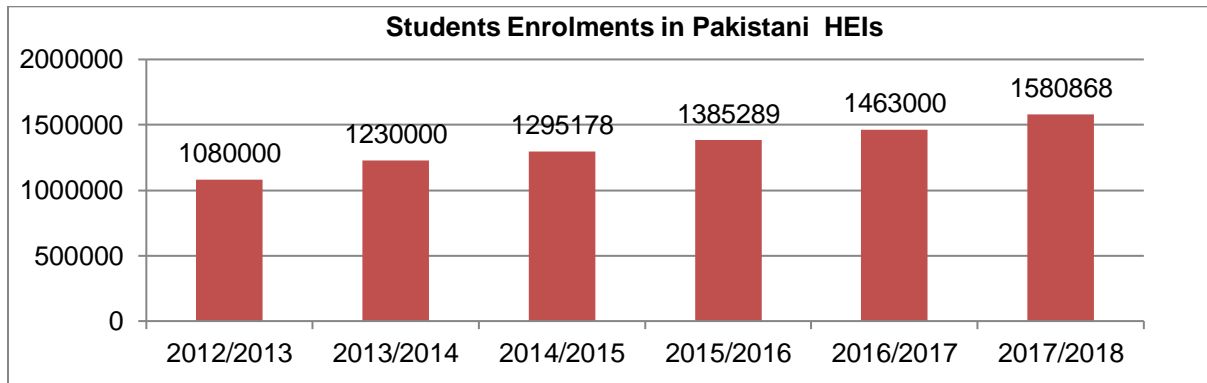
**Chart 1: Total and Ph.D. wise full time faculty in HEIs**

Source: (HEC, 2018)

**Table 1: Universities Growth vs. Students Enrolment.**

Year	Universities	Students Enrolment
2012-2013	153	1,080,000
2013-2014	156	1,230,000
2014-2015	163	1,295,178
2015-2016	174	1,385,289
2016-2017	185	1,463,000
2017-2018	192	1,580,868

Source: (HEC, 2018)

**Chart 2: Students enrollments in Pakistani HEIs.**

Source: (HEC, 2018)

The framework of a country's development and expansion is constructed based on educational cream in the form of Ph.D. academics. It's particularly important because these are the folks who, via study, uncover new avenues for growth and profit. So every country strives to increase the number of PhDs by focusing on the construction of new institutions and the capacity building of existing ones to sufficiently and effectively meet the country's needs. It has resulted in a huge increase in both the number of Ph.D. researchers and Ph.D. granting institutions. There are 15,036 Ph.D. holders, 71 percent of whom are men and 29 percent of whom are women. The number of universities/DAIs as of

September 17, 2018, the Punjab government chartered 25.8% of the 93 universities that have completed doctorates, while the Sindh government chartered 24.7 percent, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government chartered 23.7 percent, the federal government chartered 20.4 percent, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir chartered 3.2 percent (HEC, 2018).

**Table 2: Total Universities, Ph.Ds. producing universities, and Ph.Ds. till to 2018**

Chartered by	Number of Ph.Ds. producing universities	No of Ph.Ds.	Total no of universities	% of universities which produced Ph.Ds.
Government of AJK	3	48	7	43
Government of Balochistan	2	94	8	25
Government of K P	22	1599	34	65
Government of Punjab	24	6248	54	44
Government of Sind	23	3704	52	44
Federal Government	19	3343	37	51
Total	93	15036	192	48

Source: (HEC, 2018)

Likewise, 22 (or 65 percent) of the 34 universities chartered by the KP government provide Ph.D. programs. This ratio was 51 percent for those chartered by the federal government, 44 percent for those chartered by the provincial governments of Punjab and Sindh, and 43 percent for those chartered by the AJK government. Thus on a state basis, Ph.D. programs have been completed in 48 percent of universities. Nearly 41.6 percent of all Ph.Ds in the country earned their degrees from universities chartered by Punjab's provincial government. The Sindh government's universities come second with 24.6 percent, followed by the federal government's 22.2 percent and the KP government's 10.6 percent. Furthermore, public universities have produced 95 percent of Ph.Ds, compared to only 5% in the private sector. As per the latest figures calculated from HEC (2021) universities statistics on 11th of August 2021, the number of HEC accredited universities are 184 and DAIs are 35\_total HEIs are 219 in numbers showing the progress of this sector.

### 3. Quality Assurance and Authorization:

PHEC has established Quality Assurance Division, to monitor the working of both public and private sector universities and to see what new is required for their standardization for comparison with international universities (HEC, 2011). In 2006 PHEC established Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs) in 10 public sector universities for bringing quality in higher

education. Similarly, 20 more QECs were also established in 2007-2008 in public sector institutions for the same purpose. In 2009-2010, 15 more QEC's were established in the public sector universities, with 17 in the private sector, and the process is still ongoing (HEC, 2010).

On April 19th, 2010, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan's constitution was amended, and the education sector, including higher education, was devolved to provinces for advancement (Mehmood, 2011). The PHEC approves HEIs of both the public and private sectors, and the federal or provincial governments accredit them (World Education News and Review, 2020).

Rankings are tools for evaluating the research and technology performance of higher education institutions at the national, neighboring, and international levels. The ranking is a technique for improving the image of universities. International students choose the best international university with a high ranking based on the information provided by this instrument, rather than researching each country's national education system (Ghulam, 2017, p. 8).

### 4. Pakistan's Indigenous University

**Rankings:** The PHEC has undertaken many initiatives to enhance the quality of tertiary education in Pakistan by bringing Pakistan's HEIs up to international paradigms. The ranking is one process of measuring how successful HEIs strive for international competitiveness in

education, research, and innovation (HEC, 2014).

Stakeholders such as researchers, students, the business community, parents, and industry can use the ranking to evaluate universities based

on a variety of characteristics such as quality and research. Since 2006, Pakistan's HEC has published five rankings of universities: 2006, 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2016 (HEC, 2015).

**Table 3: Top 10 Pakistani Universities in the Indigenous 5<sup>th</sup> Ranking -2015 Announced on 23.2.2016.**

Ranking	Name of the university	Relative Scoring
I.	Quaid-i-Azem University, Islamabad	100.00
II.	University of the Punjab, Lahore	83.29
III.	NUST, Islamabad	80.28
IV.	University of Agriculture, Faisalabad	78.73
V.	Agha-Khan University	77.27
VI.	COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Islamabad	76.52
VII.	PIEAS, Islamabad	74.89
VIII.	University of Karachi	70.08
IX.	University of Health Sciences, Lahore	68.03
X.	University of Veterinary & Animal Sciences, Lahore	66.79

Source: (HEC, 2015).

**5. Asian Ranking of the Pakistani Universities:** Many universities in Pakistan may now be found all over the world. In the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Asian ranking, 23 Pakistani universities are currently among the Top 500 Asian Universities, with NUST ranked 87th. Furthermore, 9 Pakistani universities are among the top 1000 universities in the world, with PIEAS ranking 397th in the QS World University Rankings (HEC, 2019).

**Table 4: Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Asian Ranking – 2019.**

S#	University	Ranking	S#	University	Ranking
1	NUST, Islamabad	87	13	Institute of Space Technology, Islamabad	351-400
2	LUMS, Lahore	95	14	IIU, Islamabad	351-400
3	Quaid-i-Azem University, Islamabad	109	15	NEDU E & T, Karachi	351-400
4	COMSATS University, Islamabad	135	16	University of Lahore, Lahore	401-450
5	PIEAS, Islamabad	146	17	University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Lahore	401-450
6	UET, Lahore	171	18	Mehran University of Engineering & Technology, Jamsharo	401-450
7	University of the Punjab, Lahore	193	19	University of Sargoda, Sargoda	401-450
8	Agha-Khan University, Karachi	195	20	University of Sindh, Jamsharo	401-450
9	University of Karachi, Karachi	251-260	21	Lahore College for Women University, Lahore	451-500
10	University of Agriculture, Faisalabad	281-290	22	University of Central Punjab, Lahore	451-500
11	Govt: College University, Lahore	351-400	23	University of Management & Technology, Lahore	451-500
12	Bahria University, Islamabad	351-400			

Source: (HEC, 2019)

**6. International Ranking of the Pakistani Universities:** In the current Shanghai Ranking, COMSATS is one of four Pakistani HEIs in the top 1,000. Quaid-i-Azem University, University of Agriculture Faisalabad, and the University of Punjab are among the universities in the 801–990 band. The Pakistan Institute of Engineering and Applied Sciences (375), the National University of Science and Technology (400), Quaid-i-Azem University, Islamabad (511–520), the Lahore University of Management Sciences, Islamabad (701–750), and COMSATS, Islamabad, the University of Engineering and Technology, and the University of Punjab (all in the 801–1000 band) are all included. As a result, Pakistani universities are steadily improving their rankings across a variety of ranking systems (WENR.WES.QRG-2020).

**Table 5: QS World University Ranking 2019 to 2021- Pakistan.**

No	World Rank			Institution
	2019	2020	2021	
1	397	375	373	PIEAS, Islamabad
2	417	400	355	NUST, Islamabad
3	551-560	511-520	454	Quaid-i-Azem University, Islamabad
4	701-750	701-750	651-700	LUMS, Islamabad
5	751-800	801-1000		COMSATS, Islamabad
6	801-1000	801-1000		UET Lahore
7	801-1000	800-801		University of the Punjab, Lahore

Source: QS World University Ranking (2019-2021)

## B. LEADING CHALLENGES

**1. Poor Academic Management:** A university needs experienced Vice-Chancellor (V.C), deans, department chairs, etc. to run its affairs smoothly. People in these positions, especially in Pakistan where the Tertiary level Education is relatively immature, have important roles as they make rules/regulations and policies related to students, staff, and faculty members. Often issues in our academic institutes are due to conflicts arising between faculty and their academic managers. There is a lack of experienced higher and middle-level faculty members trained to run university affairs in many universities, especially those who understand modern university affairs like attracting research projects and grants, new trends in faculty teaching and research evaluations, tenure track system (TTS), semester system rules/regulations and their implications, setting up new departments and attracting faculty, etc. resulting in underperformance of universities (Mian, 2019, p.2).

**2. Flawed Universities Governance:** Marginson and Considine (2000, p.7), stated that in higher education, governance refers to the process of planning and administering

institutions. The terms management and governance are not interchangeable. Simply, university governance refers to how an institution operates. According to Akhtar & Kalsoom (2020, p.82), universities are operating in a more dynamic global context that necessitates highly change governance in this rapidly changing globe. Because considerable gains have been made in university systems around the world, much more emphasis is now being paid to the governance makeup of universities in general and the role of the governing body in particular. Universities can be governed from a variety of angles. In Pakistan, several parties try to sway university decision-making. Higher education associations, financial organizations, the Education Ministry, related legislative committees, accrediting agencies, governors, students, top administrators, and academic leaders are among those involved. According to the Sharif Commission Report (1959), the university's chief academic and administrative officer will be the Vice-Chancellor. He will be accountable to the Chancellor for his responsibilities. A serious issue is that the Chancellor, who is intended to keep the Vice-Chancellor accountable, lacks the time and ability to do so. Pakistan's government is a major stakeholder in higher

education administration. Some of the measures used include direct funding, the appointment of university governing boards, legislative rules, and day-to-day direct engagement. Higher education has always been a source of contention in Pakistani politics, with several parties struggling for influence and control (Task Force Report, 2002).

In the organization and operation of public universities, the chancellor, the syndicate, faculties, departments, and students were all joint actors. All public universities are supervised by the Chancellor, who is either the President or the Governor. He appoints the Vice-Chancellor and members of the university's governing bodies. He has the authority to order an investigation into the university's teaching, research, administration, and structure. Since he is the Governor, so his political commitments influence university appointments and decision-making. As a result, students, faculty, and the general public are unsatisfied. From a funding viewpoint, the higher education budgets, expansion, enrollment policies, and educational costs are typically decided at the political level rather than the institutional one. The academic staff has been harmed as a result of deans' and department heads' excessive power and abuse of it.

Employees are dissatisfied with the working environment, low pay, a lack of motivation, employees' lopsided promotion, reduced academic freedom, and insufficient teaching and research resources. The organizational structure of private universities differs from that of public universities. Their ties to the government in terms of governance are weaker; therefore the government plays a smaller role in their governance. The government's involvement has been primarily confined to examination, inspection, and accreditation. These organizations have more autonomy. As there are fewer bureaucracies and committees, therefore they made their own management decisions easily and promptly (Akhtar & Kalsoom, 2020, p.87).

### **2.1. Pakistan's Higher Education Commission and Governance of Universities**

The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan was tasked with bridging the gap between government and educational institutions. The commission aims to improve university education provisions and to advise the education minister on how could higher education institutions be built and grown in Pakistan to encourage tertiary education? Private universities are accredited by the HEC, which also assists public universities with long-term planning, financing, and budgeting. It also works with government ministries, community organizations, and the private sector to plan training and skills necessary for national growth. It provides policy advice to the government on higher education issues and oversees university operations. The chairman and secretary of HEC are appointed by the president. According to the commission, higher education is a government priority, so the government has the right to make decisions about the universities. The commission has also been subjected to challenges and criticism. The commission has no complete control over university administration because Vice-Chancellors have become very powerful as a result of their political appointments, and they routinely ignore the commission in many administrative matters. Instead of dealing with the commission, they usually deal directly with the Chancellor or Minister of Education. As a result, HEC's ability to carry out its statutory responsibilities is hampered (Akhtar & Kalsoom (2020, p.88).

### **2.2. Ineffective university Board of Governors control**

Though HEC acts as an external monitor and source of quality assurance, yet internal controls are also essential. In this regard, both public and private sectors' top management, particularly university boards of governors, plays a vital role. Typically, university boards of governors appear to be unaware of university concerns; there is a clear incongruence between top management's stated goals and what is implemented. Thus, adequate governance is lacking. Universities, as a result, are unable to

handle the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Usman, 2014, P.39).

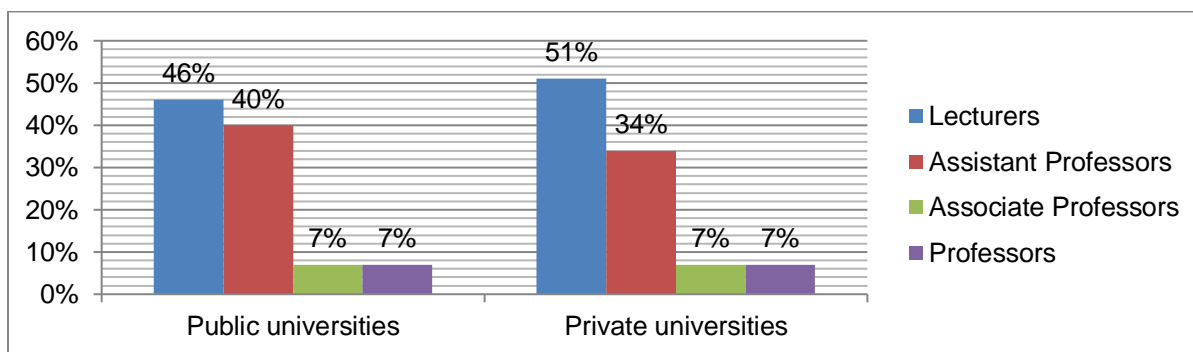
### 1.2. Government's interference in the Governance of Universities

In Pakistan, funding has become an important aspect of university governance. As a result of this role, the government remains the primary supporter of higher education and retains a majority of influence over its governance. As a result, the government interferes with university decisions and autonomy (Memon, Farooq, and Khuram 2010, p.673).

### 2. Poor Teaching and Research Quality

According to (HEC, 2018), a shortage of senior teaching professionals is one of the most serious flaws in Tertiary Education. Lecturers in most academic fields can teach with only a master's degree. The ratio of teaching staff with PhDs is low in HEIs due to the strong dependence on non-tenured lecturers. In 2015, just 21% of full-time faculty at Pakistani institutions has a Ph.D., according to HEC figures. There were no professors with doctoral degrees at several universities.

**Chart 3: Faculty Profile of Pakistani Registered Universities up to 2018.**



Source: (Education in Pakistan, 2020)

According to the study of Mian, (2019, p.2) before HEC (2002), the focus of universities was mostly on teaching. After the foundation of HEC, the focus shifted entirely to research. We imported publish or perish paradigm and implemented tenure track system (TTS), in which the promotion is tied with the research publication count, without taking into account the local state of affairs at that time. There is nothing wrong with the TTS per se but it was like "importing a Ferrari and running it on broken roads". With the same teaching loads, best teachers started spending their time increasing publication count, which otherwise they were previously giving to teaching activities. This combined with the semester system proved quite detrimental to the quality of teaching. The semester system is an instructor-centered system in which the instructor is all in all. The same instructor is in charge, of course, content creation, lecture delivery, exam question creation, and paper marking and grading. All of this necessitates a

high level of maturity and accountability on the part of the educator. Due to a lack of understanding of the semester system, teaching quality suffered greatly., relative grading (grading on a curve), and a lack of adequate teaching quality monitoring, as well as an increased lack of enthusiasm in teaching. There is a student feedback system in place, as well as peer review, but neither is used to its full potential. Until our industry began complaining about the quality of students produced by our universities, no one was to monitor the product of teaching activity. According to the same survey, between 2002 and 2019, Pakistan's research publication count increased from roughly 1000 to 12,000 per year. However, the quality of the publications has not been up to standard, and the majority of them were published simply for the purpose to increase the count of publications. In 2017, Pakistani higher education institutions published only 0.49 % of global research papers, and only 9.76 % of

such articles in the South Asian region (Nosheen, 2020).

According to the same author generally, quality comes after quantity as a natural process of evolution. But in Pakistan so far there is no indication that people are becoming conscious of quality and the impact of research. The state of affairs remains the same, 'increase the publication count'. Most of our faculty members are not even aware or not interested in publishing in venues of higher quality. This is due to the HEC promotion criteria which mainly considers publication number count, whether in impact factor or some local HEC recognized journals. People publish just for the sake of incrementing their publication count to get promotions and not as an outcome of a genuine interest in research activity.

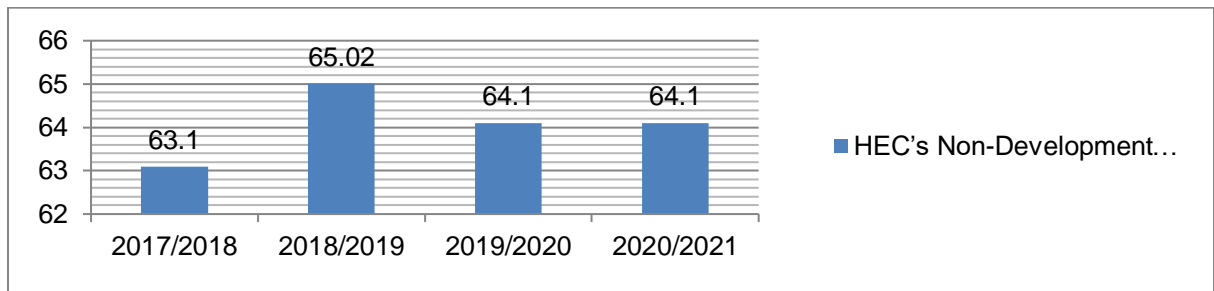
### 3. Budgetary and Finance Constraints

Higher education remained a political priority in Pakistan, but it was not at the top of the list. Only 2.7 % of GNP is allocated instead of what UNESCO recommended as 4% for all the developing countries (Ghulam, 2017, p. 9). Finance is regarded as the heart of any system. Pakistan's educational system appears to be directly impacted by a lack of resources. Education has received less than 2.5 percent of the national budget in recent years, which is insufficient to satisfy the country's rising educational demands. Several growing regional countries, such as Sri-Lanka and Bangladesh, have increased their educational budgets. However, it is progressively decreasing in Pakistan (Ahmad, Rehman, Ali, Khan & Khan 2014, p.82).

According to Nosheen, (2020) the education sector had the lowest budget since Pakistan's creation, undermining the educational system's foundation of excellence. As a result, education has failed to contribute to the

economics, politics, or social well-being of the country. Despite the passage of more than half a century and the adoption of various educational strategies, the educational system has failed miserably to lift the country out of its abysmal economic, political, and social conditions. In addition, 2.2 % of GDP was allocated to education in the 2017-2018 fiscal year. Even in the most recent financial budget, HEC's financing was drastically reduced. Researchers, Bilal and Khan (2012, p.163) stated that on the one hand, universities are experiencing financial difficulties, while the government of Pakistan is reducing funding for the Higher Education Commission. Both the HEC and universities are in severe financial crisis, with the HEC cutting university budgets by 10-15%. The university administration is facing a severe budget crisis, even just to pay salaries and deal with day-to-day operations. Universities and HEC had demanded an increase in HEC's budget, particularly for non-development programs. However, budgetary documents revealed that there is no significant increase in the non-development budget, which is intended for salaries, for the fiscal year 2021-22. The government has set aside Rs108 billion, with 42.4 billion set aside for development and 66.25 billion set aside for the HEC's non-development expenditure (Abbassi, 2021).

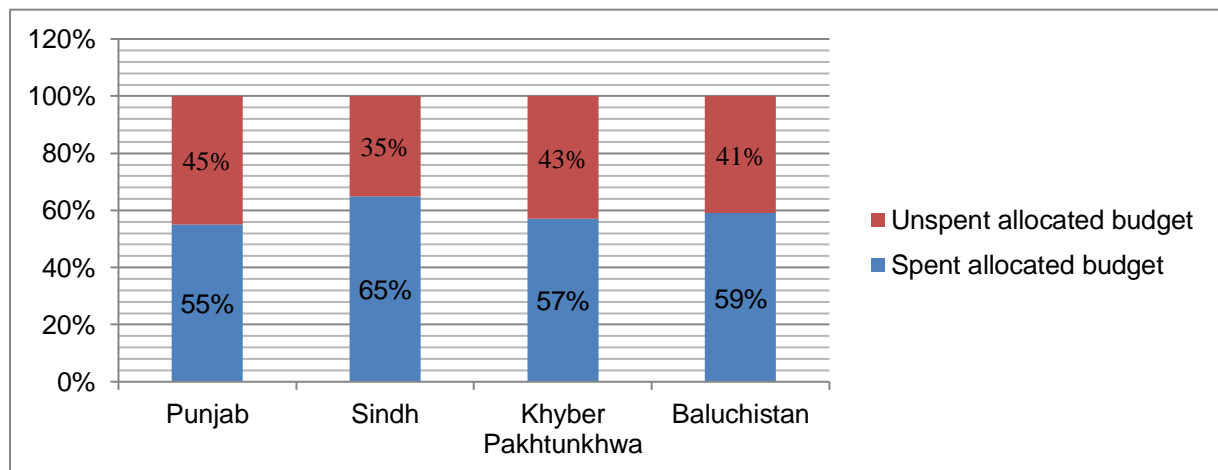
The non-development expenditure of the HEC in the preceding fiscal years i.e. Rs 63.1b in 2017-18, Rs 65.02b in 2018-19, Rs 64.1b in 2019-20, and Rs 64.1b in the fiscal year 2020-21 means that the non-development expenditures of the mentioned budgets remained almost stagnant. These budget cuts and stagnancy halted most research projects and badly affected the higher education sector as a whole (WAPAK, 2020).

**Chart 4: HEC's Non-Development Expenditure of Budget 2017/2018 to 2020/2021 in RS, Billions**

Source: (Wapak, 2020)

#### 4. Education Budget Remains Unspent:

According to I-SAPS (2018) every year, a large percentage of the education budget gets returned unutilized. Poor expenditure results in an unspent developmental budget for a variety of reasons. The development budget for 2017-18 was set at Rs. 174 billion, however only Rs. 118 billion (70%) was spent. In the 2017-18 fiscal year, Punjab spent 55 % of its development budget, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa spent only 57%. This was recorded as 35% for Sindh and 41% for Baluchistan.

**Chart 5: Unspent Allocated Budget vs. Spent Allocated Budget.**

Source: (I-SAPS, 2018)

#### 5. Gape in Academia and Industry

Chisti, Tahirkheli, Raja & Khan (2014, p.937) argued that there is a significant mismatch between job requirements for necessary knowledge, skills, and training and the country's competent human resource availability. The research study of Bilal and Khan (2012, p.160) stated that the university and industry are the two fundamental bodies

that might drive a country to progress, however in Pakistan, there is a large gap between these two pillars. There is a lack of relationship between these two sectors because Higher education institutions are unable to create practical skills that are relevant to market jobs. This results in hampering the performance of various industries in the country. The use of anything

can always judge its quality, and the talents of graduates can be better measured by how the employer perceives them. Employers are dissatisfied with the quality of Pakistani university graduates in terms of professional, personal, social, and intellectual qualities.

According to the research of Mian (2019, p.6), there are no coop programs as part of the undergraduate curriculum. There is a lack of PHEC linkage with the Ministry of Science & Technology and Industries to facilitate coop programs, corporate social responsibility, and inclusion of academics in industry technical boards.

### 6. Politicization

Higher education has long been at the center of Pakistani national politics, with various parties trying to compete for control and influence (Akhtar and Kalsoom, 2020, p.86). Educational activities in Pakistani universities are politically controlled. Educational leaders are unable to ensure educational quality due to intense political pressure. Employees are valued based on their political background rather than their hard work. Because the political culture of universities pollutes the other noble professions, so we are unable to build a perfect nation (Bilal and Khan 2012, p.162).

Politics can be found in the administration of universities as well as among their students. Universities are thought to be a nursery for future politicians. As a result, political parties create student unions in universities to promote their missions and to persuade students to join a particular political party (Hassan, 2016, pp. 132-133).

Provincial administrations in Pakistan have attempted to inflict ban on universities to recruit instructors in recent years. Governments want lawmakers in the legislative assembly to play this function. Certain politicians attempt to empower provincial assemblies to select top academics. But the members of a provincial legislature are not qualified or capable of appraising the academic and professional credentials of a professor or other senior academic staff. This change has not been adopted due to

academic pressure, but political parties are still lobbying for it (Bureau Report, 2013).

### 7. Moral corrosion & Academic Dishonesty

Education is the most important aspect, as it prepares students for social activities and moral standards. It is not only about obtaining a degree for financial gain, but also about achieving moral values. Moral education is the foundation of ethical care. Character education is another term for moral education. It is an important domain that contributes to the development of student behavior. Not only in Western countries, but also in Pakistan, abuse, robbery, murder, drug use, bullying, and disrespecting parents have all increased in recent years (Lodhi and Siddiqui, 2014, pp.7-10).

Universities are deceptive in their efforts to inculcate ethics and good moral values in the minds of students. Students of tertiary education engage in various unethical practices within the institute, which become their habits and are then practiced in their professional and practical lives. These undesirable behaviors are the result of open friendships, pleasure-seeking, educational stress, boredom, and the intimacy produced by hookah-pipe sharing amongst people of opposite genders. Teachers and students make an association with different groups and unions to make their influence on their institutes. Often the university students are involved in hookah-pipe or Shisha smoking. All these unethical and immoral activities are big hurdles in the way of quality tertiary level education.

This necessitates implementing policies, norms, rules, and regulations for the academic, moral, and spiritual development of students in the universities (Bilal and Khan, 2012, pp.167-168).

### 8. Defective Evaluation Criteria:

According to the research of Rehman and Khan (2011) both qualitative and quantitative methodologies should be used to evaluate students' performance completely. In the assessment process, valid and reliable methodologies must be employed. Pakistan's examination system is not only ineffective at assessing students' achievements, but it is

also outdated. The examination system only assesses the pupils' memorization abilities. It does not assess them in all aspects of their schooling (p.43).

The examination system promotes learning based on memorization and devalues high-level intellectual qualities such as critical thinking and analytical skills in the educational process. It does not evaluate the true accomplishments and performance of the students. Furthermore, external and internal factors have influenced the examinations, encouraging the use of illicit methods such as referral culture and unfair tactics (Ahmad et al, 2014, p.81).

According to Ghulam, (2017) the internal evaluation is very weak in Pakistani universities. The HEC has demanded that universities must conduct adequate evaluations. The learning innovation branch of HEC offers many courses to assist university teachers in improving their teaching skills, which are then evaluated by the academic staff from other universities, called external evaluation. However, international evaluation is still lacking providing a further barrier to Pakistan's high-quality university education (p.12).

### **9. Implementation of Harassment Act**

Yousaf and Schmiede (2016, pp. 8-9) in their study defined Harassment as, repeatedly undesirable conduct by one or more people toward a person or a class of people who are powerless to defend themselves. Students, teachers, and non-teaching staff need a safe university environment where they can undertake independent inquiry and open discussion on any issue without fear of harassment. In response to this concern, the government passed the harassment act in 2010. The harassment Act (2010), once fully implemented, is expected to eliminate gender disparities in tertiary education while also eliminating the influence of patriarchal and archaic views. HEC mandated its implementation, which included appointing a Harassment Monitoring Officer (HMO) and informing employees of the policy's existence. Even though the Pakistani government has established the harassment act and the Higher Education Commission has mandated its

implementation, just a few universities have done so. In this significant problem, the government and organizations lack control. Women are frightened of losing their jobs, being humiliated, and having their reputations dehumanized if they speak out about workplace sexual harassment. Many people on the job don't want their families to know about their problems at work. Thus offenders continue offensive behavior daringly (Yousaf and Schmiede, 2016, p.12).

### **C. STRATEGIES FOR REFORMS IN TERTIARY EDUCATION**

Any educational innovation's success is determined by the strategy employed to implement changes and improvements. In an educational setting, change at each level is influenced by hierarchical levels. If educational institutions' cultures are not supportive, teachers, for example, may be unable to sustain change. Similar to how classroom conditions influence teachers' ability to teach students more effectively, university culture influences students' learning in either a positive or negative way (Hassan, 2016, pp.53-54).

According to the research of Hasan and Riaz, (2013, p.57) some of the most important indicators of a country's economic position include resource availability, capital formation, technology, human resources, entrepreneurship, and population growth. They consider skilled human resources in education as one of the most important variables for successful reform implementation, and they believe that their availability is dependent on the country's economic strength. Attempts to reform Pakistan's educational system in the past have failed to produce the desired results. This raised questions on the government's ability to plan and implement large-scale reforms in the country's higher education system. According to the study of Hargreaves (1994, p.18), Long-term decisions would benefit from well-thought-out and inventive strategies.

### **I. Power-Coercive Strategies**

According to the study of (Chin and Benne, 1985, p.23) the strategy for bringing about change used by people in power to impose

laws and regulations on their subordinates whether they like it or not, called Power-coercive' strategies. These are known as 'push' strategies, and include statements like "I'm your boss, so do it!" In the short run, these techniques are the most effective, but they are dependent on your ability to operate them. They're only successful for a short time because they create resistance and plant the seeds of downfall. According to a new study by (Harvey and Broyles, 2010, p.3), these strategies are usually applied when a centralized organization is responsible for formulating policies and making decisions for a large number of institutions. According to the study of Hassan (2016, pp.55-56), Pakistan is an example of such a situation, where the HEC is all in all in making the majority of decisions concerning the country's universities and is not required to consider the opinions of the teachers and students who will be affected by their decisions. Teacher dissatisfaction may emerge if the introduction of innovation or change is not followed by an explanation of the significance and advantages of the change, as well as teachers' capacity building. If such strategies are imposed, teachers may choose to disregard the changes and stick with their old materials and methods, resulting in a hidden curriculum with no practical reform.

## II. Rational-Empirical Strategies

These strategies are based on the concept that if people are shown the positive outcomes that may be accomplished for the people affected, they would be motivated to change. These are referred to as "empirical-rational strategies" (Chin and Benne, 1985, p.23). A study by Harvey and Broyles (2010, p.4) claims that these are the strategies with the lowest success rate since research shows that people do not change their behaviors simply on the availability of new information. Furthermore, they claim that these strategies may work in some special situations. However, the strategies that operate in exceptional situations cannot be generalized and implemented. These strategies may be effective if the people involved in the change process are already on board with the intended change on some level. Seminars, Newsletters, and Resource Centers are elements of rational-empirical strategies that might help teachers learn more. Even if such

efforts may not always result in significant change, they are important in the introduction of new ideas. While development reforms and innovations may help to strengthen educational institutions, they may also increase the financial and human resource requirements of those institutions (Hatch, 2002, p.628).

Educational reform in Pakistan appears to be primarily focused on strengthening institutions' physical and technological capability, as well as human resources. In this connection teachers's development is meant to provide fresh information to teachers, which, when combined with resources, will revolutionize the educational framework. Both of the previous techniques are being employed in Pakistan to bring about change in higher education, both individually and jointly. Since the founding of HEC in 2002, policymakers have concentrated on giving information to teachers in the form of quick training sessions and seminars to increase their understanding of upcoming changes. Similarly, under the umbrella of Rational-Empirical Strategies, PHEC recommends curriculum and instructional materials (mainly textbooks), which must be followed (Hassan, 2016, pp.55-57).

## CONCLUSION

The researcher concludes that Education is a key factor that aids every nation in achieving its long-term national goals. Countries with a low level of Tertiary Education are constantly mired in poverty. The supply of human resources by Higher Education Institutions of Pakistan is theoretically sound but having no or less potential abilities like critical thinking, evaluation, analysis, research, creativity, and practical skills have created a significant mismatch concerning to jobs demands of the market. This circumstance has aided in the growth of societal dissatisfaction. As a result, the country's poor Tertiary Education System has failed miserably in its efforts to build the nation on solid economic, social, political, and moral foundations.

The paper suggests that for Pakistan to become an emerging nation in the world it is essential on the part of policymakers and high-ups, in both letter and spirit, to improve the quality and accessibility of Tertiary Education.

Secondly with no more delay to overcome the highlighted leading challenges. Thirdly in the perspective of robust Pakistani cultural, political and social environment, valid and reliable strategies for reform and implementation in the Tertiary Education system are openly required.

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