

Towards Global Knowledge Society: A SWOT Analysis of Pakistan Higher Education in Context of Internationalization

Jamshed Khalid* Anees Janeer Ali Mohammad Khaleel Md Shamimul Islam
School of Management, University Sains Malaysia

Abstract

Internationalization has emerged as one of the central issues of higher education in the global knowledge economy. Developing countries like Pakistan are in the struggle to develop their higher education system in the globalized means to survive in the 21st fast pace global competitive industry. The efforts of Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan towards evolving international education settings are appreciable but still there is a need to identify basic mechanism and practices through which transformation of higher education to internationalization is possible. Current study is an overview of the trends of higher education globally, within Asia Pacific Region and specially in Pakistan. The aim of the study is to highlight the strengths and opportunities as well as weakness and threads of Pakistan's higher education system by proposing a SWOT analysis of higher education internationalization. Pakistan is facing a number of challenges on the way towards globalization and modernization of educational institutes. The study highlights those issues and challenges and suggest a set of practical recommendations to speed up the internationalization process.

Keywords: Internationalization, higher education, student mobility, globalization

1. Introduction

One major factor in the 21st century is that the world entered into a fast-tracked process of changes encompassing the fields of economy, science and technology, communications, education, culture, and politics. In education field, Internationalization is one of the most significant enticements to alter higher education system (Agrawal & Tan, 2014; Byun & Kim, 2011; Qureshi, Janjua, Zaman, Lodhi, & Tariq, 2014). Internationalization of higher education has become popular since the early 1980s in education industry (Knight, 2014).

The approach to higher education internationalization has been associated with student and staff mobility, internationalized curriculum, international research collaboration programs, increasing establishment of international branch campuses. Knight (1994) explained the internationalization as 'the process of integrating an international, intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution.' Knight also describes the concept of internationalization and globalization as 'internationalization is changing the world of higher education, and globalization is changing the world of internationalization' (Knight, 2006).

Internationalization of higher education demonstrated the concepts of networking, cultures, knowledge, and values. Consequently, internationalization has become an indicator of quality in HEIs (Urban & Palmer, 2013). Nonetheless, the growing usage of internationalization in representing the international measure of higher education, there is also a great bewilderment about its implication (Guo & Alfred, 2013; Knight, 2004). Internationalization of higher education consisted of two major dimensions i.e. internationalization at home and internationalization of cross-border education (Ashcroft, Abdullahi, Kajberg, & Virkus, 2007). Internationalization at home is related to the intercultural and international dimension of learning at the home campus. On the other hand, as explained by Naidoo (2006), cross-border internationalization relates to activities in abroad for educational learning i.e. student/staff exchange, research collaboration programs, the opening of an overseas branch campus.

Universities in the 21st century become more competitive because of modernization and globalization. Institutions are nowadays trying to recruit best students as well as staff and best research development strategies to compete in HE industry and get a long term reputation (Warwick, 2014). Pakistan is also in the struggle to develop its higher education system as per international standard. Without focusing internationalization and globalization in education, it is not possible to compete in the current global knowledge economy. There are very few studies which enlighten the true issues facing by Pakistan's higher education system in the context of internationalization. The present study is an effort to fill the gap by exposing the current situation of internationalization of higher education in Pakistan. Study emphasis on higher education trends towards internationalization globally, within Asia Pacific region and specifically in Pakistan. Pakistan is in urgent need to develop certain strategies with an aim to promote higher education in global context. The study, in the end, proposed a SWOT analysis of higher education in Pakistan.

2. Global Trends in Internationalization of HEIs

In the decade of 1990, the sharp increase had been seen in internationalization activities. Those activities

comprised of mobility of students and scholars, international research collaborations on educational programs and establishment of overseas branch campuses (Wang, 2013). The major reason behind that change was the modification of higher education systems and their structures globally. Altbach and Knight (2007) defined the medieval European origins of universities as international institutions as they attract students from many countries. Moreover, most of the universities have started following internationalization strategies, e.g. increasing the number of international students, recruiting international scholars, establishing cross-border branch campuses and enhancing the research cooperation and collaborations programs to survive in the competitive global environment (Hou, 2011).

Collaboration and competition are significant strategies for internationalization. Universities and institutions are using different strategies and practices to improve internationalization of higher education. The most commonly used practices are; exchange programs with other countries, internships, permanent and visiting staff exchange programs, internationalization at home activities and foreign language educational programs.

One research conducted by Jiang and Carpenter (2013) in the UK aiming to discover challenging facing by an institution in implementing internationalization strategy. The research exposed issues such as resource allocation which refers to the financial and human resources to strategy. Another issue is communication which is a crucial issue at all university levels, and operational process which is one of the most critical issues of operational process within faculties. Another study among US community colleges, organized by Harder (2010), has clearly pointed out that the institutions' support is the most significant component of the internationalization process in community colleges.

US and UK are the most attractive countries for international students. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2014) expose the places around the world which attract the most overseas students to their universities. The top 20 countries with the number of international students explained in Table 1.

Table 1. Top 20 Countries for International students

Serial no.	Destination Country	Total Number of Int. Students
1	US	740482
2	UK	427686
3	France	271399
4	Australia	249588
5	Germany	206986
6	Russia	173627
7	Japan	150617
8	Canada	120960
9	China	88979
10	Italy	77732
11	South Africa	70428
12	Malaysia	63625
13	South Korea	59472
14	Austria	58056
15	Netherlands	57509
16	Spain	55759
17	United Arab Emirates	54162
18	Singapore	52959
19	Egypt	49011
20	Saudi Arabia	46566

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, July 2014

3. Internationalization of Higher Education in Asia Pacific Region

Higher education services have been expanding with the development of globalization and now becoming comprehensive, market-oriented and prevailing as an industry among developed countries as well as in the Asia-Pacific region. Asian countries; i.e. Australia and Singapore are trying to establish an international network by developing international academic offices to attract students to study in their country of origin.

The last two decades have witnessed of increasing flow of internationalization activities among Asian countries. For instance, the government of Japan launched its Global 30 Scheme in 2009 with a motive to enhance the number of international student to 300,000 by 2020 (Rivers, 2010). Taiwan in 2011, also declared a bold plan to position the Taiwan as a 'Key Centre of Higher Education in Southeast Asia' through exporting higher education to other countries. Likewise, during the decade of 1990, Singapore and Malaysia focused on the transnational education and established an international environment in their universities to becoming 'education hubs' (Sidhu & Kaur, 2011).

By the continuous struggle and strategic plans towards globalization and internationalization of higher

education, it can be said that within the next two decades, Asian countries will be the most attractive destination for international students. As Onuf (2012) stated that 'Asian countries will dominate the global demand for international higher education for the next two decades.' Bohm, Davis, Meares, and Pearce (2002) foresee that the higher education demand will raise upto 7.2 million international students in 2025 from 1.8 million international students in 2000. By 2025, Asia will represent some 70% of the total globalized higher education demand, which indicate an increase of 27% from 2000.

THE (2016) announced the 200 most international universities in the world. The international outlook indicator considers each institution's proportion of international students and staff and the proportion of research papers published with at least one co-author from overseas country. For this ranking, all the institutions that feature in the top 800 of the 2015-2016 overall ranking have been considered. The Middle Eastern Institution, Qatar University is at the top of list while UK has deepest reservoir of international universities, claiming 64 institutions in the top 200. In United Arab Emirates, American University of Sharjah has the largest proportion (82%) of international students. The Contribution of Asian universities in top 20 most international universities is shown in table 2;

Table 2. THE World Most International Universities Ranking 2016 – Asian's Universities Contribution in top 20

Rank	Institution	Country	International outlook	Region
1	Qatar University	Qatar	99.9	Middle East
3	University of Hong Kong	Hong Kong	99.5	East Asia
6	University of Macau	Macao	98.4	East Asia
9	National University of Singapore	Singapore	96.2	Southeast Asia
12	American University of Sharjah	United Arab Emirates	95.6	Middle East
15	United Arab Emirates University	United Arab Emirates	95.0	Middle East
17	Nanyang Technological University	Singapore	94.6	Southeast Asia

Source: www.timeshighereducation.com

The last decade witnessed that there has been 78 % increase in the student mobility as the number of students enrolled in overseas universities (Choudaha, Chang, & Kono, 2013) and institutions increased to 3.6 million in 2010 from 2 million in 2000. The contribution of South East Asian countries is 28% of international students. China, among them, provides the largest pool of international students i.e. 17%, while universities of USA, UK, and Australia are the home of these students. Out of total enrollment of international students, 19% are enrolled in American universities, 11% in UK universities, 8% in Australian universities (UNESCO, 2013). With the increasing student mobility, research collaboration also increased among countries in Asia. For instance, China, in 2013, formed 71,003 documents with international collaborations, compared with India's 17,484, Pakistan's 4,278 and Bangladesh's 1,566.

The countries in South Asian region i.e. Pakistan, are also in the struggle to globalize higher education. Higher Education Commission in Pakistan is striving to develop strategic alliances and institutional networks with foreign countries i.e. The Knowledge Exchange Strategic Plan (KESP), International Research Support Initiative Program, etc.

4. Internationalization of Higher Education in Pakistan

Majority of the developing countries like Pakistan are suffering from a perilous situation in keeping up with international standards of global higher education (Zakaria, Janjua, & Fida, 2016). However, Pakistan has adopted the internationalization policies for higher education quite liberally. At the time of Partition in 1947, there were more than two dozen colleges and technical institutions but only one university in the provincial capital of Punjab, the Punjab University, Lahore. Today, there are 177 public and private universities in Pakistan.

Through the efforts of Higher Education Commission (HEC), student mobility trend has increased in Pakistan at a fast pace. According to (UNESCO, 2012), outbound student mobility ratio is 2.6, and a total number of mobile students are 35,086 who went abroad for education purpose mainly to USA and UK and also to Australia, Germany, Malaysia, etc. A total of 4986 scholars, Under the HEC overseas scholarship scheme, has been sent abroad under several scholarships and funding programs for MS, Ph.D., or post-doctoral research. Majority of the students went overseas in the field of technology, engineering and bio sciences.

Moreover, HEC awarded 1569 overseas scholarships under the 'Faculty Development Program' and 178 researchers have completed their PhDs under this program. Another program named as 'Development of High-Level Manpower S&T through Split Ph.D. Program' 86 scholars have been sent abroad under this scheme for split Ph.D. (UNESCO, 2012). Advanced countries are also providing scholarships to students from Pakistan. The world's largest Fulbright Scholarship Program each year provides a number of scholarships to Pakistani students to study in the US higher education institutions. Likewise, a large number of students travelled to Australia for higher education under the Australia-Pakistan Scholarship Program.

According to the annual report of HEC (2012), under Foreign Faculty Hiring Programs, adopted by

Pakistan, more than 300 experts and scientists have been hired from different top leading universities or institutions worldwide. The report also revealed that through another scheme named as ‘Visiting Scholars Program’, 61 experts around the world have come to Pakistan. These experts offered their services and conducted workshops and seminars to share their experience and knowledge by spending two to eight weeks at public sector universities / DAIs.

Table 3. Outbound Students from Pakistan to Overseas

Country	Number of Students
United Kingdom	9,754
United States	5,176
Australia	3,078
Sweden	3,044
Canada	1,560
Germany	1,406
Malaysia	1,367
Cyprus	1,215
Cuba	934
Kyrgyzstan	911
Saudi Arabia	766
France	673
Finland	420
Norway	291
Other Countries	4,491
Total Number of Mobile Students abroad	35,086
Outbound mobility ratio	2.6
Gross outbound enrolment ratio	0.2

Source: *UNESCO (2012)*

However, the inbound mobility of international students towards Pakistan is not impressive. The International Islamic University (IIU) is at the top position in respect of international students’ recruitment in Pakistan. There are 1726 international students belongs to 40 different countries. The National University of Science and Technology (NUST) has only 11 international students and in Bahria University there are only 14, while the COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT) Pakistan enrolled 21 International students during the year 2012-13 (Zakaria et al., 2016).

According to the report of HEC (2011), HEC processed 1225 cases of international students who applied for admission in Pakistan as mentioned in Table 4.

Table 4. Inbound Mobility of International Student in 2010 – 2011

Sr.	Country	No. of Int. Student Enrolled
1	Afghanistan	440
2	China	315
3	Somalia	133
4	Turkey	60
5	Saudi Arabia	46
6	Others	231
Total		1225

Source: *Higher Education Commission of Pakistan Report 2010-2011*

Some of the Pakistani universities struggled for internationalization, as indicated by HEC (2012), by providing research and academic programs and also offering enhanced facilities to induct International Students i.e. International Islamic University (IIU) and COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT). Universities has accelerated their marketing strategies internationally and started mutual agreements for research collaboration, student/staff exchange programs, joint ventures schemes to appeal more international students in their systems despite various cultural diversification and less developed infrastructure. However, there is still a need of greater efforts to understand the level and necessities of internationalization in HEIs and to improve the quality of higher education and develop the infrastructure of the universities in such a way that attract international students.

5. SWOT Analysis of Internationalization of HE in Pakistan

SWOT analysis is an effective way to understand the existing level of internationalization as well as a guide for further action steps for improvements. In the current study, SWOT analysis is used as a mechanism to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the organizations as well as the opportunities and threats (Stewart & Richardson,

2000).

Table 5. SWOT Analysis

	Positive	Negative
Internal	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internationally recognized academic programs and professional courses • Ideal location and size and regional vicinity • Increasing flow of publications and research activities • HEC accreditation policy and quality assurance strategies • International fully and partially funded scholarships • Good reputation of Pakistan's medical and engineering education globally • Partnerships and strategic alliances with developing countries • Government increasing efforts to assist universities for the enhancement of higher education 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate national and institutional policy to internationalize HEIs • Lack of appropriate budget for internationalization • Poor higher education system • Weak Legal System • Inappropriate funding • Lack of faculty development • Lack of equipment and facilities for advance research • Lack of international staff and faculty members • Experienced staff leaving for greener pastures • Lack of facilities for student welfare, counseling and career guidance
	<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased chances of international collaboration and partnerships in support of university initiatives, and programs • Prospects for Foreign Aids from World Bank and IMF • Use of distance education and e-learning and adoption of latest information and communications technologies • Strategic positioning for the organizations of international seminars and development programs within the context of globalization • Increased chances of developing and enhancing of capacity to accommodate more international students and research collaboration activities • Improvement in quality of higher education and reduction in student tuition fee due to fair and free competitions amongst the universities • Increased chances to attract international students by offering fully funded scholarships 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder resistance to develop an international environment in HEIs • Leadership deficit • Fiscal uncertainty, mismanagement, and corruption through misuse of power • Underdeveloped research culture • Inability of senior management in the universities to hire and retain the international students and faculty • Limited resources for faculty and staff development • Growth of privatization of HEIs • Politically represented academic and decision-making bodies in universities • Fear of terrorism • Intellectual property rights, patent and copyrights issues • Inappropriate distribution of national and international funding • Less developed infrastructure of the universities as compares to international standards
External		

Table 5. SWOT Analysis of Internationalization of HEIs

6. Practical Suggestions

On the way towards a global knowledge economy, internationalization is needed to emerge as one of the top priorities for institutes as well as for government. The study suggests some crucial recommendations to develop a strategic plan on institutional and national level. These recommendations based on the perspective of students, faculty, research, Curriculum, engagement and culture. The details have been mentioned below;

Indicators	Recommendations
Student	Activities for ‘Internationalization at Home’ Announce international scholarships and fellowships schemes Expand and improve international student experience Promote distance learning / e-learning
Faculty	Recruit internationally experienced permanent and visiting faculty Develop faculty exchange programs with for foreign countries Buildup and amplify faculty members’ skills and expertise in context of internationalization through global workshops and seminars
Research	International joint research collaboration and projects Equip universities with advanced technology and innovative instruments for scientific research Organize international conferences, seminars, and workshops
Curriculum	Start globally accredited degree programs Allow international joint degree programs Offer educational programs in foreign languages
Governance	Introduce national and institutional policy for internationalization Earmarked financial resources to promote and facilitate internationalization Establish international offices in universities Ensure effective accreditation and quality assurance policies
Engagement	Engage international alumni by developing a strong alumni network Enhance international strategic alliances, networks, and partnerships
Culture	Develop multicultural campus and build harmonization among universities Encourage the integration of international and domestic students / staff

Conclusion

The concept of globalization of higher education induce new challenges and, therefore, a universal skill set is required to overcome these challenges. Higher education in Pakistan is in need to find out parameters which would be useful for the smooth drive towards internationalization. Pakistan can enhance and improve the quality of higher education by developing internationalized curriculum, recruiting international students and staff, offering global scholarships and funding and establishing international research collaboration programs. Current study emphasis on recent trends and issues in global higher education to determine the roadmap through which internationalization of higher education could be possible. The study proposed SWOT analysis for the internationalization of higher education in Pakistan which illustrates the internal and external factors which are positively or negatively impacting the higher education system. Moreover, study suggests imperative recommendations and activities helpful to speed up the internationalization process. The study is useful for the higher education institutions to understand the fundamental needs of internationalization as well as it is useful for policy makers in developing long-term strategies. Future studies needed to implement the SWOT analysis among the universities in Pakistan to figure out the results.

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