The Reality of Academic Autonomy in Public-sector Universities of Pakistan: A Case Study of University of Education, Lahore

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Abstract

The study explicates the phenomenon of academic autonomy in public-sector universities of Pakistan in the context of higher education reforms of 2002. The academic autonomy refers to involvement of senior faculty in strategic planning of the university, university's authority to introduce new programs, authority to revise its curriculum, authority to set admission criteria for students, ability to deal with plagiarism, ability to change from 2-year bachelor's to 4-year bachelor's degree and ability to change from annual to semester system. Case study research design was used and University of Education, Lahore was the unit of analysis. The respondents included the senior faculty and the senior administrative staff of the university. The data was mainly collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews. The snowball sampling technique was employed. The conclusions derived from analysis of data tell us that university exhibits traces of Managerial Model of university governance which is prevalent in many Western countries. The university possesses low levels of academic autonomy as senior faculty has very limited representation in decision-making structures of the university. And again for introduction of new programs, revision of curriculum and setting the admission criteria for students the university has to strictly follow the guidelines given by the HEC.

Keywords: Academic Autonomy, Managerial Model, Collegial Model, Nature of Autonomy, Extent of Autonomy

Introduction

In recent times the roles of universities have gone through massive transformation throughout the world and it has changed from perseverance of knowledge to a much larger forum of contributing in national growth and development mostly through innovation and technology. The phenomenon of globalization has also affected the governance structures of the universities and the world's rapid movement towards a knowledge-based society has also changed the role of universities in social and economic development of the countries (Nigavekar, 2010). The definition of higher education is also changing with time and it is now considered to be a life-long activity where professionals continue their training and development for the future challenges of life (Fielden, 2008). So in recent times the universities have multiple roles to play and these are to create new knowledge through research, decipher the knowledge which is produced elsewhere in the world and produce human capital which can compete anywhere in the world. So it is the knowledge which is going to be the key factor in development of every nation in modern world and higher education is going to be the determining factor in the future knowledge-based economies and societies (Nigavekar, 2010).

There is also a general consensus throughout the world that education in general and higher education in particular plays a central role in economic and social development of the countries. Thus the governments all over the world acknowledge its value and importance. A well educated population is considered to be foundation of a prosperous and affluent society. The universities play a critical role in the development of this human capital. All over the world the nations depend on their universities for national development because the knowledge required for every nation to move forward is produced in these institutions (The Boston Group, 2001). Higher education institutions (HEIs) play two very important roles in every society a) they create and disseminate knowledge and b) they provide a platform where complex societal questions can be addressed in an open environment (Weber, 2006). Consequently, the nations invest in their universities because they expect that their universities will contribute in national progress and development.

Academic autonomy is vital for every university because it helps to produce and transmit knowledge without undue interference from any level of the government and include that university should be independent in matters regarding setting admission criteria for students, decisions regarding selection of various academic programs, deciding about content of courses, recruitment and termination of academic staff, maintaining the degree standards and freedom in selection of research areas and publications of its research. Every university has its governance and management structures e.g. Governing Board, Senate, Committee of Deans etc which need to be protected from undue external influences and the academic autonomy provides a platform for flexible and quick to respond approach for the universities to meet with their requirements of teaching and research (Ekundayo and Adedokun, 2009).

Pakistan has had a turbulent history of education reforms (Higher Education Commission, Report 2002-08). It is the sixth largest country after China, India, USA, Indonesia and Brazil. Its population is growing at a rate of about 2% annually and it is estimated that by 2030 it will overtake Brazil and will become the 5th most populous country of the world. It has one of the youngest populations of the world and about one half of its population is

below the age of 18 years. Its literacy rate is also much lower than the other countries of the region e.g. Sri Lanka and India (Hathaway, 2005). Soon after independence Pakistan's education system did a satisfactory job and provided a platform for its citizens for growth and development, but over the years it failed to match its expansion with adequate resources, and it deteriorated with time. It particularly suffered due to lack of vision on the part of its rulers (Hathaway, 2005). The successive governments of Pakistan introduced many reforms in the sector but none achieved its desired result. Lack of political will and insufficient allocations of funds were two main reasons for past failures (Jahangir, 2008).

The present situation is also very dismal and the country is spending less than 2 % of its GDP on education which is very low when compared with other countries of the world. Although the government's spending on public-sector institutions has increased in the last decade but the number of students receiving tertiary education in Pakistan are still very low. In Pakistan higher education refers to the education after F.A./F.S.C. Only 7.8% of the age-bracket 17-23 have access to higher education which is far less than the other countries of the region. The quality of education is also very low considering the fact that only two universities of Pakistan are ranked among the top Technology Universities of the world as per QS World Universities Rankings 2010. Lack of qualified faculty and weak infrastructure are the two grey areas in the development of higher education in Pakistan. Although the numbers of PhD students enrolled in Pakistani universities have increased in the past decade but the situation is still far from satisfactory (Higher Education Commission, Medium Term Development Framework 2011-15).

Therefore, the education has always remained a central and serious challenge for the governments of Pakistan. Its low literacy rate further translates into its poor social and economic development. It can be easily said that Pakistan's future lies in its education. There were considerable demands from different segments of the society to reform higher education in Pakistan in line with the modern day requirements of globalization and knowledge-based economy. Therefore, reforming higher education was one of the most important visions of Mushraf's Regime. The Task Force on Higher Education was constituted by the Government of Pakistan in 2001 to reform higher education in the country. It was constituted with the agenda that a) best students should get the best available education b) all universities should at least meet bear-minimum requirements in faculty, financial stability and uniformity in procedures and c) high quality of education in all higher education institutions of the country (The Boston Group, 2001).

In March 2002 the Task Force came up with a comprehensive 'Report' to revitalize the higher education sector of Pakistan. It recommended that the already existing apex body for higher education in Pakistan, The University Grants Commission of Pakistan (UGC), should be replaced by a more effective and authoritative body which they named Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC). It also recommended that the public-sector universities should not be under direct control of the government and government should play a facilitative role in governance and management of the universities. Task Force recommended several structural and functional changes in the decision-making structures of public-sector universities and recommended that all public-sector universities of Pakistan should be given administrative, financial and academic autonomy so they can meet the modern day requirements of globalization and knowledge-based economy. The Task Force on Higher Education also suggested many curricular reforms in the higher education sector of Pakistan. It recommended that 2-year bachelor's degree should be replaced by 4-year bachelor's degree in accordance with the international standards and the annual system should be replaced by the semester system (Task Force on Higher Education, 2002).

Aims and Objectives of the Study
1. To describe the nature of academic autonomy at University of Education, Lahore.
2. To measure the extent of academic autonomy at University of Education, Lahore.

Literature Review
The modern day requirements have changed the manner in which the universities are governed and managed. There have been changes in the governance structures of the universities as the States are reducing their funding to the higher education institutions and universities are forced to find new avenues for their survival (Schmidt and Langberg, 2008). Schmidt and Langberg inform that throughout Europe these pressures have brought about reforms in the higher education sector and also have resulted in universities to move away from research projects which were discipline-oriented to market-driven. They enlighten that there have been radical changes brought about by recent reforms in the higher education sector throughout Europe and as a result of these reforms mainly the authority of academics have been curtailed through introduction of strict hierarchy, dissolution of Collegial Bodies and introduction of market-driven research.

Schmidt and Langberg (2008) further inform that in Denmark the senior faculty has historically played an important role in decision-making structures of its universities but after the 1970s this model has been criticized by policy makers because of its slow adaptation with the changing time and after the emergence of University Act in 2003 the power has been shifted to the professional managers and the role of senior faculty has been limited to academics only. New boards of governors have been established in the Danish universities with top-down approach

which has replaced the earlier bottom-up approach, which was dominant in the Collegial Model. Now in new model the senior professors have very limited role in the decision-making structures of the universities. Schmidt and Langberg, however, add that it has yet to be established that whether this model has served any good for the Danish government because these policies made by full-time managers have ultimately to be implemented by the faculty and only time will tell whether exact balance has been achieved by the government in this regard or not.

Moutsios (2012) informs that the first decade of the twenty-first century has seen the elimination of academic autonomy from the universities and the university systems are moving more towards control by the governments throughout Europe. He adds that the implementation of 'Bologna Process' is gradually eliminating the academic autonomy in its entire core dimension e.g. policy making, governance and management, creation of knowledge and imparting of knowledge. Quality assurance and evaluation of universities is turning universities into business units and the European universities are running like business organizations and are run by professional managers and operating with cost-benefit criteria. He states that the universities are turned into corporate organizations through introduction of new legislations and with time the academics' role is being limited as they have no say in the policy decisions of their own organizations.

Gerber (2010) states that a good tradition in university governance and management is to give faculty their due share in selection and promotion of faculty, choosing and nominating deans and departmental heads, participation of senior faculty in making budgets of the universities and also senior faculty's say in the policy decisions of the university. According to him academic autonomy refers to a state in which the academics not only have the liberty to teach and research but also have say in the overall strategic decisions of the universities. He thinks that the idea of shared governance is likely to be of more benefit in this state and the larger issues like academic policy making, revision of curriculum, selection and promotion of faculty should be made by this shared governance.

Different scholars have enlisted the components of academic autonomy. Farrant (1987) has listed following components of academic autonomy:

- To decide upon future direction of institution without external interferences
- To set own academic priorities
- To recruit academic staff without external influences
- To take decisions regarding admission criteria of students
- To take decisions regarding content of courses
- To take decisions regarding teaching methodologies
- To take decisions regarding control and evaluation mechanisms

According to Ergüder (2010) academic autonomy consists of following elements:

- Participation of academics in overall institutional goal setting
- Decisions regarding appointment of faculty
- Deciding on degree programs
- Decisions regarding student's admission criteria
- Deciding on number of students to take
- Deciding on content of courses

University Governance Models

The two popular 'Ideal Type' of university governance models oftenly described and referred to by the scholars of contemporary time are the 'Collegial' and the 'Managerial' models (Nybom, 2008).

Farnham (1999) states that in the 'Collegial Model' there is very high level of academic staff's participation in the decision making of the institution. This model gave a lot of professional autonomy to the academics and was very popular in the 1970s. In this type of model the authority was established by virtue of collective agreement and it was not imposed by top-down approach or by strict hierarchy. It is often quoted as the golden era of the universities but there were some hidden costs as well. The universities were heavily dependent on the States for funding and in some other matters as well e.g. for appointment of academic staff etc. The main criticism of 'Collegial Model' was its lack of flexibility to respond to challenges of the external environment, slow adaptation to the changing demands of the stakeholders and lack of explicit responsibility of the decisions. Diametrically opposed to 'Collegial Model' is the 'Managerial Model' of university governance which is fairly common in the recent times. This model is like the one seen in the corporate world. It is a top-down approach based on strict hierarchy and gives very limited autonomy to the academics. It follows the executive management style of the corporate sector. A lot of modern day universities are adopting this model. It is not appreciated by the academics because it reduces their participation in the decision making processes. The goals are set by the external forces and the academics merely help to achieve these goals (as cited in Felt and Glanz, 2002).

Farnham (1999) further states that between these two extremes there are two more models of university governance, which are 'Bureaucratic Model' and 'Entrepreneurial Model'. The 'Bureaucratic Model' gives

authority to the individuals but the organizational structure is very rigid and mechanistic. There is clear-cut hierarchy and strict rules and regulations. It is not considered to be a flexible approach and is also criticized for its slow process of decision making. Another model emerging in the recent times is the 'Entrepreneurial Model' of university governance. This model is based on short objectives and looks to explore newer venues for the institutions of higher education to achieve financial stability. It achieves financial autonomy by relying heavily on external funding. In this model the financial considerations take the central seat and are the main rationale for making decisions. This model commonly exists in the United States of America and in some European countries. However, he elaborates that in the literature regarding models of university governance and management there seems to be lack of consensus that how these institutions should be governed and managed and even within the institutions different model seems to co-exist (as cited in Felt and Glanz, 2002).

Research Methodology

Considering the nature and the context of study the researchers decided to undertake interpretive, descriptive qualitative research. The reasons for choosing qualitative research were a) that researchers wanted to use the social actors' point of view to describe the social phenomenon, b) they wanted to describe this social phenomenon in detail, c) they focused on the social process, d) and adopted a flexible approach (Blaikie, 2000).

Case Study Research Design

This is a case study regarding the concept of academic autonomy; its nature and extent done at University of Education, Lahore (UE). Yin (2003) states that selection of case study as research methodology is beneficial when a) a researcher wants to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Baxter and Jack (2008) inform that:

> Qualitative case study is an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. This ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood. (p. 1)

Population and Unit of Analysis

The population of the study included the senior faculty and the senior administrative staff of the University of Education, Lahore and The University of Education, Lahore is the unit of analysis.

Sample and Sampling Technique

In total twelve in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted from senior faculty and the senior administrative staff of the university. The researchers chose snowball sampling technique for data collection because every interview provided some sort of lead for further probe and investigation and it proved very beneficial for data collection. MacNealy (1999) states that non-probability technique such as snowball sampling is used by researchers when the population concerned can only be identified by someone who knows that a particular person has the requisite experience or characteristics to be included in the sample. Blaikie (2000) further adds that in snowball sampling technique one contact is made with one member of the network and then that person is asked to identify other members which have the relevant information.

Instrument for Data Collection

For collection of data the researchers chose semi-structured interviews. The reasons for choosing semi-structured interviews were that the researchers wanted to do an in-depth study of the phenomenon of academic autonomy in its real-life context. For their facilitation during the interviews and to make sure that all the aspects of the study are fully captured the researcher developed an interview-guide. The researchers also opted for semi-structured interviews because they wanted to remain flexible with their approach and wanted to explore the phenomenon of academic autonomy in its minute details. Harrell and Bradley (2009) inform that:

> Semi-structured interviews are used often in policy research. In semi-structured interviewing, a guide is used, with questions and topics that must be covered. The interviewer has some discretion about the order in which questions are asked, but the questions are standardized, and probes may be provided to ensure that the researcher covers the correct material…. Semi-structured interviews are often used when the researcher wants to delve deeply into a topic and to understand thoroughly the answers provided. (p. 27)

Data Collection

The data was collected by the researchers in natural settings from the senior faculty and the senior members of the administrative staff of the university. The interviews were conducted with due consent of the respondents. Considering the nature and of the study and the status of the respondents the researchers employed the strategy of making appointments with the respondents one day prior to the interviews. This strategy also helped the researchers

to make an early contact with the respondent and this allowed them to brief him/her about the nature of the study. During the course of data collection the researchers remained very flexible with their approach and allowed the respondents to fully express their views without interruptions. The responses of the interviewees were noted-down in the form of short handwritten notes and later on the same day the researchers expanded these notes to the full interviews to completely capture the views of the respondents.

Ethical Considerations
Several researchers (Blaikie, 2000; Marvasti, 2004; Wiles et al., 2006) have emphasized that confidentiality and anonymity of respondents should be ensured by the researchers in social research. Marvasti (2004) stresses that a researcher should guard the privacy of his respondents and their identity should not be disclosed to anyone. She adds that researcher can use codes to protect anonymity of his respondents. So the researchers have followed the ethical standards set by the scholars of the past and have kept the identity of the interviewees hidden. They have developed codes for their work and have fully respected the confidentiality and anonymity of their respondents.

Data Analysis
The data was analyzed by the researchers without use of any software. The data collected through semi-structured interviews was in the shape of handwritten notes and was transcribed by the researchers. During the exploration stage of the data analysis the transcribed data was re-read by the researchers to generate themes and categories. The data was also coded during the exploration stage of data analysis. The similar ideas and patterns were recognized in the transcribed data and noted down. The contrasts were also identified and documented. The similar ideas were put-together in similar themes and categories and likewise the contrasts were also organized and put under similar themes and categories. The important narratives were also identified in the transcribed data and were highlighted to be used as evidence. The analysis was made using these themes and categories and conclusions were drawn based on these themes and categories. Kawulich (2004) informs that qualitative content analysis strategy of data analysis includes going-through transcribed data a number of times to find similarities and divergences that help researchers to generate themes and categories.

Data Interpretation
For describing the phenomenon of academic autonomy the researchers have selected the theoretical framework put-together by Chawla, Govindaraj, Needleman and Berman (1996) which is known as Methodological Guidelines for Evaluating Autonomy. The researchers think that the methodological guidelines developed by Chawla et al. (1996) provide a solid base for analyzing the phenomenon of university autonomy at University of Education, Lahore. The aim of the researchers is not to draw parallels between the two studies. They just want to use the framework developed by Chawla et al. as theoretical basis for their work as they think that the guidelines developed by Chawla et al. also provide a logical and practicable framework to be used for their study.

Discussion
The concept of academic autonomy is discussed under following headings:
1. Involvement of Senior Faculty in Strategic Planning
After talking to various members of the faculty and the administrative staff of the university the researchers came to the conclusion that the senior faculty of UE has very limited say in the strategic planning of the university. The Syndicate is the apex body of university governance and management and the composition of the Syndicate is such that one Director of Division or Principal of College is member of the Syndicate. He/she represents the senior faculty in the policy decisions of the university. So the senior faculty has very limited say in the policy matters of the university. The decisions are imposed upon the faculty by top-down approach which is characteristic of the 'Managerial Model' of university governance as documented by Felt and Glanz (2002) that the 'Managerial Model' is being practiced by most of the recently established universities of the West. It is a top-down approach in which there is well defined hierarchy and decisions are executed through executive management systems and structures. This model gives very limited autonomy to the academics so is not well appreciated by the academics. This resemblance can be due to the fact that most of the education reforms have been initiated in Pakistan by the international donor agencies e.g. World Bank, UNESCO etc. Kazmi (2011) describes this phenomenon by saying,

> *Recipes and solutions fostering greater administrative autonomy in universities were borrowed from West in Pakistan. These administrative reforms were further trickled down through the pressure exerted by various donor agencies especially World Bank and UNESCO in Pakistan. Inspired by these changes abroad and by the impending coercive pressure, the administrative elite of Pakistan reformed the existing university structure by giving autonomy to Pakistani universities. (p. 145)*

2. Authority to Introduce New Programs
The university does not have the authority to introduce new programs and it has to seek permission from the HEC before starting any new program. This finding was corroborated from the following excerpts as well:

For introduction of new programs the university has to strictly follow the directions of the HEC and you have to get approval from the HEC. There are general guidelines for introduction of new programs and if you follow these guidelines only then you get the approval from Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. If the guidelines are not followed by the institution the HEC can terminate the program and this in fact has happened at UE in the past.

3. Authority to Revise Curriculum

For revision of curriculum again the university is dependent on the HEC. The National Curriculum Revision Committee (NCRC) is working under the umbrella of HEC and is responsible for revision of curriculum at the national level. The revision of curriculum is done after every three years and Board of Studies (BOS) of UE participates in this exercise and forwards its proposals to the Academic Council and the final approval is given by the Syndicate of the university. These findings were also supported by the following excerpts:

For revision of curriculum the Government of Pakistan has given the task to the HEC and it basically supervises revision of curriculum for all higher education institutions of Pakistan. The Curriculum Section of HEC provides directions to all degree awarding institutions (DAIs) on matters regarding revision of curriculum. It is the HEC's responsibility to ensure that curriculum is revised after every three years. HEC has constituted National Curriculum Revision Committee (NCRC) to perform this function.

A senior member of the faculty elaborated the issue by saying,

HEC has over-controlled universities' curriculum and you have to adopt it and they don't appreciate interferences. So according to me their control over academics is a little too much. UE started a degree program and they instructed us to stop that program and we had to obey because they are the main funding agency.

4. Authority to Change Admission Criteria for Students

University's autonomy regarding changing the admission criteria of the students is also close to zero. Although the law permits the university to set the admission criteria of its students but in reality the policies are made at the federal level and the university is just implementing these policies. Again in this regard the university's authority resembles the 'Managerial Model' of university governance where the academics have very little say in the policy matters and merely serve as tools to implement the government policies. Nybom (2008) explains this by stating,

The managerial model reduces the professional influence, while at the same time introducing executive management systems and structures found in the corporate sector; the illusive dream is obviously to force the allegedly cumbersome, expensive and reflecting members of the 'temples of learning' into instantly reacting, 'on-demand-producing' and lean 'temples of Earning. (p. 136)

5. Ability to deal with Plagiarism

After analysis of data the researchers inferred that the increasing cases of plagiarism are a big concern for the administration of UE. The university administration seems to be in a quandary to deal with the problem. The problem becomes more conspicuous due to absence of an appropriate anti-plagiarism policy. As mentioned by Yaseen (2008) in case of Punjab University that "plagiarism, though not a new issue in university matters, was not defined clearly in the statutes; it was left to the personal values of the researchers as to what constituted acceptable copying and what was plagiarism" (p. 81). There also seems to be a lack of consensus between the public-sector universities of Pakistan and the HEC regarding cases of plagiarism. At present the role of HEC is limited to giving universities access to the anti-plagiarism software 'Turnitin' which is more of an aid than the solution. A senior administrator comprehensively explained the situation by stating:

The quality of research at UE is very poor and publications are a majbori (compulsion). There is no research agenda and research is only done to get the promotion in case of faculty and students do it to get their degrees. Majority of our work is based on plagiarism. I think both faculty and students are to be blamed for this. Faculty is interested in fulfilling the requirements for the next grade and students just want to get degrees without working hard. It is really hampering the quality of research. This is why the quality of our graduates is very poor, but if you look at their grades or CGPA you will be amazed to know that most of them are over 80% or have CGPA in excess of 3.5.

6. Ability to Change from 2-year Bachelor's to 4-year Bachelor's

After the higher education reforms of 2002 the Government of Pakistan decided to replace 2-year bachelor's degree with 4-year bachelor's degree. The researchers conclude that the step was taken in haste without considering the context of the country. Majority of the people of Pakistan are poor and cannot afford to remain in education for such a long period of time. Furthermore, HEC took the initiative without considering the fact that whether the institutions of higher education have the capacity to absorb this change. Now HEC has realized this negligence and has decided to adopt a more flexible approach. It has introduced an Associate Degree of Education (ADE) which is a 2-year degree program and can be upgraded to a full 4-year degree. A senior professor summarized the situation in following words:

I think it is a good move because you are living in a globalized world, but this move should have been gradual. There has been a lot of resistance in the society and to address that resistance will be a big

challenge for all of us. We should have considered our own context before introducing it. Our people are poor and they cannot afford that much of time and money in doing bachelors. It is a good thing now that HEC has approved an associate bachelor's program which is of two years. You can up-grade it to four years later in your life when you want and you have the required resources.

7. Ability to change from Annual to Semester System

University does have the authority to change from annual system to semester system but like other public-sector universities of Pakistan the UE's system is also a hotchpotch; it is neither a semester system nor an annual system. Again it seem to the researchers that the decision was taken by the Government of Pakistan without due consultation with the universities and after frequent remonstrations of the universities now it has been left to the individual universities to decide which system to adopt. The administration of UE has tackled this issue by introducing a comprehensive examination. The university has ten campuses which are located throughout the Province of Punjab and introduction of this comprehensive examination is serving well to achieve uniformity in standards of education throughout the province.

Conclusions

After talking to various members of the faculty and the administrative staff of the university the researchers came to the conclusion that UE's autonomy in matters related to academics is very limited. The Academic Body of the university is the 'Academic Council' whose authority is contained. As far as the academic autonomy is concerned the university's governance structure resembles the Managerial Model of university governance which is dominant in most of the Western countries. The researchers further infer that because in Pakistan most of the higher education reforms were introduced based on studies conducted by the international donor agencies i.e. World Bank and UNESCO so the Managerial Model was enforced on the Pakistani system on the quest of these international donor agencies with aim that the State have to invest less on the education and most of the financial burden was put on the general public of Pakistan.

The senior faculty of the university has very limited say in the policy matters of the university including the budgeting of the university. The Syndicate is the apex body of university governance and management and only one member of the senior faculty is part of the Syndicate. After the higher education reforms of 2002 the government of Pakistan through legislation has restricted the participation of senior faculty in policy matters of the universities. The solitary member of senior faculty is nominated by the Chancellor of the university who is the Governor of Punjab. The Academic Council which is the academic body of the university has no say in nomination of this member and law provides it with little authority in policy matters of the university.

For introduction of new degree programs the university has to strictly adhere to the policy guidelines given by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. For revision of curriculum the university is again dependent on the HEC who has constituted National Curriculum Revision Committee who perform this task on national level and universities are just implementing the policies which are made at the center. While dealing with cases of plagiarism the university administration is dependent on the HEC and due to vague policy guidelines given by the HEC the university administration is unsure how to handle this quandary.

For setting up the admission criteria of students the university has to follow the guidelines made on national level where HEC as apex body for higher education in Pakistan establishes these criteria. The university's capacity to change from annual to semester system and 2-year bachelor's degree to 4-year bachelor's degree is contained. The researchers conclude that both the decisions were taken in haste by the government of Pakistan without due consultation with the public-sector universities of Pakistan and after a decade now the government has realized its negligence in this regard and since then has adopted a more flexible approach and have introduced an Associate Degree Program which is of two years and has also delegated the authority to the universities to decide whether to adopt annual or semester system according to their requirements.

Recommendations

After analysis of the data the following recommendations are put-together by the researcher for future actions of the policy makers of higher education in Pakistan:

1. The present composition of the Syndicate of UE is such that only one Director/Principal is member of the Syndicate; who is appointed by the Chancellor of the university. So there is very limited representation of senior faculty in the Syndicate, which is the policy making body of the university. The researchers propose that restructuring of the Syndicate should be done in such a manner that the representation of senior faculty in the Syndicate should be raised from one to three and the Academic Council instead of the Chancellor should be empowered to appoint these members.

2. Plagiarism is possibly the greatest malice which is affecting the quality of research in universities of Pakistan. According to different respondents the situation is even worse at UE and it is further complicated by nonexistence of an appropriate anti-plagiarism policy at the university. The HEC needs to play a proactive role in this regard by helping institutions of higher education in eradicating this malice

from our system. It can accomplish this by providing policy guidelines to all public-sector universities and by ensuring that universities impose strict penalties to the offenders. The researchers recommend that plagiarism should be properly defined in the Statues of the university and the newly established Directorate of Research should be made responsible for stern implementation of anti-plagiarism policy at UE.

3. During the course of the study the researchers came to the conclusion that government's decision to change from 2-year bachelor's degree to 4-year bachelor's degree was a step taken in haste without considering the local context. Although the government later realized this negligence and since then has adopted a more flexible approach and introduced Associate Degree in Education (ADE). This new degree will be of two years and is upgradeable to full 4-year degree. Although Pakistan's education system is fast moving towards 4-year bachelor's degree, but we should not forget that Pakistan is a poor country and majority of its people cannot afford to remain in education for such a long period of time. So this ADE program is a move in the right direction and other degrees programs like it should also be started so that majority of the population should be properly accommodated.

4. The past governments of Pakistan have tried to replace the annual system in universities with the semester system without much success and at present there is neither an annual system nor a semester system in the country; in fact it is a hotchpotch. The transition from hybrid annual-semester system to complete semester system is not going to be easy. The researchers suggest that universities need to build their capacities both in terms of physical and human resources before this transition and HEC needs to play a central role in guiding universities through this transition.

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