

Improving Higher Educational Management through Good Governance

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Abstract

The study investigated dimensions of good governance in order to improve higher educational management in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The functions of the universities are to develop the people physically, mentally and spiritually. The purpose of higher education is to promote the economic, social, political and cultural life of a nation. The rapid economic, industrial and agricultural advancement of the developed nations is the outcome of their higher education institutions. Unlike its regional counterparts, the developmental indicators of Pakistan have not demonstrated positive results since its inception. According to the National Education Policy 2009, the participation rate of age group 18-23 at the level of higher education was 4.7% in 2008 as compared to the advanced countries which are achieving more than 40 percent participation rate in higher education. There are problems of quality of staff, students, library and laboratory and issues of governance in Pakistan. The relevance of education with social needs, research facilities, budgetary allocations, examination system, governance and academic results of Pakistan in general and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular are not at par with international standards. Considering higher education to be the most important sector in development, the study was found significant and needed as research was scarce in this area. The objectives of the study included review of relevant literature and a description of different traditions, a search for best practices and identification of new dimensions for improvement of good governance of universities. The population of the study included all heads of institutions, teachers, administrators, planners, examination experts, and students of higher education in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The sample of the study was three universities purposively selected for the study. Sixty six heads of institutions, teachers, administrators, planners and examination experts and sixty students from all universities were included in the sample. The tools for collection of data were two questionnaires administered to the subjects. Both the questionnaires were refined after pilot testing. The data were collected personally. Based on the conclusions drawn a couple of recommendations were made for improvement, which suggested that the governance systems and institutions of higher education may be based on adequate inclusion of all relevant stakeholders, institutional autonomy may be granted for ensuring academic freedom, public authorities may establish and maintain an appropriate legislative framework to ensure institutional autonomy, merit may be the only consideration for enrollment in higher education, the grant for universities may be substantially increased and capacity of university staff and faculty may be developed.

Keywords: Good Governance, higher education, educational management, development indicators, participation rate and national education policy.

Introduction

Governance in higher education refers to the means by which higher educational institutions are formally organized and managed. University governance is the way in which universities operate. It also refers to the internal structure, organization and management of autonomous institutions. The organization of internal governance is generally composed of a governing board, the university head with a team of administrative chancellors and staff, faculty senates, academic deans, department chairs, and usually some form of organization for student representation.

The study attempted to conceptualize good governance in higher education. It took stock of the relevant research in this area to identify and analyze different traditions and strategies of governance in the higher educational institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The study also took cognizance of experiences of the heads of institutions, administrators, managers, teachers and students on the strategies of governance in their respective domains. The purpose was to enlist respective hurdles related to the governance of higher education. The study focused on the area of higher education, issues of governance with a view to explore new dimensions

for improvement of educational management in universities. It was significant research as the planners, administrators, academicians, and experts working in the field of higher education could utilize the findings of the study for improvement. After drawing the conclusions, some workable recommendations were made for the improvement of governance of higher education. Good governance promotes educational quality and brings about positive changes in the management of educational institutions. Traditions of governance vary from institution to institution. The governance patterns of public and private institutions in Pakistan are different from one another.

Ten parameters of 'good governance' with educational perspective were focused in the study, which included accountability, competence, legitimacy, openness, participation, relation between upper and lower hierarchy, responsibility, rule of law, transparency and impact. A set of implementable suggestions for the improvement of educational governance were made.

Literature Review

The study conceptualized different aspects of good governance in educational perspectives. It took into consideration the current research in this area to identify and analyze related research in education across the globe. The study also took cognizance of the best practices and experiences of different institutions and professionals associated with the problem. Analysis of the research studies documented provided a clear picture of the national and international experiences with respect to good governance at the level of higher education. The current status of institutions of higher education in Pakistan depicts a miserable picture. Some of the major issues and problems of universities in Pakistan that reviewed include:

Universities in Pakistan, in most cases are functioning only as postgraduate colleges and are concentrating mainly on teaching and examinations. Even the quality of teaching is at the lowest ebb. The degrees are not acceptable in other countries. In a World Bank Report (2000) it is stated that using international standards, the degree of Pakistani universities. M.A. /M.Sc. could soon come to the equivalent of secondary school diploma in other countries.

The financial responsibility of the universities is with the federal government and administrative and legislative authority lies with the provincial government. The separation of the two means that neither federal nor provincial university authorities can be held fully accountable for the overall management of the university system.

Extent of admission to different fields is not in accordance with the development and manpower needs of the society. The curriculum too, in many cases, is out dated and irrelevant. For these reasons external efficiency of the universities has become very low. As a result, on the one hand university graduates remain unemployed and on the other hand, qualified personnel are being imported in Pakistani industry and other employment sectors.

Universities always remain deficit in their budget. The proportion of budget allocated to the universities has decreased over the year but enrollments have increased enormously. No doubt, it provides broader access to higher education but it results in low quality education. In the given budget allocation, it is not possible to provide the pre-requisites for quality education such as good libraries and laboratories.

The New Education Policy (1978) mentioned that "universities should outreach to the public through extension service in the field of their specialization. Nothing tangible has been done in this direction except in case of agricultural universities".

According to Mirza (1994), "The entire higher education is plagued with politics, violence, and pressure tactics, and indiscipline. The unions of the students and employees exercise pressure on administration and influence decision-making. The system of accountability is not very effective. This is partly due to the external factors i.e. the law and order problem in the society. The political parties, too, are somewhat blameworthy of this situation"

Today higher education is recognized as a capital investment and is of paramount importance for economic and social development of the country. Institutions of higher education have the main responsibility for equipping individuals with advanced knowledge and skills required or positions of responsibility in government business, and other professions. Only highly educated manpower can handle advanced technology. Thus, without the participation of highly qualified manpower, the process of economic development is very difficult to be accelerated. It is, therefore, important that decision makers must recognize that higher education is an important factor of development.

The rapid means of communication and digital revolution have opened wide vistas of the world, especially for higher educational institutions. The rise of internationalization, globalization of economies, knowledge and culture, and the concept of lifelong learning give a distinctive character to higher education both in international the national contexts. Through its contribution to lifelong learning, competitiveness and the pursuit of excellence, high education has to play a significant role in a society. Internationalization has put university education in the forefront of the world educational map. Our universities and institutions of higher

education will have to meet international standards and produce graduates who can compete internationally. Accordingly, higher education institutions must be responsive to the challenges of a rapidly changing and challenging new world; expectations of society and growing demands of the rising student population. This policy, therefore, looks forward to a new beginning for higher education in Pakistan.

Methodology of the Study

The study attempted to identify dimensions of good governance in higher education in the context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. It chose a descriptive methodology based on scientific method of research. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied for analysis of data. The study was delimited to higher education institutions in public and private sectors of provincial capital Peshawar.

The population of the study included all heads of institutions, university teachers, administrators, planners, examination experts, and students in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The sample of the study was three Higher Education Commission recognized universities (15%) purposively selected for the study. Sixty six heads of institutions, teachers, administrators, planners and examination experts and sixty students from all universities were included in the sample.

Data Collection and Analysis

The tools for collection of data were two questionnaires administered to the subjects. Both the questionnaires were refined after pilot testing. The data were collected personally from the heads of institutions, teachers, administrators, planners, managers, examination experts, and students of universities. Likert's five-point scale was used. The data obtained were given both quantitative and qualitative treatment. The tabulated data were analyzed with percentages and discussed. The quantitative data were placed under different categories and interpreted for drawing conclusions.

Outcomes and Results of the Study

The outcomes of the study were based on the analysis of data and suggested in brief that public should have access to the needed information in the university, a mechanism of transparency should be existed for effective institutional management, stakeholder's participation should be ensured for effective running of management affairs of the university, the management system of university should be based on the principle of responsible governance, performance based continuation should be the only criteria for teaching and non-teaching staff and students, education policies should be implemented in letter and spirit in institutions of higher education, management of a university should be capable of dealing with student's disciplinary issues and political interference, academic standard of the universities should be compatible to the needs of national and international job market, university management should take cognizance of the fast changing needs of higher education, co-curricular activities such as conferences, seminars, workshops, exposure visits and sports etc. should be part of the curriculum, advanced research should be one of the priority areas of the university management, management should be given due importance to the qualitative and quantitative improvement of library and laboratory facilities, university should be equipped with modern technologies such as digital library, computers, multimedia projectors etc., an impartial and uniform accountability mechanism should exist for ensuring good governance in the university, there should be a working system for the professional development of teachers, free and fair academic environment should be available in the universities for faculty, staff and students.

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