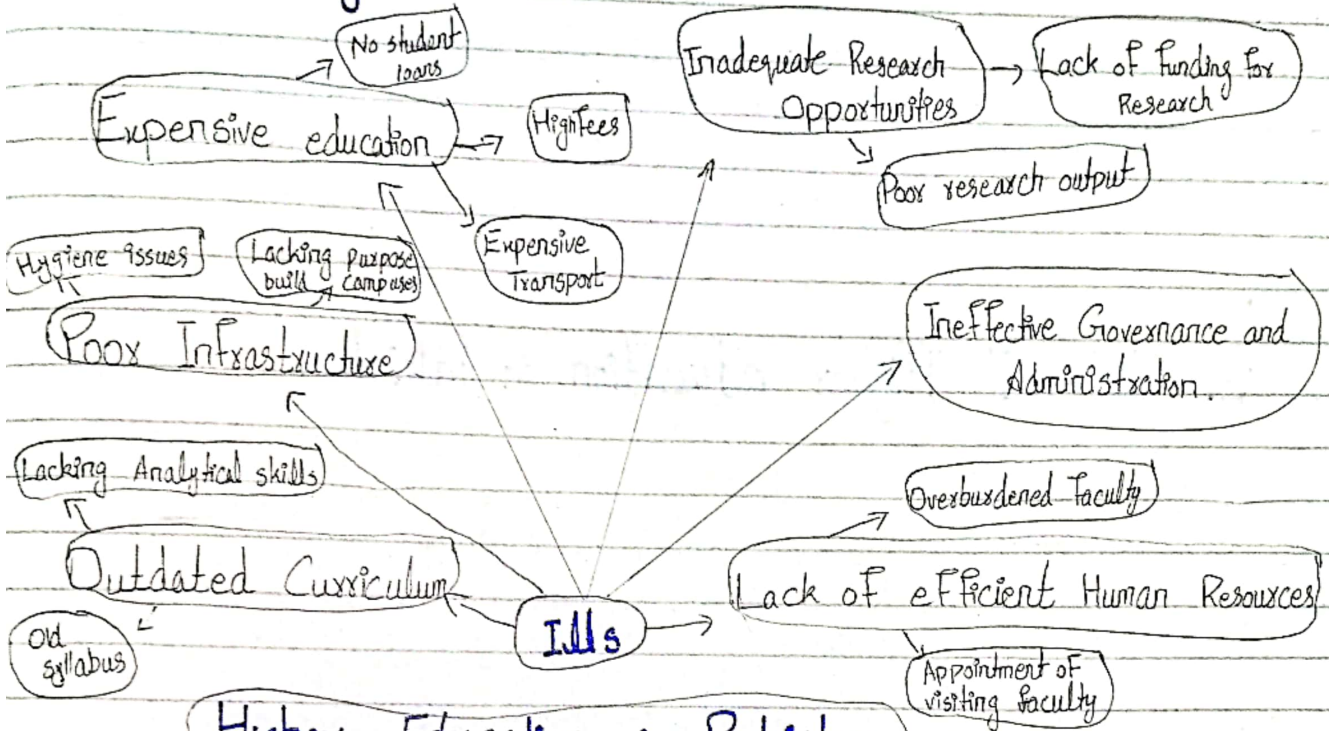


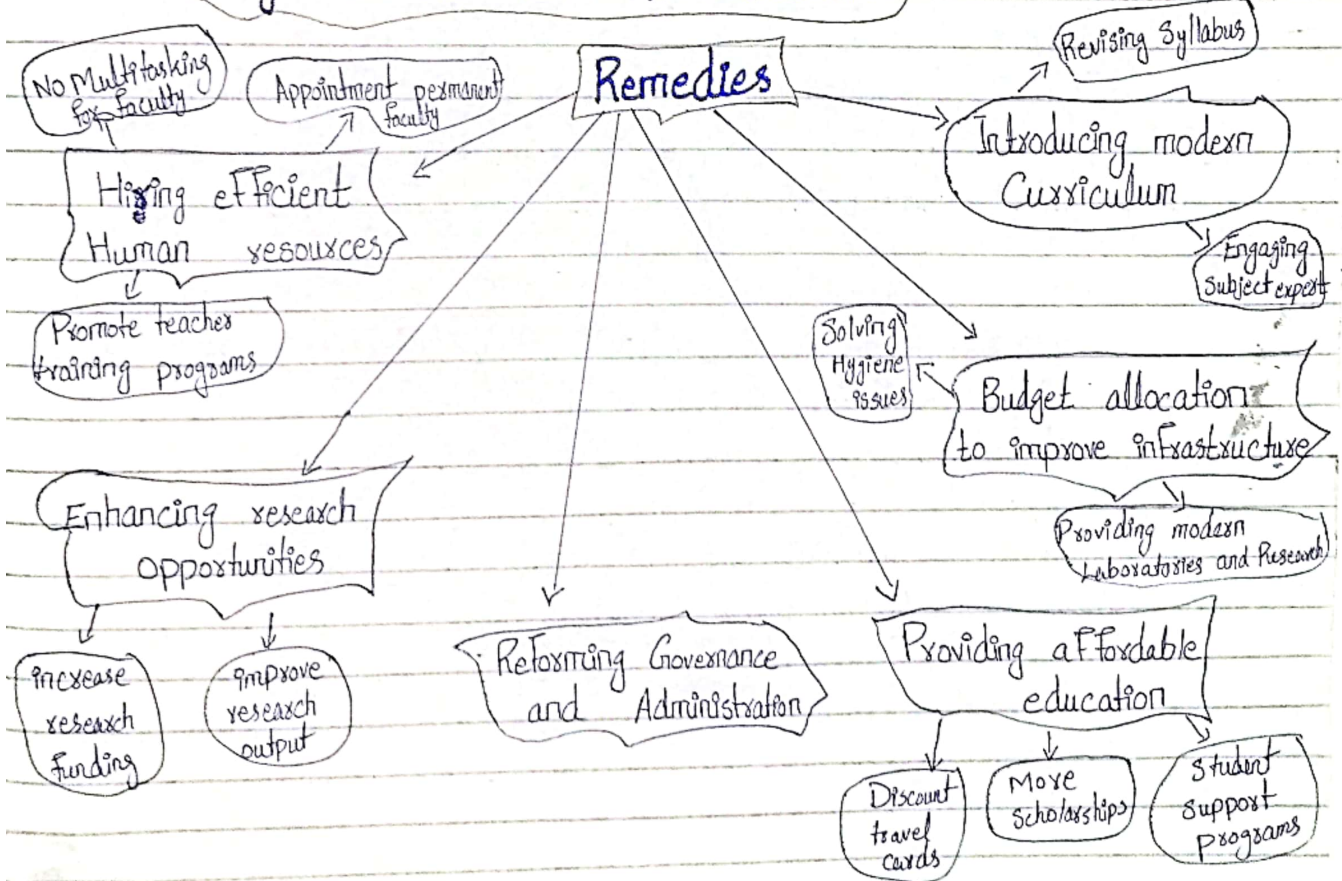
Topic :

Higher Education in Pakistan : Ills and Remedies

Brainstorming :



Higher Education in Pakistan



Outline

1. Introduction

Thesis statement: There are several ills related to outdated curriculum, poor infrastructure, ~~high fees~~, expensive education, and lack of efficient human resource. Introducing modern curriculum, improving infrastructure, offering affordable education, and hiring efficient human resource are immediate remedies.

2. Ills of Higher education in Pakistan

2.1 Outdated Curriculum

2.1.1 Old Syllabus

2.1.2 Teacher centered, not student oriented

2.1.3 Lacking Analytical Skills

2.1.4 Unsuitable for Practical purpose / Industry academia link

2.2 Poor Infrastructure

2.2.1 Lacking Purpose-Built Campuses

2.2.2 Lacking modern Laboratories and Research Facilities

2.2.3 Hygiene issues in educational institutions

2.2.4 Lacking modern learning tools

2.3 Expensive Education

2.3.1 High fees

2.3.2 Expensive transport / Conveyance Issues

2.3.3 Limited scholarship opportunities

2.3.4 No student loans

2.4 Lack of Efficient Human Resources

2.4.1 Appointment of visiting Faculty

2.4.2 Absence of Teacher Training Programs

2.4.3 Overburdened Faculty

2.4.4 Irresponsible attitude of Permanent faculty

3. Remedies for the Ills in Higher Education

3.1 Introducing Modern Curriculum

3.1.1 Revising Syllabus Annually

3.1.2 Engaging Subject Experts

3.1.3 Promoting Life Skills - Based Education

3.1.4 Establishing Industry - Academia Linkages

3.2 Budget Allocation to Improve Infrastructure

3.2.1 Building Purpose-Built Campuses

3.2.2 Providing Modern Laboratories and Research Facilities.

3.2.3 Solving Hygiene Issues

3.2.4 Upgrading Classroom Technology

3.3 Providing Affordable Education

3.3.1 Student Support Programs

3.3.2 Announcing More Scholarships

3.3.3 Providing discount Travel Cards

3.3.4 Promoting Online Education

3.4 Hiring Efficient Human Resources

3.4.1 Appointment of Permanent Faculty

3.4.2 Promotion of Teacher Training Programs

3.4.3 No Multitasking for Faculty

3.4.4 Checks on the Performance of Permanent Faculty

4 Conclusion

The Essay

"The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet." - Aristotle. This became clear during the Second World War, when Churchill received a message from Hitler. Hitler made him an offer if Churchill did not bomb German Universities, he would also not destroy his ones. Churchill immediately accepted his offer, knowing that protecting universities was key to keeping culture and knowledge alive. This shows how important higher education is for a country's future and growth. In Pakistan, higher education has big problems. The curriculum is old and does not fit current job market needs. The buildings and facilities are not good enough for proper learning and research. Education is too expensive for many students, and the quality of teaching suffers because of poor human resources. These issues stop students from growing academically and professionally, which slows down the country's progress. To fix these problems, Pakistan needs to update its curriculum to match today's needs, improve infrastructure to create better learning conditions, make education more affordable with financial aid and scholarships, and hire well-trained, full-time teachers. Solving these problems is crucial for Pakistan to improve its education system and gain respect on the global stage.

To begin with, the outdated curriculum is a major problem in Pakistan's higher education system. Many universities use old and outdated syllabus that

do not match current academia and industry needs. For example, the syllabus in arts and social sciences remains outdated, focusing heavily on theory with little practical use. This gap is evident in graduates, such as those with a master's degree in English, who struggle with basic communication skills. This is in contrast to Indian counterparts who excel in international markets due to their updated education systems. Additionally, the Pakistani education system is mostly teacher-centered. Teachers control the classroom, set exams, and assign grades without including student-centered methods. This lack of student engagement is made worse by the absence of open book exams and external reviewers, creating an environment where students often feel pressured to stay on good terms with their teachers rather than focusing on real learning. Moreover, the curriculum fails to develop analytical skills. Students are not given real-life problems or practical projects to work on, leading to memorization rather than understanding. For instance, law students memorize legal rules without understanding their basic principles. As a BS Accounting and Finance graduate, I noticed that teachers only emphasized practicing accounting patterns repeatedly. They did not teach us about accounting software, which is widely used in organizations today, both small and large. This lack of practical training has left many graduates unprepared for the current job market. Finally, there is a big gap between academia and industry. Students in fields like Mass Communication and Business Studies have trouble finding relevant jobs or starting their own businesses. Overall, these problems make the outdated curriculum a big hurdle to effective higher education in Pakistan.

The second major issue of higher education in Pakistan is poor infrastructure. Many universities do not have purpose-built campuses, and there are almost no facilities for disabled students, such as elevators or ramps. Even top universities like FAST, NUST and EME lack these essential facilities, making it difficult for physically challenged students to navigate the campus. Additionally, the lack of modern laboratories and research facilities hinders effective learning. For instance, in medical schools, a few students crowd around one cadaver to practice, while others have to wait their turn. Similarly in engineering labs, there are not enough gadgets for all students to use. In my institute's Business Studies, there was a large ~~big~~ computer lab, but they are not accessible to us. We were not given classes or permission to use these computers for learning essential software like MS Office (MS Word, Excel and Powerpoint), which are crucial in the field of Accounting and Finance. Moreover, hygiene issues are a significant concern. For example, water filter was inconveniently placed next to the restroom, their cafeterias and washrooms always create troubles for students, adding to the unhygienic conditions students faced daily. Finally, the lack of modern learning tools, such as up-to-date software and digital resources, further limits the quality of education. Therefore, poor infrastructure, outdated labs, hygiene issues, and the absence of modern learning tools, significantly hampers the goals of higher education in Pakistan.

The third major issue affecting higher education in Pakistan is the question of affordability. In the past, universities were supported by the government, making education accessible to students from all social classes. Any person could pursue higher education either on merit or through self-finance.

However, with the government now struggling with a fiscal deficit, it has become impossible to support public colleges or universities. As a result, students are burdened with high fees. For example, in my university, the fee for the first semester, including the admission fee, is Rs 15,600, and by the final semester, it increases to Rs 24,200. These rising costs make it difficult for many students to continue their education. Additionally, there are almost no travel discounts for most students. Except in a few cities, students from rural areas face significant transportation costs. Unlike developed countries, Pakistani students have very limited access to student support programs. For instance, while the Higher Education Commission (HEC) announces stipends for students pursuing higher education each year, but the number of scholarships available is only a small fraction compared to the number of students studying in universities. Moreover, banks do not offer student loans to those in need. Lastly, online education, which could reduce transportation expenses, is not promoted by universities, except during natural calamities or pandemics. Although the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily shifted education online, these benefits were not extended afterward. As a result, physical classes continue to strain the financial resources of Pakistani students, hindering their learning process. All these factors make education increasingly expensive for the average Pakistani student.

Finally, there is a lack of efficient human resources is a significant issue not only in higher educational institutions in Pakistan but also in the Higher Education Commission (HEC). Universities often rely on visiting faculty to reduce expenses, offering them minimal wages for each lecture. In my university, visiting faculty members are paid as little as

Rs. 500 to Rs. 1000 per lecture, and the time they spend teaching cannot be counted as experience in their careers. This practice is deeply unfair to educated youth who are trying to build their professional lives. Furthermore, there is an absence of proper teacher training programs, which means that many educators lack the necessary skills to effectively teach and engage students. In my university, the faculty is often overburdened, with one teacher handling 3 to 4 classes in a day, each lasting 1.5 hours. This heavy workload leads to burnout and reduces the quality of education. Additionally, the attitude of permanent faculty members is often problematic. In many cases, they treat male and female students differently, being more courteous and supportive toward female students while being rude and dismissive toward male students. They also do not allocate sufficient time to help male students with their academic needs, further exacerbating the issue. This lack of efficiency and professionalism in the human resources of higher education institutions in Pakistan severely hampers the quality of education and the overall learning environment.

Unfortunately, Pakistan's higher education is struggling because of an outdated curriculum, poor infrastructure, high costs and a lack of skilled teachers. These problems are causing serious issues. We need to find solutions to improve the education system. The solutions lie in updating the curriculum, improving infrastructure, making education more affordable, and hiring better teachers.

The first solution to address the outdated curriculum in Pakistan's higher education is to introduce ~~and~~ a modern and updated syllabus. The curriculum should be revised

every year to keep it relevant. For this, the help of subject experts from around the world can be taken. For example, in 2011, the Punjab government partnered with the British Council to improve the curriculum at the school level. They hired experts like Michael Barber, a well-known educational advisor, to guide the process. This approach could be applied to higher education as well. Additionally, instead of focusing on rote learning, education should promote life skills like critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and social skills. Students should be encouraged to develop problem-solving abilities and analytical reasoning. For instance, exams could include questions that test these skills, similar to those introduced in class 9 and 11 by the Federal ~~Board~~ Board in Pakistan. Lastly, there should be a strong link between industry and academia. Some universities, like LUMS and IBA, already have this connection, allowing students to gain job experience in their final semester. This practice should be expanded to other degree programs, giving students hands-on experience before they graduate. By following these steps, one of the major problems in Pakistan's higher education system can be effectively addressed.

The second remedy is to allocate a proper budget to improve infrastructure in higher education institutions. First, funds should be directed towards building purpose-built campuses that cater to all students, including those with physical disabilities. These campuses should include working elevators, ramps and other necessary facilities to ensure that handicapped students can attend classes independently, preserving their dignity and boosting their confidence. Additionally, it's crucial to allocate a budget for providing modern laboratories and

research facilities. Unfortunately, laboratories in many universities are not well-equipped to conduct the experiments required by the curriculum. For instance, in 2024, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) requested 125 million rupees from the Federal government to improve these facilities, but only 65 million rupees were finally approved. This insufficient funding makes it difficult for universities to update their laboratories. Moreover, addressing hygiene issues should be a top priority. Students spend a significant portion of their time at university, and the quality of food and cleanliness on campuses is often below acceptable standards. Separate staff should be assigned to ensure cleanliness in classrooms and washrooms, creating a healthier environment. Finally, upgrading classroom technology is essential to meet the demands of modern education. Many classrooms lack the necessary technological tools, such as multimedia projectors, smart boards, and reliable internet access, which are critical for effective teaching and learning. Investing in these technologies would enhance the learning experience and better prepare students for the job market. By implementing these improvements, universities in Pakistan can offer a more conducive and healthy learning atmosphere, significantly enhancing the overall well-being of students and staff.

The third remedy for unaffordable education is to make it more accessible through various support measures. Firstly, student support programs should be introduced in universities. Education is a right for everyone, but even middle-class families find it hard to afford it nowadays. The government and universities should start support programs to encourage students to continue their education. Easy loans from banks and private organizations should be made

available to help poor students. For example, at King Edward University, Lahore, alumni offers loans to students who cannot pay their educational expenses. Secondly, scholarships should be announced to help students. The Higher Education Commission should establish clear, merit-based, and need-based criteria for scholarship eligibility, simplifying the application process and ensuring that all students are aware of these opportunities. Apart from national scholarships, there are many international scholarships available but students can not avail them due to difficult processing. Thirdly, travel expenses for students can be reduced by providing discount travel cards for those using public transport. This will make it easier for students from far-flung areas to reach their universities without financial stress.

A similar example comes from Japan, where Japan Railways planned to close a train station in a small town, but one girl who relied on that train to pursue her education wrote a letter asking them not to close it. The government decided to keep the station open until she completed her education, symbolizing the importance of supporting education. Finally, promoting online education can reduce both travel expenses ~~and~~ of students and staff, but also the running cost of universities. Universities should ~~to~~ organize online classes three days a week at least for theory based lessons. Therefore / in this way the issue of expensive education can be resolved.

The fourth solution is to hire skilled human resources in universities. First, universities should hire permanent teachers instead of relying on visiting teachers. Permanent teachers can give more time and attention to students, which helps in better learning. Visiting teachers often have other jobs

and can not focus fully on their teaching. For example, many universities in Pakistan hire visiting teachers to save money, but this causes problems with the quality of education. Secondly, regular training programs for teachers are important. Training helps teachers learn new methods and become better at their jobs. For example, the Aga Khan University offers training programs to improve teachers' skills. Thirdly, universities should ensure that teachers are not given too many tasks. Teachers should focus mainly on teaching and research, not on other duties. This way, they can spend more time helping students. Lastly, there should be regular checks on the performance of permanent teachers. This ensures they are doing their jobs well and students are learning effectively. For instance, a good manager regularly checks on their workers to make sure everything is going well. By following this, universities can greatly improve the quality of education they provide.

To conclude, the major ills of higher education are outdated curriculum, poor infrastructure, expensive education and lack of human resources. In the presence of these issues, development in Pakistan seems a distant dream. Therefore, serious efforts must be taken to address these issues. Introducing modern curriculum, improved infrastructure, affordable education, and employing efficient human resource are the remedies available to counter the ills of higher education in Pakistan. Only those nations earn respect and prosperity who focus on their higher education. After World War II, Britain was deprived of all her colonies and source of raw material and revenues, she emerged as a respectable nation due to her excellence in higher education. Even today, the majority of population aspires to get a British degree from Oxford or Cambridge. Even today, the

British curriculum rules the lower education in the form of Cambridge O' and A' levels exams all over the world. It is the education that gives prestige; it is the education that gives respect. It is never too late to pledge for a new change to create a new tomorrow, where there is a will there is always a way, regardless of the obstacles and hindrances we can also definitely achieve our goals.