

The Higher Education Commission in Dilemmas

Outline

1. Introduction:

Thesis Statement: The decline of Higher Education Commission of Pakistan has severely impacted academic quality, which is threatening nation's progress. Restoring its effectiveness is crucial for reviving Pakistan's education sector and supporting national development.

2. The Decline of Higher Education Commission in Pakistan

3. The Root Causes of HEC's Current Predicaments:

a. Lack of technological advancements reduce the ability to compete globally

Example: Gaps in IT resources limit students and researchers participation in international research networks. (Techno
Gaps in Higher Education, Nadeem Hassan, August 2021)

b. Limited Institutional accountability and transparency has led to ineffectiveness

Reference: Issues in HEC's Institutional Accountability, Hassan Shah, November 2023.

c. The 18th Amendment created jurisdictional conflicts over HEC's role

Reference: Highest Education Commission: Role and Challenges, Tasiq Khan, January 2021.

d. HEC's emphasis on quantity over quality in research publications has led to low-quality research outputs

Reference: HEC and the question of Higher Education, Fahd Zulfikar, 2021

e. Political interference disrupts HEC's policies which are impacting its educational planning and autonomy

f. Lack of policy clarity and implementation created instability in academic institutions

g. Insufficient funding and budget limited HEC's effectiveness.

Example: Only 1.71% of GDP was allocated to education in budget

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ 2024-2025

4. The Effects of HEC's Policies on Pakistan's Education System:

- a. Limited access to education has resulted in low literacy rate
- b. Cuddled curriculum and poor infrastructure have reduced quality of education
- c. Global recognition of degree has declined due to limited research funds
- d. Limited educational opportunities have affected youth's mental health
- e. Social inequalities deepen as wealthier students access private education and public institutions lack quality education
- f. Inadequate career security contributing in brain drain which is exacerbating the shortage of qualified faculty
- g. Misalignment with market needs of educational programs contributes to high youth unemployment

5. Measures to Mitigate the Doldrums of HEC and Enhance Pakistan's Education System:

- a. Introducing scholarships and talent retention programs
- b. Faculty development through international partnership
- c. Expanding funding for research and development
- d. Investment on technological advancement to enhance students' skills and employability

6. Conclusion

Essay

Education is necessary for the foundation of personal growth, societal development, and economic progress. Across the globe, nations strive to improve their education systems, recognizing that well-educated citizens contribute significantly to nation's development. A strong educational foundation, particularly in higher education equips individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to address complex challenges and drive innovation. However, despite its importance, higher education commission of Pakistan is in doldrums. It has declined due to multiple causes. For instance, lack of technological advancements have reduced youth's ability to compete globally. Limited accountability and transparency has led to HEC's ineffectiveness and the 18th amendment created jurisdictional conflicts over its role. HEC emphasize quantity-over-quality research. Political interference is disrupting HEC's planning and autonomy, and its lack of policy clarity and implementation has created instability. In addition, poor funding and budget has limited its effectiveness. Due to HEC's doldrums, Pakistan's

Education system is effected severely. The literacy rate is low due to limited education access, and outdated curriculum and poor infrastructure has reduced education's quality. Furthermore, global recognition of degree has declined and social inequalities are deepen because of lack of quality education. The brain drain exacerbating the shortage of quality faculty. Educational programs are not aligned with market needs contributing in youth unemployment. To reduce HEC's doldrums, there is a need of scholarships and talent retention programs, international partnership for faculty development, expanding research funding and investment on technology. In short, the decline of higher education commission of Pakistan has severely impacted academic quality, which is threatening nation's progress. Restoring its effectiveness is crucial for reviving Pakistan's education sector and supporting national development.

The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan is currently facing significant challenges that have led to its decline in recent years. Once it was seen as a symbol of progress for the country's educational

system. When it was established in 2002, the HEC was envisioned as an institute to enhance quality of higher education, research, and institutional development. However, budget cuts have crippled the HEC's ability to fund research initiatives which is halting its academic progress and technological innovation (Pakistan's Education Crisis: Barriers, Inequality, and the Path to Reform, Nazeer Ahmed Asjo, September 2024). To restore HEC, it must be reformed focusing on sustainable funding, transparency, and accountability of institution.

Moreover, many universities under HEC lack technological infrastructure and resources. Which are vital for education system. It hinders students ability to compete on global level. Insufficient technological infrastructure in HEC-affiliated universities reduces the ability for the students and researchers to participate in international research networks. (Technology gaps in Higher Education, Nadeem Hassan, August 2021). Lack of technology has deteriorated the quality of higher education in Pakistan.

Furthermore, the Higher Education Commission in Pakistan is facing criticism over its lack of institutional accountability and transparency. Its poor decision-making, fund allocation, and faculty appointments has made it inefficient. The favouritism in faculty appointments and resource distribution has weakened the commission's ability to foster effective higher education system (Issues in HEC's Institutional Accountability, Hassan Shah, November 2023). In short, HEC's institutional accountability and transparency is limited which has led it to inefficiencies.

Additionally, the 18th Amendment's devolution of responsibilities to provinces created jurisdictional conflicts over HEC's role. The amendment created ambiguity around role and authority of HEC. Disputes over standards and funding allocation complicate educational policy implementation across federal and provincial levels. (HEC: Role and Challenges, Tariq Khan, January 2021). This devolution has complicated policy implementations which are leading to conflicts over jurisdictions, standards, and funding allocations between the federal government and provincial governments.

authority. Resultantly, the 18th Amendment created more issues for the HEC.

Although, the Higher Education Commission promotes research, however its emphasize on quantity has led to low-quality research. The emphasize on quantity over quality has promoted plagiarism in Pakistan. The challenges like limited funds, lack of incentives, and inadequate training for faculty restrict Pakistan's academic outputs and its international recognition. HEC's emphasizes on quantity over quality has produced many low quality research publications which affected Pakistan's reputation. (HEC and question of Higher Education, Fahd Zulfqar, 2021). Additionally, the focus on quantity has produced many low-quality papers.

In addition, Higher Education has often faced instability due to shifts in politics and their priorities. Political shifts results in inconsistent policies that affect long-term educational planning. Political interference sometimes disrupts HEC's autonomy. The interference is challenging its ability to implement reforms effectively and manage

funds without external pressure. On the whole, political interference often hinders effective reforms and pressures HEC's funding management.

Similarly, the HEC's approach to policy-making is inconsistent due to unclear and contradictory directives. The inconsistent directives are resulting in high dissatisfaction of faculty and frequently policy change overlook ground realities.

The HEC's tenure track system (TTS) was hastily implemented without adapting to Pakistan's specific needs, which created instability in academic careers. (Pakistan's Higher Education Dilemma, Dr Ljaz Ali, February 2021). The HEC's decision-making lacks the policy clarity and implementation, makes institutions instable.

Lastly, the poor funding and budget have limited HEC's effectiveness. Budget constraints are a significant issue as funding allocations often fall short of the requirements for maintaining educational standards, infrastructure, research programs and faculty development. The Budget 2024-2025 only allocated 1.71% of GDP to education. From which HEC

received on RS. 25 billion, which is decreased from the previous year's budget of RS. 65 billion. The low budget of HEC would lead to destruction of universities, many of which are already facing financial challenges.

The doldrums of the HEC have had significant effects on the higher education system in Pakistan, one of which is the low literacy rate. The literacy rate in Pakistan remains low due to the neglect of the HEC by Pakistani authorities. According to the Ministry of Federal Education, the literacy rate stands at just 63.3%, which is lower than India's 77.7% and Bangladesh's 80.2%. This rate varies across regions, for example, Islamabad has a literacy rate of 96%, while many tribal areas of Balochistan and KPK has lower than 10% literacy rate. This disparity shows the severe higher educational challenges faced by the country.

Another effect is outdated curriculum and poor infrastructure of HEC-affiliated institutions have reduced the quality of education. Despite the rapid advancements in global education,

many Pakistani universities still rely on archaic teaching methods and outdated syllabi that fail to equip students with necessary skills. The lack of research facilities, technology, and faculty development further exacerbates the situation. The systemic neglect of curriculum and infrastructure have hampered the academic growth of students and leaves them ill-prepared for the world.

Moscovers, degrees from Pakistani universities are losing credibility on international stage due to limited research funds. Without enough funds in research and development, universities struggle to produce high-quality work that can compete on the international stage. Employers worldwide are increasingly viewing these degrees as inferior due to Pakistan's declining educational standards. This creates hurdles for students seeking global opportunities. This not only limits individual prospects but also diminishes Pakistan's global standing in higher education.

The psychological impact on young people is also noteworthy. Many

students feel deprived by the lack of educational and employment opportunities, which leads them to a sense of hopelessness. This frustration contributes to mental health challenges. Students in Pakistan are likely to face mental health issues due to little educational opportunities.

(Education in Pakistan: Problems, Challenges and Perspectives, ~~Am~~ Sabiha Abid, August 2022). It is a critical concern for the higher education students.

The public higher education institutions are struggling to provide quality education leaving low-income students disadvantaged. While elite class have access to quality education, creating social inequalities. The majority of students are dependent on struggling public universities. The elite private educational institutions like IBA and LUMS are beyond the reach of the lower-middle-class and ordinary salaried class. Such divide creates inequalities leaving middle-class students low ^{quality} education.

One of major consequences of HEC's ~~boldness~~ is an alarming brain drain among educated Pakistanis.

youth. Due to inadequate career security and job satisfaction, many skilled academics seek opportunities abroad. Furthermore, limited research opportunities and under-resourced facilities drive talented students abroad. Many students chose to stay in the host countries after their degree completion due to better job prospects. This phenomenon severely impacted Pakistan's knowledge economy, as qualified professionals do not contribute to national progress.

Another consequence of HEC's doldrums is educational programs misalignment with job market. Lack of practical and vocational training is impacting employment rate. Graduates are struggling to find jobs. Students often graduate with limited understanding of current industry trends. This negligence is not only hampering the academic growth of students but also leaves them ill-prepared for the demands of a rapidly evolving global job market.

To mitigate these doldrums of HEC, it is essential to introduce scholarships and talent selection programs

that focus on private institutions to enhance educational opportunities and retain talent. The Higher Education Commission already supports students through programs like Fulbright and USAID scholarships, which provide opportunities for studying abroad. However, there is a need for similar initiatives that promote access to quality education within Pakistan. By offering scholarships for students to study at private universities, HEC can help ensure that talented individuals remain in the country. This approach will boost the quality of education.

Another approach to enhance education is to develop faculty through international partnership. Collaborating with top global institutions gives faculty access to training and new knowledge. These partnerships can facilitate exchange programs, joint research, and workshops to enhance teaching and research. These partnerships help faculty stay updated with global best practices. Such approach improve academic standards and foster innovation.

Expanding funding for research

and development is essential for to strengthen Higher Education Commission. The research of Pakistan is considered inferior at international stage. Currently, the allocation of 25 billion rupees for HEC is insufficient to meet the growing demands of research. Pakistan must invest more in its higher education to enhance research capabilities, attract top tier faculty, and support top research projects. In a competitive world, a significant increase in funding is necessary to support world-class research and academic growth.

Lastly, investment in technological advancements is crucial for improving students' skills and employability in Pakistan. Currently, many universities lack access to modern tools and resources which leave students unprepared for job market. By investing in technology, students can learn fast and modern ways to complete a task. In short, enhance investment in technology is essential to bridge the gap between education and employment.

In a nutshell, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan is in doldrums that hampers its ability to deliver education and support students' growth. These challenges includes, lack of technological advancements, limited institutional accountability, political interference, and 18th Amendment jurisdictional conflicts. As a result, Pakistan's education system struggles with outdated curriculum and poor infrastructure, low global recognition of its degree. This has led to social inequalities and brain drain as talented youth seek better opportunities abroad. To address these issues, it is essential to improve faculty development through global partnership, expanding research fund, and investment in technology. Only through these measure, the Higher Education Commission can be revitalized. The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams (Eleanor Roosevelt).