

Higher Education in Pakistan: Ills and Remedies

Brainstorm

Higher Education

Ills Remedies

Old Methodology

Updated Curriculum with practical knowledge

Old curriculum/theory based/Cramming

Outdated Syllabus

Expensive

Low cost/ Affordable

Poor infrastructure

Improved INFRA...BUDGET

Faculty/Lack of professional skills/HR

Hiring of staff

Least Professional Development

Refresher Course

Use of Second Language

National Language

Outlines

1. Introduction:

1.1. Hook/ Attention Grabber

1.2. General Statements

1.3. Thesis statement: There are several ills related to outdated curriculum, poor infrastructure, expensive education, and lack of efficient human resource.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. Main Body:

A. 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2.1 Outdated Curriculum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 & Research facilities

2.2.3 . Hygiene Issues

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 Resource

2.4.1. Appointment of visiting Faculty

2.4.2. Absence of Teachers Training Programme

2.4.3. Overburdened Faculty

2.4.4. Irresponsible attitude of Permanent Faculty

B) Remedies for the Ills in Higher Education

2.1 Introducing Modern Curriculum

2.1.1 . Revising Syllabus Every year

2.1.2 . Engaging subject experts

2.1.3 . Promoting Life skills based education

2.1.4 . Establishing Industry academia link

2.2 Allocating Budget to Improve Infrastructure

2.2.1 . Building Purpose Built Campuses

2.2.2 . Providing Modern Laboratories & Research facilities

2.2.3 . Solving Hygiene Issues

2.3 Providing Affordable Education

2.3.1. Student support programs

2.3.2. Announcing more scholarships for Students

2.3.3. Providing discount travel cards

2.3.4. Promoting Online Education

2.4 Hiring efficient Human Resource

2.4.1. Appointment of permanent Faculty instead of visiting

2.4.2. Promotion of Teachers Training Programme

2.4.3. No multitasking for Faculty

2.4.4. Checks on the performance of Permanent Faculty

3. Conclusion:

3.1. Thesis restated, Summary of Ideas presented

3.2. Concluding Thoughts

Special Paragraphs

Introductory, Transition, Concluding

The Essay

During the Second World War, 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 and said if England was destroyed and Cambridge and Oxford Universities were spared then English culture would also survive. This is the importance of higher education. Even after defeat, Germany restored its position on the victory stand only because of her universities. Higher education involves learning as well as the professional training with regard to the particular degree. The efficient and competent higher education system produces capable and skillful individuals who not only excels in their life but also takes the country to new heights. The countries who are leading the world has put extra-ordinary efforts in improving and updating their higher education system to make it relevant and useful in dealing with the new needs of time. Unfortunately, Pakistan is facing problems in higher education (HE) due to outdated curriculum, poor infrastructure, expensive education, and lack of efficient human resource. These ills have drastic impacts; immediate remedies are introducing modern curriculum, improving infrastructure, offering affordable education, and hiring efficient human resource. Unless the issues of higher education are addressed properly, Pakistan can neither become prosperous nor respectable.

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

First come the ills in which outdated curriculum stands prominent. The syllabus of most of the Pakistani universities is old and outdated. For instance, old syllabus is there in arts and social sciences. Theory without application exists. Even a masters in English cannot speak, read or write properly. Whereas our counterparts, Indians, are dominant in middle east in education and services. Even a graduate in electrical engineering cannot fix the electrical problems of his own house. Similarly, our education system is teacher centered not student centered. The teacher takes the leading role in class and the students have to listen to his instructions. He is the one who teaches, he is the one who sets the papers, he is the one who grades it. There are no open book exams. There is no external evaluator. This forces the students to keep in good terms with their teacher by hook or by crook. In the same way, our curriculum lacks analytical skills. The course does not give real life problems to be solved by the students. There are no projects and there are no logical tasks to perform. A law student has to cram laws without any understanding of the rationale behind them. A masters in Mathematics is often found helpless to solve the analytical or even maths relevant problems asked in competitive exams. Finally, there is a wide gap between industry and academia in our universities. For instance, a student of Mass Communications is unable to find any placement or exposure in media industry. In Business studies, a student can neither find a placement nor can he start any business by himself. Therefore, outdated curriculum has created a big hurdle in the effectiveness of higher education in Pakistan.

2.2 Poor Infrastructure

2.2.1. Lacking Purpose Built Campuses

2.2.2. Lacking Modern Laboratories & Research facilities

2.2.3. Hygiene Issues

The second ill of higher education in Pakistan is poor infrastructure. Most of the universities lack purpose-built campuses. There is almost no facility for disabled students. They are no elevators or ramps for such students in the universities. Unfortunately, the elite universities like FAST, NUST and EME have no such facility. Due to limited space, classes are often taken in the kitchen and verandas of the university building. Similarly, there are limited labs and laboratories. There are more students to accommodate in limited space. For instance, in medical schools one dead body is surrounded by few doctors to examine who come first. Rest have to wait or adjust. So is the case with engineering labs. There are few gadgets for scores of students. Even the students of literature do not have the opportunity to borrow books from the library because there are only one or two copies available on the same subject. In this way, the students who have no proper access to labs and libraries cannot conduct research properly. Apart from purpose-built campuses and modern labs, the universities have mostly unhygienic environment. Their cafeterias and washrooms always create troubles for students. Elite universities like FAST and NUST have open kitchens where animals like cats roam around freely near the food. Majority of university cafeterias do not follow the hygiene instructions neither in terms of making the food nor in cleaning the tools and utensils, which makes the students contract Hepatitis A and E very often. The condition of washrooms is pathetic in all the universities irrespective of being private or public sector university. There is no proper and timely cleaning of washrooms that makes students suffer not only from mental distress but also from the diseases and infections. Therefore, lack of proper infrastructure creates hurdle in the aims of higher education in Pakistan.

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

The third ill inflicting the higher education in Pakistan is the question of affordability. First of all, high fee is the primary factor to make education expensive. In past, universities were supported by the government. Any person from any class could go for any education on merits otherwise on self – finance. However, in the present times when the government is already under the burden of fiscal deficit, it is impossible for it to support the public colleges or universities. Resultantly, students have to bear the burden of high fees. The first semester’s tuition fee of law degree program offered by FJWU (Government University) was Rs. 21,100/- in 2016 that went up to Rs. 24, 100 till the final semester. But now in 2024, the initial tuition fee is Rs.33,065 that will increase with the upcoming semesters. Moreover, there are almost no travel discounts for majority of the students. Except for few cities, students from rural areas have to bear the brunt of massive transportation costs. Unfortunately, unlike developed countries, students are not provided affordable public transport. Pakistani students have very limited access to student support programs. For example, HEC announces stipend for students pursuing higher education every year, but the available scholarships are just a fraction of the majority studying in

universities. 5000 scholarships and 4 lac graduates. HEC used to offer Outreach Support Program (OSP) that gave opportunity to the students of undeveloped regions to study in the top universities of Pakistan free of cost but now OSP is not operational. Furthermore, banks do not offer any student loans to the needy. Lastly, online education- which reduces transportation expenses – is no more promoted by the universities except for some natural calamity or pandemics. The corona pandemic was a blessing in disguise so far as online mode of learning was concerned. However, its benefits were not extended after the pandemic was over. Physical classes, thus, cost the pockets of Pakistani students and hampers their smooth learning process. All these reasons make education expensive for the common residents of Pakistan.

2.4 Lack of Efficient Human Resource

2.4.1. Appointment of visiting Faculty

2.4.2. Absence of Teachers Training Program

2.4.3. Overburdened Faculty

2.4.4 Irresponsible attitude of Permanent Faculty

Finally, there is lack of efficient human resource not only in higher educational institutes in Pakistan but also in Higher Education Commission (HEC). On one hand, universities are still interested to hire more and more visiting faculty to cut their expenses. They are paid minimum wages for each lecture for example the Islamic International University, Islamabad pays Rs.1000/- per lecture with 20% tax deduction, which makes it Rs.800/- per lecture. Further, their duration of teaching cannot be claimed as experience anywhere which is a worst discrimination against the educated youth and it also makes the visiting teacher's interest with regard to the learning of students doubtful. Absence of Teachers Training Program for university level is non-existent in Pakistan, there is no training program or workshop offered by HEC that a teacher has to undergo to become eligible for teaching at university. There are training programs available for the teachers that teaches at school or college level but the higher education is completely ignored in this behalf. Moreover, universities are short of staff. Since the salaries are so meager, mid-level workers often leave for better opportunities. This disturbs the smooth working of university and negatively affects its efficiency. Due to non-availability of required staff a teacher often has to conduct the ceremonies, manage the extra-curricular activities and also teach all at the same time. This multi-tasking overburdens the faculty. Last but not the least, the irresponsible attitude of the permanent staff is also problematic. The permanent faculty often adopts careless and ruthless behavior just because of being permanent, that results into the harassment of students. Teaching in perfunctory manner and not making serious efforts towards the learning of student is a common practice, further late responses on the research work ends up in the late awarding of degree. So, the lack of efficient human resource is another big challenge of the higher education in Pakistan.

2.1 Introducing Modern Curriculum

2.1.1. Revising Syllabus Every year

2.1.2. Promoting Life skills-based education: Critical, Emotional skills, Social skills

2.1.3. Establishing Industry academia link

First comes the remedy for outdated curriculum. Modern and updated curriculum must be introduced in our higher education. The syllabus must be / should be revised every year. The services of Subject experts around the world can be taken in this regard. A similar activity was performed at lower education in Punjab when the provincial government hired the services of the British Council in 2011 by Directorate of Staff Development (DSD). Master trainers trained the heads of the state schools and then the training further went to the levels of teachers. There were significant changes brought in the course book of schools. The standard of the content was made as per the international requirements. In this connection the government took the advice/ services of a renowned educationist Micheal Barber, former educational advisor of ex PM Tony Blair. Such Foreign collaboration to improve the syllabus can also be organized for higher education. Similarly, life skills-based education should be promoted instead of cramming based subjects. Students must be taught problem solving skills. Critical thinking and analytical reasoning should be developed among the students of higher education. Their exams may include those questions that test these abilities. Such skills are tested in exams have been introduced in class 9 and 11 of Federal Board Pakistan. Finally, there should be industry academia link. This link is present in few universities of Pakistan such as LUMS and IBA where students in their last semester often get placements in industry. Such incentive must be provided to other degree programs so that the students can get first-hand experience in job industry. By following these guidelines, one of the major ills of the higher education in Pakistan can be overcome.

2.2 Allocating Budget to Improve Infrastructure

2.2.1. Building Purpose Built Campuses

2.2.2. Providing Modern Laboratories & Research facilities

2.2.3. Solving Hygiene Issues

Then comes the remedy for poor infrastructure. Budget should be allocated to build purpose-built campuses. There must be the provision of facilities for the physically disadvantaged students and teachers. The building must have working elevators to assist them. Buildings should be built in such a way that allows the handicapped students and teachers to go to their classes on their own. In Pakistan, handicapped students or teachers are picked by their friends or helpers to reach the class. So, the provision of lifts would prove beneficial for them. Such physically challenged people will gain confidence and their self-respect will also not tamper. Human dignity will be maintained overall.

Similarly, budget should be allocated to provide modern laboratories and research facilities to the universities.

Laboratories are not well equipped to carry out any experiments required for the given syllabus. In 2024, HEC demanded 125 million rupees from the federal government, but in return, the federal government first allocated only 26 million rupees, and after some table talk, they finally agreed to give them 65 million same as previous year. With this budget, Universities are unable to build modern laboratories. The budget should be increased to meet the demands. Students should also be provided with student passes

allowing them to travel free to and from the university.

Finally, hygiene should be the top priority of the universities as health is wealth.

Students spend most of their time in their universities, but the quality of food in the university is far below than the international recommended standards. A separate staff should be assigned for the cleaning purposes. Cleanliness must be observed in classrooms and washrooms so there is a better learning environment and fewer sick days.

By addressing these areas, universities in Pakistan can create a healthier and more conducive learning environment, significantly improving the overall well-being of students and staff.

2.3. Providing Affordable Education

2.3.2 Offering Student support programs

2.3.2. Announcing more scholarships for Students

2.3.3. Providing discount travel cards

2.3.4. Promoting Online Education

Third comes the remedy for unaffordable education. Firstly, student support programs should be introduced in universities.

Education is right of every individual but even a middle class isn't able to afford education nowadays. The government and the universities should start student support programs to encourage such students to join education programmes. Easy loans by banks, and private organisations should come forward in offering financial support to poor students. For example, in King Edward University, Lahore, there is a programme by alumni of the University who offer loans to their students who are unable to pay their educational expenses. Secondly,

if students are provided with scholarship programs it will increase affordability of the parents and more students will be able to study. The Higher Education Commission should establish clear, merit-based, and need-based criteria for scholarship eligibility. It must simplify the application process and ensure widespread awareness.

Apart from national scholarships, there are many international scholarships available but students cannot avail them due to difficult processing.

Thirdly, students' travelling expenses can be reduced by providing discount travel cards.

Travel discount cards for students who use public transport to reach universities must be provided. These cards will make travel convenient and affordable for the students, from far flung areas, so that there are no hurdles for them in reaching the institutes. Finally, universities must Promote Online Education. Online mode of education has been sufficiently tested during Covid-19. Online education will not only reduce the travel expenses of students and staff, but also the running costs of the universities. For experiment-based lectures or studies on-campus classes is a need but for theory-based lessons online classes should be arranged by the universities at least three days a week. In this way the issue of expensive education can be resolved.

2.4 Hiring efficient Human Resource

2.4.1. Appointment of permanent Faculty instead of visiting

2.4.2. Promotion of Teachers Training Program

2.4.3. No multitasking for Faculty

2.4.4. Checks on the performance of Permanent Faculty

Last but not the least, the inefficient human resource must be replaced with the efficient and competent human resource. Universities should prefer the appointment of permanent faculty rather than relying on temporary scheme of hiring visiting faculty. Permanent faculty is a bit expensive than the visiting but it is far more fruitful, as the students will have the facility of availability of teacher anytime they need during university hours secondly the teacher who knows his job is permanent will take his/her responsibility more seriously. Furthermore, it is about time that HEC realize the need teachers' training programs. Teachers' training programs should be established and also be made mandatory to be taken by the teachers who wants to join as a university teacher or professor. Such programs positively contribute in the credibility of teachers and of overall education system. Since, higher education is the most senior level of education in Pakistan, the need of such programs becomes more vibrant. Universities should also fill in the vacant seats of faculty required to manage the ceremonial affairs of the university or its departments. The system must make sure that the faculty which is appointment for teaching purposes must not be made responsible to handle the tasks outside of their domain so that they are more able to focus on academic and research work. Teachers should also be awarded with incentives for publishing their research work. Finally, a proper and efficient mechanism for checking and analyzing the performance of permanent faculty should also be established. The authority comes with the great responsibility of its rightful usage. There have been numerous cases where students are blackmailed and harassed by the permanent teachers, so, universities must make sure that the power is not being misused rather being used in creating conducive and learning environment. Hence, efficient human resource is direly needed for the reformation of higher education system in Pakistan.

To conclude, the major ills of higher education are outdated curriculum, poor infrastructure, expensive education, and lack of human resource. 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 which/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.