

Essay 1: Higher Education in Pakistan: Ills and Remedies

Outline

1. Introduction

1.1 Attention Grabber

1.2 Background Information

1.3 Thesis Statement: Pakistan's higher education faces difficulties due to outdated curriculum, poor infrastructure, expensive education, weak research culture and lack of efficient human resource. Immediate remedies of these ills are introducing modern curriculum, improving infrastructure, providing affordable education, reviving research culture and training of efficient human resource for a better and prosperous future.

2. Ills of Higher Education

2.1. Outdated Curriculum

2.1.1 Old Syllabus

2.1.2 Teacher centered, not student oriented

2.1.3 Lack of analytical and critical thinking skills

2.1.4 Weak Industry - Academia linkage

2.2 Poor Infrastructure

- 2.2.1 Lack of purpose build campuses
- 2.2.2 Shortage of modern equipment and research facilities
- 2.2.3 Lack of proper hostel within universities
- 2.2.4 Poor hygiene

2.3 Expensive Education

- 2.3.1 High Fees
- 2.3.2 Expensive transport costs and conveyance issues
- 2.3.3 Expensive hostels
- 2.3.4 Lack of scholarship opportunities
- 2.3.5 No student loans system

2.4 Weak Research Culture

- 2.4.1 Lack of funding for Pakistan lowest research ranking of Pakistani universities
- 2.4.2 Lack of originality
- 2.4.3 Low innovation output

2.5 Lack of Efficient Human Resource

- 2.5.1 Dependency on visiting faculty
- 2.5.2 Lack of teaching training programs
- 2.5.3 Overburdened teachers due to multitasking
- 2.5.4 Brain drain of talent teachers and researchers

3. Remedies of ills of Higher Education

3.1 Introducing modern curriculum

3.1.1 Revise syllabus every year

3.1.2 Engaging subjects experts

3.1.3 Promoting critical thinking skills

3.1.4 Enhancing industry-academia linkage

3.2 Improving infrastructure

3.2.1 Build purpose build campuses

3.2.2 Facilitating modern equipment

3.2.3 Building proper hostels

3.2.4 Solving hygiene issues

3.3 Providing affordable education

3.3.1 Providing affordable fees

3.3.2 Providing student support programs

3.3.3 Providing discount travel cards

3.3.4 Increasing scholarship opportunities

3.4 ~~3.4.1~~ Reviving Research Culture

3.4.1 Provide funding for research projects and publications

3.4.2 Incentives for patents, innovations

and global recognition ^{3.4.3 Innovation hubs and technology parks}

3.5 Hiring and training of efficient human resource

3.5.1 Hiring of permanent faculty instead of visiting

3.5.2 Teaching training Programs

3.5.3 Reducing burden of overburdened teachers

3.5.4 Providing competitive Salaries to reduce brain drain

3.5.5 Regular checking of Permanent faculty.

4. Conclusion

Essay

After the war of independence in 1857, Muslims were politically, economically and socially stagnant. **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan** emerged as a reformer during that time. He believed that Muslims were behind because they were ignorant and they did not have modern education so he laid the foundation of **Aligarh College** which later became **Aligarh University**. From there, emerged a class which was rich in modern sciences and technology. This is how higher education can change the future of a nation. In early 1960s, **Pakistan** was the first country in the Muslim world to launch a space rocket (**Rehbar II**). Renowned Pakistani scientist **Abdul Qadeer** won the Nobel Prize, but now these achievements seems a distant dream. Today, Pakistan's higher education faces numerous challenges such as outdated curriculum, poor

infrastructure, weak research culture, expensive education and lack of efficient human resource. Immediate remedies for these ills are improving curriculum, infra infrastructure, providing affordable education, reviving research culture and hiring of efficient human resource. Without solving these ills, Pakistan can neither become prosperous nor respectable.

The first ill of higher education is outdated curriculum. Most of the time, syllabus taught in universities is outdated. Engineering students are being taught old physics techniques. Languages like C++ or C is being taught which is very outdated. Same goes for medical students. There is no modern equipment on which students can practice. Moreover, curriculum is very teacher centric. Dr. It is the same teacher who teaches, marks or and set up the paper. There is no concept of open book examination. So, students are at the mercy of their teachers who sometimes exploit those privileges. Furthermore, there is a lack of analytical skills. As the saying goes, Universities are the factories of ideas and these ideas lead nation. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, they

without application exists. Even an engineering student cannot solve the wiring problems of ^{its} his own house. Similarly, an English student cannot read, write or speak properly. In addition to this, there is weak industry-academic link. Even the HOD of a business degree seldom do any business of his own. So, a business student finds it difficult to open his new business. A mass communication student finds it difficult to get a placement in a suitable media house. These are the reasons which are a hurdle in higher education of Pakistan.

The second ill of higher education is **poor infrastructure**. Most of the universities lack purpose built campuses. There is no ramps or elevators for disabled students. Fire exits are either missing or not properly maintained. Moreover, there is shortage of modern equipment and research facilities. **In medical school**, a single cadaver is surrounded by multiple students for ~~its~~ inspection while others have to wait for their turn. Similarly in engineering schools, few equipments are shared among large number of students. literature

students do not are unable to borrow books from libraries as only few books are available. Moreover, there is no proper hostels for students. For instance, in April 2023, the rooftop of girls hostel in Bhanuulpur collapsed due to which 2 students were killed and 2 were injured. Furthermore, there are a lot of hygiene issues in universities. Cafes are substandard, washrooms are poor maintained which leads to many health problems. As the saying goes, a healthy body possesses a healthy mind. However, Pakistan spends very little on improving infrastructure. Traditionally Pakistan used to spend 1.5-2.5% of its GDP, but in year 2024-2025, this allocation has dropped to 0.8% which is lower than the UNESCO recommended amount 4-6%. (Economic Survey in Pakistan). Unless, these issues are addressed, Pakistan can not achieve its true aim.

The third ill inflicting Pakistan's higher education is the question of affordability. In the past, government used to support colleges and universities but now the country is facing fiscal deficit so students have to

bear the brunt of it. For instance, the fees of LUMS is Rs 400,000/- per semester while the fees of National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) is Rs. 200,000/- per semester for engineering students and Rs. 250,000/- per semester for sciences and architecture students. Moreover, transport issues make university education more expensive. A student living in Wazir Khan Cantt. cannot live in a hostel so she had to do daily commutes of one hour to go to NUST. So, either she has to take bus or taxi or avail taxi services. Which is very expensive. Moreover, a student living in Karachi or Lahore wants to take admission in National Uni NUST University, Islamabad campus so she will live in hostel which is very expensive. Furthermore, there is a lack of scholarships. HEC (Higher Education Commission) only announce only a handful of scholarship which needs to be increased. Unlike in USA (United States of America) and UK (United Kingdom), there are no student loan programs. As Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Yet in Pakistan, this weapon remains out of reach due to financial burden.

Fourth ill which is effecting higher education of Pakistan is **Weak research culture**. According to **QS Ranking**, no university of Pakistan is among the top 350 due to low impactful research. In contrary to this, Pakistan's regional counterparts China and India China and India, Their universities are consistently ranked in top 200. The second major concern is The lack of originality. Pakistani researchers mostly copy foreign work and thesis is considered as a mean for completing education. degree. Moreover, there is a lack of innovation output. According to **World Intellectual Property Rights**, Pakistan patent filings are only 0.02% which is less as compared to its regional counterparts. If this continues, universities will only produce degree holders.

According to **PIDE**, Pakistan produces **450,000** graduates annually which while **31%** of the educated population remains unemployed. So, we need immediate solution for reviving the weak research culture.

The fifth ill inflicting upon the

higher education of Pakistan is **lack of efficient human resource** not only in the universities but in HEC also.

There is heavy reliance on visiting faculty instead of permanent faculty. because visiting faculty cost less as compared to The permanent faculty. Their experience is not even counted as a formal experience. Moreover, there is a lack of teaching training programs. In developed countries, there is continuous training of teachers. However, in Pakistan, there is no check and balance on the faculty. In addition to this, most of the universities teachers are overburdened because he has to look after his courses, administrative work and to exam give duties of during exams. However the biggest reason is the brain drain of talented teachers and researchers. According to **Federal Bureau of Emigration (2022)**, 250,000 has left Pakistan for better job opportunities. Unless these issues, are addressed, Pakistan's higher education will remain like that.

All these ills : outdated curriculum, poor infrastructure, expensive education, weak research culture and

lack of efficient human resource has pushed Pakistan's higher education into crises. These issues demand immediate remedies.

First comes the remedy for higher education: outdated curriculum. **Modern and updated curriculum should be introduced in our higher education.** Syllabus should be revised and updated every year. The services of subject experts should be taken in this regard. A similar activity has been done in the lower education when the provincial government hired the services of British Council in 2011 by Directorate of Subject Department (DST). Trained Master trainers trained the head of state school who trained the teachers of their schools. The content of the subjects should be updated as per the international requirements. In the past, we took the help of Michael Barber, former educational advisor of former Prime Minister Tony Blair. Similar efforts have been done for 1 class 9th and 11th of Federal Board. Furthermore, we should provide life skills based education for instead of rote teaching cramming based subjects. Skills like problem solving, analytical and critical thinking skills should be introduced and

such skills should be tested in the exam as well. We should take open book exams as well. In addition to this, we should ~~int~~ enhance the industry-academia link. There are some universities in Pakistan like LUMS and IBA where students get placements in the final year, but such things practices should be adopted in every university. So that students can get hands on experience. ~~in the~~ Without introducing modern curriculum Pakistan will continue to lag behind its global counterparts.

The second major Remedy is to allocate sufficient budget to improve infrastructure in higher education. **According to World Bank analysis, countries who invest heavily in higher education see a global rise of 1% in annual GDP growth.** So, Pakistan should invest heavily in it. Pakistan's universities should be equipped with purpose build campuses and HEC should grant affiliation when the universities meet academic and infrastructure requirements. In addition to this, Universities should be equipped with modern laboratories, libraries and research facilities, because meaningful

research cannot be conducted without that. Proper hostel should be build within universities. Hygiene issues should be solved on the priority basis. As Benjamin Franklin once wisely remarked, "Investment in knowledge is the best interest." Without investment in higher education, it will be difficult to achieve the true aims of higher education.

The third major remedy is providing affordable education so that higher studies are within the reach of every capable student without financial burden. To begin with, student support programs should be initiated such as alumni funded initiatives where senior graduates offer financial assistance to struggling students. Similarly, HEC should provide scholarship opportunities to students. Ehsaas Undergraduate Scholarship Programme stands one of its kind in Pakistan. It offer 50,000 scholarship online annually but it needs to be scaled up more. Similarly, government should announce discount travel cards to students. similar in practice with Japan where its government gives commuter cards (gakusei teikiken) to students so they can commute

freely at a very low cost. For instance, in Japan, the remote Kyu-Shiataki station remained opened till 2016 because a single highschool girl used to commute daily from that station which showcases how far countries can go for education. Without making education affordable, we cannot higher education cannot achieve its true aim.

The fourth ill was weak research culture, so Pakistan should invest in reviving its research culture. Firstly, it ~~sho~~ government and HEC should allocate dedicated funding to research publications. Secondly, incentives must be provided for patents and innovation. Researchers who achieve patents or publish their work in a respectable journal should be awarded with grants, promotions or a national award. Thirdly, universities should invest in technological parks and research centres. **NUST Technology Incubation Centre and National Incubation Center (NIC)** are positive beginnings but they need to be scaled up in every university. Without reforming the research culture, Pakistan will continue to produce degree holders.

The fifth and perhaps the most important remedy is the hiring and

training of efficient human resource. At the present, universities heavily rely on visiting faculty because they cost less.

This needs to be changed. There should be ~~visi~~ hiring of permanent faculty. and Moreover, teaching training and development programs should be initiated. **HEC Faculty**

Development Programme is a great beginning, but this needs to be

expanded. Furthermore, the burden of teachers should be reduced so that they can focus more on the research and

teaching. Another pressing matter is the brain drain of teachers. **According to**

HEC, 30% of teachers funded abroad don't come back to Pakistan or migrate again because of better opportunities abroad. Gulf and Middle Eastern countries

offer them competitive salaries so universities should offer them job security along with ^{market} competitive salary. Furthermore, there should be continuous checking on permanent faculty by student reviews, peer reviews and research output.

Such efforts are being done at NUST University and LUMS but it should be expanded across all universities.

So by hiring and training of efficient teachers, Pakistan's higher education

can achieve its true aims.

In a nutshell, the major ills of higher education are outdated curriculum, poor infrastructure, weak research culture, expensive education and lack of efficient human resource. These issues demand immediate remedies in the form of introducing modern curriculum, improving infrastructure, ~~reviv~~ reviving research culture, affordable education and hiring of efficient human resource. A nation can neither become respectable, nor prosperous without investing in higher education. For instance, **Britain** after **World War II** was deprived of its colonies and raw materials, but she emerged as a respectable nation due to excellence in higher education. Even today, majority of the population wants to get a degree from Oxford or Cambridge University. **Cambridge O and A levels** is dominating at the lower education of Pakistan. In contrast, the higher education of Pakistan seems to paint a bleak future; however, it is not true. With the suggested remedies, Pakistan can overcome the neg ills of higher education and reduce its ~~e~~ impacts negative impacts for the future generations. As **Emily**

Dickinson beautifully remarked,
Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tunes without the words

This shows that hope with practical action
can reduce the negative ills of higher
education and can transform Pakistan
as a bee beacon for the world.