

**Endeavours of Higher Education Commission Pakistan Towards Quality Education:  
Policies and Challenges (0088)**

**ENDEAVOURS OF HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION PAKISTAN  
TOWARDS QUALITY EDUCATION: POLICIES AND CHALLENGES**

**PART-1**

**ABSTRACT**

Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan was established in 2002 with a mission to facilitate and gear institutions of higher education to provide quality education vital for socio-economic development of the country. Since its establishment, the number of higher education institutions has increased from 59 to 132 in a span of nine years. From a developmental point of view, qualitative empowerment of higher education is more meaningful than quantitative growth. This paper addresses the questions: how HEC Pakistan has accelerated the higher education towards quality standards of education? What policies have been formulated by HEC to assure quality education at University level? And what challenges HEC has been facing in the implementation of policies and achievement of set goals? Policy documents and review of success stories of HEC encompass staff development, development of research culture in universities, strengthening learning resources and development of infrastructure for sustainable elevation of higher education in Pakistan.

## **PART-11 INTRODUCTION**

The quality in education is a complex, dynamic and multidimensional concept (Mok, 2007). It covers knowledge, skills, and attitudes besides being related to the attainment of goals for education along with an active constructive contribution in society (UNICEF, 2000). In the current technological era, the importance of quality education, particularly higher education cannot be denied. It is a form of capital investment in trained human resource, which ultimately enhances economic growth. Higher education in Pakistan is the post secondary and professional education, pursued in government recognized institutes, which prepare individuals to face the current competitive work environment (Mughal & Manzoor, 1999).

The world has become a global village, interconnected through means of education with higher education being one of its major components for attainment of social, political economic growth and stability (UNESCO, Taskforce on Higher Education, 2000). According to Frazer (1992), quality education is indispensable for higher education because the institutions providing higher education are answerable to students, society and to other institutions. Quality Education in higher education is a complex phenomenon, encompassing all the processes for systematic monitoring and evaluation to develop quality higher education institutions (Kontio, 2008).

Before 2002 there was a funding agency for Higher education known as University Grants Commission (UGC) at the central level. It had no jurisdiction regarding the quality related affairs of higher education. In 2002, Higher Education Commission was established with a thrust to empower higher education in Pakistan by its sustainable development in quantitative as well as qualitative aspects and to facilitate Universities to serve as engines of economic strength and social harmony for the country.

HEC since its establishment has been striving hard for achieving these goals. It seems valuable to review and re-examine the policies related to quality enhancement and to acknowledge the milestones achieved by HEC as success stories. It is also important to highlight challenges faced by HEC along the way to reach marked heights. The study of all these aspects can help HEC to revisit and plan again to reach the road to success.

The following research questions are discussed in this paper.

1. How HEC Pakistan has accelerated the higher education towards quality standards of education?
2. What policies have been formulated by HEC to assure quality education at University level?

3. What challenges HEC has been facing in the implementation of policies and achievement of set goals?

### **POLICIES AND SUCCESS STORIES OF HEC FOR QUALITY EDUCATION:**

Ever since independence, the Government has emphasized the central role of education in the social development of the country in policy documents from Pakistan Education Conference 1947 to National Education Policy 1998-2010 for the development of its citizens.

The five-year programme for reform outlined in the HEC Medium Term Development Framework (MTDF) has been systematically implemented by the HEC, in which Access, Quality and Relevance have been identified as the key challenges faced by the sector (Ali, 2008).

HEC has taken valuable steps to ensure quality for higher education in Pakistan. The formation of Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) in every university and incorporation of plagiarism software assure standard and quality of research. HEC National Digital Library has been setup for scholars and supervisors having access to international scholarly literature (Ameen, 2007).

Faculty development programs, Indigenous and foreign PhD scholarship programs, Post doctoral fellowship programs for university teachers are among the predominant policies of HEC. A total of 5,546 indigenous scholarships were given out locally since 2002-2008 in its four Indigenous Ph.D. scholarship schemes encompassing all disciplines of Science & Technology alongwith Social Sciences & Humanities. Foreign faculty hiring programs have initiated to hire highly qualified faculty from abroad for rendering services in public sector universities of Pakistan (as cited in Ali,2008).

The number of universities and degree awarding institutes has been raised from 59 to 132, along with increase in students' enrolment from 135,000 to 400,000 in the period of 2002-2011 (Bangash, 2011). The total number of Ph.D. thesis went up to 671 in 2009 from 271 in 2002(Aadil, 2010). Five Pakistani universities are ranked among top 600 universities of the world. The number of PhD scholarships have soared from 1500 (2002) to 8000 (2011), the number of PhD scholars similarly has been enhanced from 3321 (1947-2001) to 3658 (2002-2011). The number of accreditation councils have been increased from 7 to 11. HEC has set criteria for journals which were non-existent in the past and now there are 164 approved journals. The research output of Pakistani universities has been raised up to 4650 per year after 2002. 5047 Travel grants have been awarded to university teachers and scholars (Naqvi, 2011).

Research and development activities are a hallmark of HEC, Which has helped the country to become a knowledge economy (Ismail, 2010). The total research publications till 2002 were just a meagre 500 from all over Pakistan-far below that of a single university in Singapore or Hong Kong (Rehman, 2011).

However, in practice, to attain QA is a very challenging phenomenon in developing and less developed countries. The issues of quality have been discussed in the developing and developed Asian countries; also regarding faculty development, research produced curriculum development etc (e.g., Anwar, 1993; Satija 2006; Makiko, 2006; Haider and Mahmood, 2007).

### **OUTLINING FUTURE CHALLENGES:**

Pakistan as a developing country has encountered major challenges in fulfilling the educational needs of its people, particularly in higher education. To meet the demands of quality assurance in higher education is a Global challenge (Ismail, 2010). The decreasing budget for HEC has reduced all research activities resulting in a decline in quality education directly (Rahman, 2011).

The most important issue is the unrealistic implementation of documents and policies from 1947 to 2010. Leaders are not successful in completely wiping out all the threats to the future of the country that has internal and external challenges (Aadil, 2010).

The gap of 11.5 billion between allotted and provided budget in 2009 followed by allocation of 15.7 billion and provision of a meagre 1.5 billion in 2010 due to the havoc created by the floods. Whereas as at the same time a whopping 442 billion defence allocation is an eye opener regarding the prioritization of education against other needs (Committee of Education, 2011).

The scarcity of funding, neglecting development of faculty, lack of political will, poor research environment, population explosion, inconsistencies in administrative policies, political instability are big obstacles in the way of strengthening higher education, the key endeavour of HEC Pakistan, which is currently fighting for its own survival.

The effects of the Global economic recession and shortage of finances have also affected the Higher education sector in Pakistan, with the proposed dissolution of HEC in April, 2011 by the government presents an uncertain future for higher education in Pakistan.

### **SUGGESTIONS:**

Quality in higher Education is a momentous venture, which can only be realized with joint efforts of academic and administrative spheres. The Government should implement the decisions undertaken through policies with true letter and spirit. The institutes imparting higher education must be up to the mark and be able to meet the expectations of the public as well as students. Moreover, Universities who have greatly achieved various benchmarks of quality education should help under developed universities of other provinces to achieve quality education by conducting joint researches and visiting faculty programmes. The goal is to form

strong and powerful higher education system of Pakistan, which is none the less in the world.

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