

Role of Education Planning in Promoting Social Sciences in Pakistan

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Abstract

Social Science disciplines have always been considered the second choice as compared to the hard sciences in the academic institutions of Pakistan. Does this apply to the national education policy as well, where the state intervention is catalytic in setting up the academic choices of the people? This study, by critically reviewing the national education policies and plans, endeavors to address this important question to understand the role of education planning in promoting/demoting social science academic disciplines in Pakistan. Education policy in Pakistan has been predominantly proposed through eight national five-year plans between 1955 and 1998, to primarily focus on increasing the national literacy rate, and promoting hard science education and vocational training. After the creation of Higher Education Commission of Pakistan in 2002, the policy significantly shifted to Higher Education, yet to focus (natural/computer) science, and technology. Social science is at the periphery of the knowledge mission in Pakistan. The paper concludes that even the long-awaited recent quantitative growth of social science disciplines fails to produce significant impact on national education policy that almost unanimously seeks their economic worth, instead of their inherent social value.

Keywords: *Education Policy, Social Sciences, Pakistan, Five-Year Plans, HEC*

1. Introduction

Subcontinent won its independence from Britain, and Pakistan emerged as an independent state in 1947. It inherited the University of Punjab in Lahore and the University of Dhaka, the only degree awarding institutions in the regions that became part of Pakistan. A newly born country with 32.5 million population had to deal with basic structural problems and it took more than five years to build the infrastructure and basic institutional setup to take the country *en route* to modern nation-state (Hoodbhoy, 2009).

When Pakistan got independence, colonization had already destroyed the traditional education systems in subcontinent. Historians may not have witnessed this destruction in material sense in geographical areas belonging to Pakistan, however, abandoning the state support and invalidating the utility and traditional

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education led to its virtual death. Colonial Masters failed to provide an alternate as quickly as destroying the already available education opportunities and in required quantity. Consequences were devastating and remnants of such policies are yet to be neutralized. Pakistan started its journey with a plethora of problems and the illiteracy was mammoth among those. Estimates reveal that almost eighty five percent of the total population dwelling in Pakistan at the time of independence was illiterate. The situation did ameliorate after sixty years but not so optimistically. Statistics from different sources indicate that about 55-60 percent of adult population is considered literate (UNICEF, 2013). whereas these figures for women dropped from 15 to 25 percent, as compared to men (Government of Pakistan, 2013).

The prevailing higher education structure contains a lot of interconnected institutions that add to the complexity of bureaucratic system. There are both federal and provincial governments involved to channelize the higher education under state-controlled policy. The typical centralized institutionalization of higher education began in 1973 by forming Universities Grants Commission (UGC) through an act of parliament. It was established to build an academic coordination among all higher education institutions in Pakistan in the fields of research and teaching for greater national development. It was indeed an effective way of controlling the pedagogical content and implementing the political intent. UGC bureaucratized the administrative units in universities to the extent that academic departments had to seek formal permission from higher authorities even before purchasing the stationery for office use (Parveen, Rashid, Iqbal, & Khan, 2011). Although UGC was replaced by HEC in 2002, which is also a centralized institution, and claims to believe in academic autonomy, yet the departments in universities are not autonomous in administrative and financial matters, and in faculty recruitment decisions.

In 1946-47 (just before the partition), the University of Punjab (the only University in West Pakistan at that time) had 23 academic departments; eleven Natural Sciences, five each of Social Sciences and Languages and one each of Arts and Music. These 23 departments had 147 teachers. Out of them 71 (48%) were associated with 11 departments of Natural Sciences; 47 (32%) with five Social Sciences departments; 19 (14%) with five Language departments; and, 10 (7%) with Arts and Music Departments. These social science departments consisted of Economics, History, Political Science, Geography and Journalism with total number of 14, 12, 11, 8 and 2 teachers, respectively. As reflected in Table 1, out of these 47 teachers, 15 (32%) were PhDs, and most of them got their degrees from the University of London. The only two female teachers were from United Kingdom (Government of Pakistan, 1959).

After the Partition, University of the Punjab was left with only 9 teachers in the fields of social sciences who came to Pakistan. During the next three years, 24 more teachers were recruited. Out of these newly recruited teachers, only three were females, and only four had PhDs.

Table 1

Pre-partition and early post-partition distribution of Social Science Teachers

Year	Total N of Teachers	PhDs	Females	Local	Foreign	Qualification of Head of Departments
1946-47	47	15	2	42	5	4 PhD, 1 MA
1947-50	32	12	3	31	1	2 PhD

Source: Report of the commission on national education (1959)

There was slow but steady expansion in the subsequent years. By 1963, four new universities, 11 new disciplines and 35 departments were established, raising their numbers to 5 (these five universities were University of the Punjab, Sindh University, Jamshoro, University of Karachi, University of Agriculture Faisalabad, and University of Peshawar), 15 (They are: Archaeology, Economics, Education, Geography, History, Home Economics, International Relations, Library Sciences, Mass Communication, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Public Administration/ Business Sciences, Social Work, and Sociology.) and 40, respectively. The growth of social science institutes created 222 teaching vacancies, with an average of five teachers per social science department. It is also worth noting that 62 (27%) out of 222 teachers were PhDs (Government of Pakistan, 1963).

Pakistani universities assign higher value to foreign degrees as compared to local degrees and it is felt that foreign degrees improve the teaching and research capacity of teachers. Out of the 222 of teachers, 114 (51%) had their degrees from foreign universities: 58 PhD (26%), 50 MA/MSc (23%), and 6 BA/BSc (3%). Out of these 58 PhD degrees, 52 (90%) were acquired from Western countries and 6 (10%) from non-western countries. The relatively higher ratio of PhDs from US universities was strikingly different from the pattern that had prevailed before Pakistan gained independence from Britain in 1947. However, out of 52 PhDs obtained from universities of the Western countries, the universities in UK and US taken together conferred 81% (42) of them (ibid).

1.1 Objectives of Study

This study undertakes the following objectives:

1. To analyze the national education policies to understand the role of education planning in the promotion of social science in Pakistan

2. To recognize the role of HEC in the advancement of social science in Pakistan

2. Literature Review

In Pakistan, flawed and overoptimistic education policies led to the deteriorated the state of education system in general, and to the miserable state of social science, in particular. A brief sketch of these policies is given below.

2.1 First National Education Conference

One of the first endeavors to devise a National Education Plan was the National Education Conference in 1947. It focused principally on primary education for children and adults, and set the goal to make the adult population literate within the next 25 years. It is important to note that the committee on national education in 1947 suggested that the Urdu would be the medium of instructions, and would be taught as compulsory language in schools. Also, worth noting that Pakistan is a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic society, and people communicate with each other in different regional languages including Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi, Saraiki to name a few. Unfortunately, to follow the path of becoming a nation-state, rulers and policy makers deliberately ignored the regional differences and forced significant majorities to accept a universal, homogenized culture of power Elite. Such illicit tactics ultimately resulted in the further divide of East and West Pakistan into two independent states in 1971. Yet those ignorant masters continued their policies to prepare *imagined communities* to be forced into a nation-state that could be better governed (Bengali, 1999).

The committee also suggested to make contacts with other countries to request them to establish their institutional setups with student exchange programs. Such provisions paved the way for foreign organizations, universities and funding agencies to initiate their projects in Pakistan. Nonetheless, the committee did not explain the mechanism of implementing policies at different levels of education, especially for higher education. Not being so clear in its objectives and the means to achieve those goals, it failed to produce the desired results. Literacy rate in 1951 went down (from 16.4 percent to 16.3 percent), though 0.1 percent, yet it was significant to demonstrate that the policy is counterproductive (*ibid*).

From 1955 onwards, education policies heavily relied on five-year development plans modelled on American economic policy, prepared by government of Pakistan on recommendations of foreign economic experts.

2.2 Five-Year Development Plans and Education Planning

The first five-year education plan (1955-60) focused its attention on social and economic development of country and education was considered one of the means to achieve this objective and a considerable importance was given to

higher education (Pakistan, 1957, p. 564). This five-year plan asserted the coordination and integration of higher education institutions to encourage the development of high standards through cooperation instead of wasteful competition, and quasi-freedom from authoritative government bodies to promote the general spirit of scholarship and research. And to be part of the developed world, technical and scientific (natural sciences) education was considered indispensable. Nonetheless, social sciences, though not as rigorously as natural sciences, too were considered important.

Indeed, the first five-year plan was significantly concerned with the growth of social science. It counted economics, political science, sociology and cultural anthropology as social science and proposed to establish a Council of Social Science Research (CSSR) that should take into account the collection of quantitative information in social sectors, i.e. the size, composition, distribution and rate of growth of the population, the economic stats of families, villages, provinces and the nation; the patterns of life and organization of families and villages; experiences in various forms of local government; pattern of employment and vocational skill, etc. The plan expressed the worries about the paucity of skilled and trained researchers and lack of course materials to prepare future generations of sociologists and cultural anthropologists. Seminars on research methods, developing various research projects in social sector, and providing financial support to prepare individual researchers were proposed as solutions. One of the interesting suggestions to promote social science research in Pakistan was to depoliticize the Council of Social Science Research. The first five-year education plan went even further to propose the inclusion of social science course for the engineers (p. 586).

The optimistic and fairly balanced approach toward social sciences in a policy document required reasonable resources and serious dedication to meet those objectives. Ironically, the allocation of marginal financial resources witnesses the potential failure of such schemes to promote social science in Pakistan, even before those projects were initiated. Only 0.08 percent (\$109,200) of the total education budget was allocated for the creation and promotion of Council of social science research for the next five years.

The Second five-year plan (1960-65) aimed to produce leaders in all fields of life. It was asserted that in a highly competitive world, a newly born country like Pakistan felt a dire need of promoting postgraduate technical education. The Plan emphasized the promotion and institutionalization of technical education and vocational training. Social sciences were marginalized in this plan as compared to first five-year plan. No new institutes were proposed for

social sciences, and focus of the attention started to shift around technical education and the disciplines of hard sciences (Pakistan, 1960).

In the Third Five Year Plan (1965-70) one of the major objectives was to focus on education quality of hard science disciplines, like biology, physics and chemistry. It was very unfortunate that in a thirty-page document describing the next five-year education plan for Pakistan, the word *technical* was repeated 24 times as compared to the term *social science* which was mentioned only once in an arbitrary context (Pakistan, 1967).

The Fourth five-year plan (1970-75) unambiguously expressed its intentions which were not so conspicuous in the previous education plans to follow the education models of developed countries, and take into consideration only those disciplines which could yield the economic growth. Identical to third five-year plan, social sciences were not even mentioned in this plan (Pakistan, 1970). This was a major shift in the aims and objectives of education; from social obligation to economic indispensability and social progress by promoting hard sciences. Economic development was more focused to meet the requirements of “*technologically-advancing world*” (p. 146).

The Fifth Plan (1978-83) aimed to focus on primary education. However, not a single word was written on social science education. Education in primary schools (5 years of education), teaching through the medium of national and regional languages, has always been free in Pakistan. In 1972, education at secondary level (11-12 years of education) was also made free. This plan, prepared under Zia regime, with a delay of three years due to overthrow of democratic government, aggressively pointed out the shortcomings of the previous plans and evaluated the quality of educational institutions’ products by comparing them with international standards, especially in higher education. One of its yardsticks to measure the quality of students was their proficiency in English, which was the medium of instruction in higher education. The plan radically proposed to scrutinize the best students, and lamented on the absence of some scientific procedure in the selection of students. In other words, since the available resources were limited, so the access to higher education should also be made available only to those selected through certain scientific criteria. Such policies led to nepotism and corruption, and consequently adversely affected the Higher Education in Pakistan.

The Sixth Plan (1983-88) was to promote the Private Sector, which was assumed to be liberated through *quantum leap and technology development* with the help of an allocation of US 70 Million for the opening of private schools, colleges and universities. This decision was very vital in determining the future route of class division in society through English Medium Education (private)

and Urdu Medium Education (public) systems. Outcome of private sector institutions was, considered a valuable product as compared to Urdu Medium. In this way, a minority class (possessing resources to bear the cost of private education) was prepared to reach to the center, and Urdu medium majority remained at the periphery of the Education system. Natural sciences, being valuable disciplines, were fed with the best of the brains, whereas, social sciences and humanities enrolled the rest of those who could compete for natural science disciplines. This plan, like its predecessors, endorsed the importance of the teaching of science and technology. Interestingly, 110 Million US dollars were allocated only for science and technology sector, and not a single penny was made available for the promotion of social science education.

The seventh five-year plan (1988-93) focused its attention to improve the literacy level, and primary education (5-years) made available to all in the country with a remedial plan to prepare them for job market through ‘vocational and technical education’. Policy makers took a U-turn and endeavored to improve the literacy rate and promote the technical education, but at the cost of higher and professional education. Once again, private sector education was promoted with the assumption that it will improve the quality of education through competition between public and private sectors. To improve higher education, new administrators with management capabilities for universities were proposed. This decision was, indeed, not intended to serve the said purpose. Rather, to take the universities under direct control of government through bureaucracy.

The Eighth five-year plan (1993-98) was fundamentally identical to the seventh plan. Ironically, this report pointed out budget deficit for universities as one of the causes of their miserable conditions, yet its proposed budget for Higher education was even lower than what was proposed in the seventh five-year education plan (from 8.6% to 5.94%). One of the plan’s suggestions was to shut down economically unproductive university departments (mostly the social science and humanities disciplines) and their resources be made available to other departments.

2.3 HEC and Social Sciences

Pakistan’s national education policy has always been focusing primary (first five years) and secondary education (6-12 years) to increase the national literacy rate until the end of 20th century. Overall share for education in the annual national budget has never been more than three percent, and in the education budget, share for higher education has always remained 10-15 percent under University Grants Commission (UGC) that controlled the higher education until 2002 (Shami & Hussain, 2006). Repeated attempts to reform education

system in Pakistan during second half of the 20th century have been termed as *failed attempts* in terms of achievement of defined goals even to an ostensible level (Boston Group, 2001). After the creation of HEC in 2002, it was hoped that with the help of USAID's support that began in 2003-04 (Academy for Educational Development, 2008), many of the higher education challenges would be met with the increase in budget and many structural changes to meet several international academic standards, such as updating university infrastructure, use of information technology, purchasing digital resources for researchers, producing and hiring PhD faculty etc. As a result of the changes introduced by HEC, a spontaneous quantitative boost in academic activities of Pakistani universities is witnessed through various indicators. For example, increase in number of universities from 106 to 147 with regional campuses throughout Pakistan from 168 to 258; increase in number of students from 333,000 to more than a million; increase in female students from 36 percent to 46 percent; increase in overseas PhD scholars from few hundreds to over six thousand; universities now have 26 percent PhD faculty etc. (HEC, 2013). This general approach to higher education, however, was heavily tilted towards the development of science and technology from day one.

When HEC began to reform higher education policy and infrastructure in Pakistan, two important themes were clearly stated in its mission statement: (i) internationalization of higher education by following the models from the developed world; and, (ii) using higher education as vehicle to knowledge economy. The first Chairman of HEC was ardent to change the fate of the country with the development of knowledge economy by promoting certain disciplines. Being himself a physicist, he was of the view that all the good that humanity is enjoying today is due to the advancement in science and technology:

...in the science laboratories in the West, and their transformation into new products or processes which have flooded world markets, thereby showering vast economic rewards on those nations which have had the courage and vision to make science and technology the cornerstone of their respective development programs. (HEC, 2003, p. 5)

And he continued to enthusiastically define the path which Pakistan could follow to reach the same destination:

It is imperative that we invest massively in education, particularly in basic and applied sciences, in order to shrug off their paralytic dependence on the West for meeting all their needs (ibid, p. 5).

His vision for nation-building using science and technology was an exact reflection of the academic imperialism that was imported to Pakistan during 1950s and 1960s. The only difference lies in the strategies to achieve that vision.

While commenting on the progress of HEC academic programs, Executive Vice President of Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) is of the view that the “current policy does not focus enough on the Pakistani people’s most pressing concerns or aspirations” (Cohen, 2007, p. vii). And more importantly, social sciences as systematic and consorted effort have been once again largely underscored at the expense of natural & computer sciences, and technological education. For example, in 2011-12, HEC provided funds for only four percent of the research projects concerning social sciences, whereas rest of the funding was for natural science projects (Mirza, 2015). Similarly, by June 2013 as shown in Table 2, out of 2895 PhDs trained in foreign countries through HEC scholarships, only 263 (9.08%) were from social science disciplines (HEC, 2013). It is also interesting to note that during the current phase of Pak-US relationships, America is far less involved in directly training the scholars at its homeland as compared to other European countries. Yet its hegemonic academic influence is visible in the academic policies and infrastructure development schemes of HEC (for example, Annual reports of HEC during 2002-13).

Table 2.3

Country/Discipline Wise overseas PhD scholars proceeded till June 2013

S.N	Country	Discipline							Total
		Engineering & Technology	Physical Sciences	Biological & Medical Sciences	Agriculture & Veterinary Sciences	Social Sciences	Business Education	Arts & Humanities	
1	France	167	154	87	82	50	52	12	604
2	Netherlands	40	68	26	48	22	15	3	222
3	Austria	74	190	63	17	27	13	3	387
4	Germany	169	135	70	52	33	7	7	473
5	New Zealand	40	45	11	14	18	18	13	159
6	China	65	26	26	25	7	6	2	157
7	Sweden	76	74	27	15			1	193
8	Australia	4		10	12	10	5	2	43
9	Canada	3	2		2	1	1		9
10	UK	39	30	50	27	54	19	10	229
11	USA	18	3			10	2		33
12	Norway	15	22	4	2	9	2		54
13	South Korea	76	15	22		5	3		121
14	Italy	79	21		1				101
15	Thailand	29	14	2	4	15	8		72
16	Turkey	21	1	9	1	2	2	1	37

17	Malaysia	1							1
	Total	916	800	407	302	263	153	54	289 5

Source: HEC annual report 2012-13

As for as the production of knowledge is concerned, between 2002 and 2010, scholars in social sciences produced less than 150 research papers as compared to more than 3600 produced by natural sciences scholars in HEC recognized peer reviewed journals (Mirza, 2015). It has not been until very recently that HEC is planning to establish an active Social Science Research Council (SSRC) with the aim of motivating the potential researchers to be part of international knowledge economy (Imran, 2015). This reflects that once again national education policy has failed to institutionalize its policy structure for the promotion of social sciences. Even few of the suggested books are older than the existence of the discipline itself in Pakistan. Although a considerable quantitative progress has been visible through an increase in number of Social Science departments and enrolled students since the creation of HEC, yet the significant issues to promote the culture of genuine knowledge production has not been addressed.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Educational reforms in Pakistan have continuously been regarded as exaggerated ambitions of lackadaisical planning. Apart from some efforts, which were made to amend constitutions of 1956, 1962 and 1973 by military dictators in 1958, 1969, 1977 and October 1999 to extend their respective reigns, no serious and practical steps were taken to revitalize the public policy for the sake of public in almost every aspect of life. Even if any such effort was made, the consequences and outcomes were even more devastating for the public than the benefits gained by the power elite. For example, many reforms were introduced in the sectors like agriculture by distributing the land into the poor peasants in 1973, by nationalizing the private sector in 1973, by introducing local bodies' administration at district level in 1962 and in 2000, by industrial and economic act to protect the rights of laborers in 1972, and recently by establishing HEC in 2003 to boost the productivity in higher education (See, for example, Alavi, 1976 on land reforms; Khan & Bhatti, 2006 on nationalizing the industrial and finance sector; Cheema, Khwaja, & Qadir, 2006 on local government reforms). The evaluation reports of such efforts that were often prepared under state patronage have always portrayed what contradicts the ground realities and third-party observations by concluding that *all is well*.

Right from 1947, the history of education in Pakistan dependently followed the models of American institutions such as Massachusetts Institute of

Technology. Even when the very first education policy was revised in 1959 under the title of NCE's educational reforms, most of the policy on higher and technical education heavily relied on Pakistan-U.S. alliance due to SEATO and CENTO agreements. Universities carried on the legacy of Colonial infrastructure to perform specific objectives defined by the power elite. The higher learning was institutionalized to serve more the political goals of power elite than to the public. Pedagogical models were directly imported from US with the assumption that they are equally applicable to Pakistani students for the rapid growth of human capital.

After the NCE reforms, several education Policies in 1970, 1972, 1979, 1992 and 1998 were suggested. Every one of these policies set almost unachievable targets, and due to lack of political will, less than two percent of budget allocations, and high corruption rates, every education policy eventually failed. Yet these policies were persistently renewed and followed by non-technical political figures, without sound planning. Some exacerbated the scenario by acclaiming that more higher education institutions should be established when it was palpable that the existing ones were not operative (Pakistan, 1972, p. 13). These education policies were not the only misleading efforts, Pakistani state endeavored to supplement these with several five-year development plans.

Although these education policies and five-year plans have consistently vouched for socioeconomic development of the country, but ironically, none of the education policies or five-year plans, except the first one, discussed or highlighted the importance of social sciences and the training of social researchers, as vigorously as technical and natural science disciplines. Focus of the debate had been technical, scientific (the word scientific education was only intended for hard sciences), medical or technological education. Few of the public policy glitches that were the permanent features were:

- 1) Insufficient resources and library facilities;
- 2) Obsolete content and syllabus;
- 3) Quantitative growth frequently compromised the quality of teaching and research; and,
- 4) Social science subjects have never been the priority.

After highlighting such failings, each policy always reflected the determinism for the future education to specify that all such anomalies would vanish by following the recommendations of current policy. However, after more than sixty years of policy formulation under state patronage the present situation does not reflect any different consequences: Pakistan spent 2.9%, 2.7% and 2.4%, of its GDP on education in 2008, 2009 and 2010, respectively (Trading

Economics, 2013). The Pakistan Economic Survey 2011-12 (Ministry of Finance, 2012) somberly concluded:

“To achieve the goals of providing higher quality education and expanding the coverage of educational services, more resources will need to be allocated to providing training and high quality facilities”
(p. 149).

Recently, a collective intellectual conscience has begun to form a consensus in Pakistan on the depressing state of social sciences and against the apathetic behavior of state (See, for example, Sabir & Sabir, 2010; Inayatullah & Tahir, 2005; Zaidi, 2002; Waseem, 2001). After the creation of HEC, a significant improvement in the quantitative production of social scientists is marked. However, concerns are expressed over the improvement of quality, which is yet to take off the ultimate goal of knowledge production and scholasticism.

Conclusively, Education policy in Pakistan failed to address social sciences for their epistemic value, and has always been interested in capitalizing on financial worth of the academic departments. There are many factors which can be highlighted in education planning that contributed to the marginalized position of social sciences in Pakistan. Few of the noticeable are:

1. Unbalanced treatment of social and natural sciences by state policies that have created a hostile attitude of bright students towards social science disciplines for their low social and economic standing in society.
2. Higher emphasis on rote-memorizing, fixed curriculum, educational grading, structured and centralized pedagogical planning leaves little space for productivity and creativity in the learning environment of under-graduates.
3. Despite several promises to implement native languages as medium of education, English is continued as primary language of the curriculum, especially in higher education, which hinders the creativity of most of the students who come from public education system, and are not well versed in English to express themselves.
4. As English is preferred by the state over regional languages for education, so is the curriculum. Textbooks are imported from Western countries, which have little relevance to the sociocultural and political realities of Pakistan.
5. Social sciences have always been taught from Western perspectives and ideological views that have only produced an imitative behavior among Pakistani social scientists.

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