

Strategic Change and Organizational Reforms: Case of a Pakistani University

*₁ Sania Zahra Malik

Email: saniazmalik@ibapu.edu.pk

Change has become a wide-spread and rapid phenomenon in the present organizational context. Managers, therefore, need to understand the process of change and factors that are associated with its success and failure. Change, whether it is incremental or transformational, requires an organization to define and clarify strategic direction. Thus, the strategy of an organization plays the most important role in guiding the process of change. This paper explores the process of change from a strategic perspective. It integrates the literature on corporate strategy and the entrepreneurial paradigms of public service management. Burgelman's (1983) concept of autonomous strategic behaviour is employed to analyse the change process in a public sector university of Pakistan. The higher education sector in Pakistan went through a significant reform process in the previous two decades. One of the strategic educational reforms included introduction of compulsory and standardized admission tests conducted by the National Testing Service. However, universities had the choice to formulate their own admission policies. This change initiative was met with a considerable opposition and universities were reluctant to adopt the new system of admissions. This study proposes that success of change initiatives is associated with the Burgelman's concept of autonomous strategic behaviour. The three components of Burgelman's concept are Top Management Support, Entrepreneurial Organizational Spirit and Project Champion. A qualitative study was conducted to analyse the change process and confirm the applicability of Burgelman's concept. Interviews were conducted with key organizational members related to the process of developing and setting the admissions criteria. Archival data and published documents were also consulted for in-depth analysis. The study finds significant evidence of the presence of the three components of Burgelman's concept and confirms that it is significantly related to successful change initiatives.

Keywords: *strategic change, organizational reform, top management support, Burgelman's concept*

*₁ Sania Zahra Malik (Assistant Professor, Institute of Business Administration, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan)

Introduction

There have been several changes in the environment and context of the government that created an indispensable need for the administrative machinery to operate in a more efficient and responsive manner. Organizations, both corporate and public, are required to show more concern for their customers. Then, the Japanese have inspired the world by their quality paradigms and quality is required in all the processes, as well as the outputs of an organization. Therefore, the processes should be geared towards minimizing waste and errors, leading to more efficiency and effectiveness. The spread of information through internet and other information technology, now allows people to possess information that was at times only accessible to a very few. The human rights and feminist

movements have made people aware of their fundamental rights. The increase in competition as a result of globalization has made the markets high in risk and more volatile. (Caiden, 1980 ; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Robbins & Coulter, 2005; Robbins & Judge, 2007).

Change has become a rapid and widespread phenomenon in all types of organizations. Organizations that remain stagnant quickly become irrelevant and obsolete for their clients (Beerl, 2009). This creates a requirement for proactive reforms and restructuring in both public and private sector. Within the public sector, new paradigms and models of public management have been evolving (J. V. Denhardt & Denhardt, 2007) which have been steering the orientation of public management towards a more client centered and performance

based approach. Within the public sector, higher education institutions and public universities have been undergoing a reform process in response to the changing demands of market mechanisms and client expectations (Dill, 1997). Reform initiatives are not limited to any particular type of cultures, countries or economies. We find abundant reports discussing reforms in diverse parts of the world, such as the Americas, South East Asia, Asia and Europe (Clark, 1998; Dai, 2006; Dill & Sporn, 1995; Mok, 2000). In this context, the higher education sector in Pakistan has also been going through a reform process initiated as a reform agenda in the first decade of this Millennium.

The process of reform is based on strategic direction of an institution. Strategy plays the pivotal role in defining the orientation of an organization towards a purpose or end-state (Tichy, 1983). Therefore, it is important to understand the strategic dimensions of reform initiatives in public management. This paper employs literature from two distinct fields of public management and strategy to create this understanding. Burgelman's model of strategic behavior (Burgelman, 1983b) was applied to analyze the change and reform initiatives in one area of higher education in public sector, i.e. admissions process.

As the world is turning into a global village, where the boundaries are only geographical, a need has been felt for standardization of all products and services in order to ensure uniformity. The need for uniformity has been most pronounced when it comes to recruitment in educational institutions. Standardized aptitude tests are considered a useful tool for admission to undergraduate and post graduate educational programs all over the world. Aptitude has been defined as the potential of a person to be able to exhibit a trait or behavior (Gay, 1991). It is very important to assess the aptitude of a person for its suitability towards a particular profession. Research reveals that a person cannot be appropriate for all types of profession. For every given person, there is a category of professions that could be synchronized with its abilities and aptitudes (Robbins & Coulter, 2005). Similarly, academic performance is also related with aptitude of a student (Eskew & Faley, 1998).

For the aforementioned reasons, it is essential

for the guardians of learning and education, to allow only those suitable candidates to their altars of learning, who would be able to deliver satisfactorily in that profession or area of expertise. It is beneficial to the educational institution, to the learner and also to the prospective industry, in which the learner is likely to work after the completion of its education. If aptitude for learning does not exist in a person, the gap between what is taught and what is learnt shall be large. Therefore, in order to improve the effectiveness of learning, educational institutions must induct appropriate candidates to their programs.

Admission reforms in higher education in Pakistan: Background

In Pakistan, however, the process of admission had been restricted to the traditional methods for a long time. The World Bank Report (1991, p. 24) states that "the external examinations are the sole means of evaluating student performance for both certification and selection purposes." It was not before the early 90's that the importance of aptitude testing started getting recognized by Pakistani educational institutions (The World Bank Report, 1991, 1992). A few institutions required its candidates to appear in aptitude tests for assessing their eligibility for admission. These tests were designed and administered internally by those institutions. As stated by a former Chairperson of Punjab University Admissions Committee, this led to a number of problems and issues, especially on part of the students applying to more than one institution at a time. Such students had to appear separately in tests for each of these institutions, had to prepare accordingly for each test, and had to pay the cost of these tests for each appearance separately. This resulted in a replication of efforts and wastage of resources of time and money.

The need for admission reform has been recognized at a number of places. It was mentioned in The World Bank Report (1992, pp. 14-15) that "the high level of student dissatisfaction and unrest is due to the mismatch between entry criteria and study programs and to the frustration and lack of genuine interest and intellectual challenges that results from this mismatch." To counter this problem, the report suggests that there should be a

national testing service in Pakistan. Later on, standardized testing was proposed in The National Education Policy (1998, p. 77), in which it was mentioned that “it is necessary to introduce standardized entrance examination for entry to the higher education which test the intelligence, aptitude and ability of the prospective candidate before admission into universities is allowed”. Ultimately, it culminated in the development of a standardized testing service, whereby, the candidates could get an evaluation that could be used uniformly for a specific field of study in all types of educational institutions. This latent need was materialized through the establishment of National Testing Service of Pakistan in 2002.

The Present Study

Simultaneously, universities responded to the need for aptitude testing in their own strategic way. This study particularly explores the case of one of the largest public sector universities of Pakistan and evaluates the strategic integration of aptitude testing with the admission processes. In order to understand the admission reform process, Burgelman’s “Model of interaction of strategic behavior, corporate context and the concept of strategy” (Burgelman, 1983b) has been employed. In addition to analyzing the situation through Burgelman’s Model, an explanation of the process of change is constructed, in which the influence of institutional and operational factors is taken into account and Burgelman’s Model is placed within this process of change.

The Burgelman’s Model

This study conceptualizes the reform process in admissions to higher education by taking the case of one large-scale public sector university. We propose that the perceived lack of validity of admission criteria by organizational actors in predicting performance during the program and in professions later on leads to development of a new strategy for admissions to the university. This strategic behavior is similar to Burgelman’s (1983a) Autonomous Strategic Behavior. According to Burgelman, when new ventures are launched by an organization, a predefined structure is not present to support the execution of the new strategy. The entrepreneurial spirit of organizational actors anticipates the

environmental demands which leads to development of projects that would be most suited to the context at that time. In the context of a structural reform, such as the university admission process, if a strong autonomous strategic behavior is present, the reform efforts shall be successful; otherwise the change shall only be of incremental nature. The integration of an aptitude test with the university admissions process has been assessed through this type of strategic behavior, and the reform process has been discussed in the light of New Public Management.

Burgelman’s model is a conceptualization of the process of strategy formulation and the corresponding structures in the large, complex corporate organizations. Although, his study is based on strategy and structure of “corporate” organizations, it can be applied to public sector organizations as they are also moving towards a market-oriented approach. Under the New Public Management paradigm, the public sector is expected to be result oriented, customer responsive and entrepreneurial. (J. V. Denhardt & Denhardt, 2007; R. B. Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000; Lan & Rosenbloom, 1992; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Rosenbloom & Kravchuk, 2002). Jones (2006) has also employed the Burgelman’s model to analyze strategic reform in French public sector of governmental ministries (Kearney, Feldman, & Scavo, 2000).

Burgelman (1983b) has also proposed the direction of relationship between strategy and structure. The two opposing questions of “strategy follows structure” or “structure follows strategy” have been clarified and integrated. He has concluded that when an organization is functioning on an on going strategy, the required behavior is going to be induced by the prevalent organizational structure, and in that the organizational members, especially the top level management uses the structure to induce strategy, whereby the functional managers formulate strategy according to the structure induced upon them. This is the situation where “strategy follows structure”. However environmental context, at a number of occasions, leads to entrepreneurial behavior. In such a situation, new ventures are undertaken by the organization; ventures that are altogether new to the organization’s previous operations. This type of situation requires self-

direction on part of organizational actors; which leads to autonomous strategic behavior. Because the new venture is a unique one for the organization, structure does not exist for implementing the strategy. Therefore, in such a situation, when strategy is formulated, the structure follows subsequently. Thus, “structure follows strategy”.

Burgelman’s “Autonomous Strategic Behavior” is defined as those strategic actions whereby the action is not according to the current strategy of the organization. If we look at the integration of NTS admissions test with the admission process of the under discussion University, it appears quite identical to the situation of Internal Corporate Ventures (ICV) (Fast, 1979), where, according to Burgelman, the case of “Structure follows strategy” holds. From the preliminary review, it seems that there was not any structure available to an aptitude test for admission process. Therefore, there must have been some kind of autonomous strategic actions from organizational actors to create a structure for this strategic change.

When entrepreneurial organizational actors foresee an environmental context, they develop a strategy to counter that contextual requirement. Autonomous strategic behavior drives the organization towards new ventures by providing them new concepts of the anticipated strategy.

According to Jones (2006), the presence of a project champion is a defining factor in determining autonomous strategic behavior. In addition to that, top management support and entrepreneurial organizational spirit are essential elements for such an environment.

For success of any reforms, it is also important to have appropriate attitude of those people who are responsible for implementing the reform strategies. Kearney et al. (2000) report results of a national survey of city managers on attitudes towards and actions taken to implement principles of strategic reform for reinventing governmental processes. A large majority of managers supported key principles of reinvention and a smaller proportion of managers took actions to recommend adoption of reinvention programs in their budget proposals to council. Managers' action-taking was influenced by certain characteristics of city managers, their communities,

and their governments, including manager’s attitudes and experiences, slack resources, and region. With relevance to the admission reform, this concept is applicable to the top and middle level managers of the university.

The public administration paradigms

The establishment of Higher Education Commission was part of a comprehensive reform agenda of the Pakistani government for the 21st century. Based upon the new approaches towards administration, the government institutions have been geared towards being responsive, customer friendly and efficient. The public sector organizations are expected to reduce wastages and maximize customer/client satisfaction. The process of administrative reform has gone through an extensive process of discussion, definition, reinvention and evaluation from traditional public administration to the New Public Management (Rosenbloom & Kravchuk, 2002), Reinventing Government (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992) and The New Public Service (R. B. Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000).

We see, in all recent literature and in major reform actions also that there has been paradigmatic shift in the theoretical foundations of public administration. Behind all this epistemological evolution and development, there have been a number of management and social science paradigms. There has been a consistent shift from traditional management towards the New Public Management, at the heart of which lie market theories of organizations.

This theoretical shift has been discussed in an editorial by Lan and Rosenbloom (1992) in which they have discussed that public administration is in a phase of transition as the approach towards it has become market based. They have predicted the changes that can be expected in various dimensions of public administration as this function becomes more market based and the way it can change the conceptions that are held ideal today but shall be subject to question in the future. The underlying principle in all the changes is that the government will need to be market-oriented. Later on, a more refined model of this new perspective of public administration, based on this market based approach,

was presented as the New Public Management. Rosenbloom and Kravchuk (2002) compare traditional management with new public management on seven dimensions and present their differences.

It is evident that customer rather than the individual lies at the center of this concept. Secondly, public administrative system should take the shape of a corporate firm and concepts of market-driven and performance-based are applied to it. NPM has met a lot of criticism as well as acclamation. Lynn (1998) has discussed the fundamental advantages and strengths of NPM, and has suggested the means of application. The author points out that if the academic admirers can avoid the trap of becoming a

cult of programmed believers, the New Public Management (NPM) can have three constructive legacies for the field of public administration:

- 1) the system should become performance-oriented, people as well as projects are rewarded for their results and effectiveness
- 2) there should be the development of an international perspective and comparison between the state design and administrative perspective
- 3) the study of administrative science should integrate knowledge of various related disciplines of economics, sociological, social-psychological, and other advanced conceptual models to develop a stronger base for theory-grounded practice.

Table 1: Comparison of Traditional and New Public Management

Characteristic	Perspectives	
	Traditional Management	NPM
Values	Economy, efficiency, effectiveness	Cost-effectiveness, responsiveness to customers
Organizational structure	Ideal-typical bureaucracy	Competitive, firm like
View of individual	Impersonal case, rational actor	Customer
Cognitive approach	Rational-scientific	Theory, observation, measurement, experimentation
Budgeting	Rational (cost benefit)	Performance based, market driven
Decision making	Rational- comprehensive	Decentralized, cost-minimizing
Governmental function characterized by:	Execution	Execution

Parallel to the debate on new public management, another work on reforms (Reinventing government by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler) was published in 1991 and given quite some recognition in public administration circles. It made the basis of the Clinton's National Performance Review, 1993, and is heavily quoted in all public administration literature. Osborne's (1993) article on reinventing government has a citation of 10275 on google scholar.

They assert that the bureaucratic institutions – both public and private – that were developed in the industrial era are not appropriate of the present times. There are several environmental that call for the government to rebuild their structures and process that can guarantee better services for the same tax dollars. The government has to take an “entrepreneurial” spirit. But by saying this, it does not mean that the government can be run like a business; there are several dissimilarities between the government and the business, thus, difference in their management. However, entrepreneurship cannot be practiced only in corporate way. Practicing the market based approach does not mean that the government shall be transformed into a market altogether.

Integrating the concepts of NPM and reinventing government, another paradigm of public management termed as The New Public Service was conceptualized (R. B. Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000). The authors argue that NPM has championed a vision of public managers as the entrepreneurs of a new, leaner, and increasingly privatized government, replicating not only the practices but also the values of business, which may not serve the purpose as the government can never be turned into a business. The propose that government should be geared towards serving the community and citizens, and not steering maximum profits. Thus, the new public service is based on three elements which are democratic citizenship, community and civil society, and organizational humanism and discourse theory.

There are several similarities between NPM and entrepreneurial government movement. Both were initiated on the premises to change the bureaucratic system of management. Both required the government to improve efficiency and

responsiveness, and focused to improve the satisfaction of public by providing them better services for the same tax dollars. Although the NPM is stronger in its epistemological development, the Entrepreneurial Government Movement suggests more radical practical implications (Frederickson, 1996). However, both the approaches view the public as *outsiders*. In that respect, the New Public Service model is quite a viable alternative to the New Public Management and the Entrepreneurial Government Movement. It has all the essential and important characteristics of the two formal approaches, but improves on them from the perspective of the citizens. In NPM, the public is considered as “customers”, and the Entrepreneurial Government Movement takes them as “clients”. NPS on the other hand values as “citizens” who own the government. The public servants are facilitators of the relationship between the government and citizens, and that the citizens can also play an important role in the effective management of the administrative machinery. It is an alternative that has been built on the basis of theoretical explorations and practical innovations. Decades ago, Herbert Kaufman (1956) suggested that while administrative institutions are organized and operated in pursuit of different values at different times, during the period in which one idea is dominant, others are never totally neglected. Building on this idea, it makes sense to think of one normative model as prevailing at any point in time, with the other (or others) playing a somewhat lesser role *within* the context of the prevailing view. Currently, the New Public Management and its surrogates have been established as the dominant paradigm in the field of governance and public administration. Certainly a concern for democratic citizenship and the public interest has not been fully lost, but rather has been subordinated. However, in a democratic society, a concern for democratic values should be paramount in the way we think about systems of governance. Values such as efficiency and productivity should not be lost, but should be placed in the larger context of democracy, community, and the public interest. In terms of the normative models, the New Public Service provides a framework *within which* other valuable techniques and values, such as the best ideas of the old public administration or the New Public Management, might be played out. We employ these public administration paradigms in

combination with Burgelman's theorizing of strategic reform to understand the underlying processes behind the reform initiatives of admission tests in the university.

The higher education context

Quality in education is a key concern for development of a knowledge based society. To achieve the objective, Higher Education Commission of Pakistan was established in 2002. The purpose was to bring a paradigm change in the perspective towards higher education. The aim of this commission was to bring the Pakistani higher education institutions at an equal level with the internationally acclaimed institutions of the world with respect to education, research and development.

The mission statement of HEC states, "The Higher Education Commission will facilitate institutions of Higher Learning to serve as Engines for the Socio-Economic Development of Pakistan" ("HEC Pakistan website,")

Higher Education Reforms

As stated earlier, HEC had been established in order to improve the state of higher education institutions in the country. It is evident that the reform agenda for higher education has been developed under the philosophy of New Public Management and Entrepreneurial Government Movement.

The need for a standardized and uniform testing service was a long standing requirement of the educational sector. Many policy documents outline the strategic plan for developing such a body in Pakistan. World Bank Report (1991) states that improvements in education sector can be accelerated by a National Testing Service. It was envisioned that such organization should be an independent body, separate from the Ministry of Education and preferably answerable directly to the parliament. The proposed functions of this organization among other include the development and field testing of new types of examinations, e.g. practical, multiple choice and aptitude tests and tests to evaluate for entry into higher education." (The World Bank Report, 1991, p. 54)

The report mentioned above specifically

discusses the need for development of aptitude tests for entrance into higher education institutions. Then, in 1992, the World Bank, in its report for Higher Education and Scientific Research, has pointed out that the admission criteria and aptitude of the students do not match with each other and it leads to low performance and frustration in the student body. This mismatch results from three aspects; the content of the intermediate courses; the entry requirements into higher education; and the content of the first year higher education programs. It has been stated that entry to higher education is based on academic scores only, which leads to induction of such people in study programs that bear no "genuine interest" in those disciplines. Furthermore, it fosters the tradition of rote learning and discounts the importance of skill development and training. Therefore, it has been proposed that the entry requirements should be revised in a way that they should not be completely based on external examination scores only, "but attempt to measure other factors such as aptitude and genuine interest in the chosen subject."

The National Education Policy (1998) outlines the vision of a National Testing Service in its policy document in clear words. It is stated in its Implementation Strategy for higher education that;

- a. "The National Testing Service shall be expanded and strengthened to cover professional colleges, universities and institutes of higher learning. Like Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and Test of English Language Proficiency (TOEFL) of USA, the National Testing Service should provide for testing of all interested candidates twice or thrice a year.
- b. It is necessary to introduce standardized entrance examination for entry to higher education which test the intelligence, aptitude and ability of the prospective candidate before admission into universities is allowed. Admission shall be granted on separate entrance examination with appropriate weightage to the earlier examinations." (p.77)

From these policy documents, it is quite evident that the need for a standardized testing service was much felt in the academic sector. But all reform efforts require strong commitment from all the stakeholders, as well as a cutting edge implementation strategy. The process of reform means a process of reorganization, redesigning,

restructuring and transformation that would lead to improvement and development over the present state. This requires a process of change, defined as “making things different” (Robbins & Judge, 2007). According to Lewin (1951), any organizational change has to be carried out in three phases, i.e., unfreezing, movement and finally freezing. This step-wise approach to change is quite suited to public administrative reforms. Public organizations are slow paced because decisions must pass through a number of procedural requirements and are also marked by a strong culture of bureaucracy. It has been found that organizations where cultures are strong can incorporate incremental change, but fail to implement sweeping or radical changes (Sorensen, 2002).

To reiterate, we employ the literature of public administration and Burgelman’s concept of autonomous strategic behavior to analyze the reform process. We expect that based upon the environmental context and an autonomous strategic behavior of organizational actors, reform initiatives are launched. These reform initiatives are a function of the institutional head’s attitudes towards the new strategy (Kearney, et al., 2000). Once the reform is approved, a structure is developed to implement. After implementation of the restructured admission process, evaluation is carried out to establish the effectiveness of the new structure for admissions. If the evaluation is satisfactory, the reform will get entrenched into the structure of the organization. However, if organizational actors find the reform to be ineffective, a new process of assessment will be carried out, and this process of evaluation and re-evaluation will continue to take place unless the organizational actors are satisfied with the effectiveness of the structure.

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design. Data were collected in 2008 through semi-structured interviews. The respondents were members of university administration relevant to decision making on admission process. They included the previous vice chancellors of the university, and also the chairpersons of university admission committee. Furthermore, data were also collected through admission committee archives, which included the proceedings of admission committee meetings and

the admission regulations of the last ten years.

Dimensions of Semi-structured Interviews

Data were collected on the following dimensions as proposed in the model;

1. Internal Organizational Context: Performance evaluation during degree programs
2. External Organizational Context: Performance in professions
3. Perceived Validity of admission criteria
4. Need to restructure
5. Autonomous strategic behavior
6. Reform initiative
7. Institutional Head’s Attitude
8. Structural development
9. Implementation
10. Evaluation

Findings

As it has been already discussed in previous sections, the requirement of aptitude testing was felt strongly since the 90’s. After a detailed interview of chairman, admissions committee during the period in which the admission test was introduced, it was found that introduction of an aptitude test was inevitable due to many reasons. Admission test was introduced primarily because the number of degree granting universities was increasing rapidly. These universities were being recognized by the Higher Education Commission and their graduates were eligible to apply for admission in the older, more renowned public sector universities. Until 2001, the candidates graduating from institutions other than the university being investigated were admitted on quota seats for other institutions and a separate merit was calculated for internal graduates and other graduates. But, from 2002, all the candidates were allowed to compete on open merit and there was no restriction on number of candidates being admitted from other universities. As the evaluation and examination systems of these institutions were not standardized, there was no assurance that a candidate obtaining a certain percentage of marks would be equivalent to a similar candidate from another institution. Therefore, there should have been some standardization tool to differentiate between the candidates applying from a diverse variety of institutions. The second important reason behind introduction of an admission test was to determine

the specific aptitude of a graduate for a particular program of study. As the candidates obtaining a certain degree were eligible to apply in a number of programs, there was no tool to judge the specific aptitude of such people on the basis of the general marks in intermediate or bachelor degrees. An interesting anecdote was narrated by the Chairman, Admissions Committee. A student who had secured overall second position in university was unable to secure admission in the Department of English. The case was discussed between the Chairman, Admissions Committee and the Chairperson, Department of English and it was pointed out by the Chairperson, Department of English that the candidate was unable to clear the entry test. In ordinary circumstances of the old admission criteria, this candidate would have been able to secure admission with a significantly high merit, but later on, would have been unable to perform even satisfactorily as the specific aptitude and skill for English. Therefore, it was strongly felt by university management that an admission test must be introduced for;

a. Standardized evaluation

b. Determination of specific aptitude

In the initial years, the admission test had to be designed in-house by the departments themselves. But, this created several hardships for the candidates intending to seek admission in the university. Usually, a candidate applies to more than one department/institute/college of the university, sometimes even as much as five or six departments. When tests were conducted by individual departments, a candidate had to appear in all of those tests to be considered for each program. In some instances, the time for the admission test for one department overlapped with that of another. In that case, the test for either of the departments had to be re-arranged for those candidates who appeared in the test of the other department at that time. People from all over Punjab, from far away villages, belonging to all income classes, seek admission in Punjab University. When a girl from a distance village accompanied by her illiterate mother with no place to stay in Lahore, travelling on shackled public transports for hours, reached the university to appear in five admission test consecutively, with no idea to locate the departments where each test was being conducted, one could easily imagine her predicament. It also involved wastage of hard earned

money of the candidates as they had to pay the processing fees of each test.

Based on such problems, the university administration realized that there must be uniform and centralized means of testing where one person would have to appear once for being considered for all programs of study, much similar to the SAT, GRE, GMAT and other aptitude exams of Educational Testing Service, USA. The National Testing Service was established in 2002 and it was growing at a rapid pace. It was being recognized as an aptitude testing institution by several higher education institutions. The NTS was also being supported by the Government of Pakistan and it was being encouraged to appoint it for aptitude testing by public sector higher education institutions. In the light of this scenario, it was much prudent to outsource the university admission test and appoint NTS for administering it. Therefore, in 2006, the administration of admission test for undergraduate programs was handed over to NTS. NTS continued to provide this service to Punjab University for two years, 2006 and 2007.

However, this was not an easy process. Throughout the tenure of the Chairman, Admissions Committee, several obstructions were met that hindered the implementation of a uniform admission policy integrating an admission test. After a thorough perusal of the proceedings of admission committee and from the interview with the Chairman, it was interesting to find that such a logical and effective method of admissions was not accepted by the members of the university. It took almost three years to completely integrate an admission test into the university admission policy and that too was only for undergraduate admission. This implementation process matches with the one proposed in earlier sections. Each of the components of the reform process of restructuring admission at the university are separately discussed below.

Internal and External Context

As already stated in the above paragraph, a strong internal requirement was felt by the university management to introduce a standardized tool for evaluation of specific aptitude. This internal atmosphere was created due to admissions based on uniform evaluation of students coming from diverse

institutions where grading and evaluations were different from each other. The chairman restated the results of an internal study conducted within the university. The study found that there was a substantial difference between the performance of students who had similar academic scores from the university being discussed and those from the other universities, e.g. a student obtaining 70% marks in BSc from the university was likely to perform much better in a Masters degree program at the university than a student obtaining 70% marks in BSc from other universities.

The external context marks the establishment of the National Testing Service and its growing adoption by a number of higher education institutions as an institution for educational testing. As the need for standardized was felt since long, the NTS was welcomed as an institution that would be able to provide such a service to people seeking higher education as well as to the higher education institutions seeking more appropriate pool of candidates. Also, the Higher Education Commission was strongly encouraging the adoption of NTS test by public sector higher education institution.

Perceived Validity of Admission Criteria

Based on such internal context, the prevalent admission criteria were perceived as less valid. The university management strongly believed that an admission test must complement the academic performance in order to develop a sound admission process that could effectively predict future performance

Need to Restructure

Based on the discrepancy between the admission criteria and perceived validity, and also on the basis of environmental currents, the organizational members recognized the need to restructure the prevalent criteria.

Autonomous Strategic Behavior

The latent requirement to introduce an admission test had to be materialized through an organizational environment that was ready to implement the change. For such a new venture, a strong and committed initiative of institutional management was essential. This strong commitment

and behaviour to take initiative has been termed as autonomous strategic behaviour in Burgelman's Model. Such behaviour is essential for those ventures that are new and entrepreneurial for the organization. The introduction of an admission test was certainly an effort similar to the one termed as Internal Corporate Venture (Fast, 1979) although ICV specifically addresses the corporate enterprises. It was not an incremental change in the university processes. The admission procedure prevalent in the University previously was being administered since decades. Hence, it was not only a structural change in the admission process. Firstly, it was a paradigm shift in the philosophy of setting admission criteria. It required a transformation of the overall strategic vision of the university. Therefore, one can suggest that to initiate such a strategic transformation, Burgelman's Autonomous Strategic Behavior was a prerequisite. It was found that there were several members of the university administration who strongly felt committed to this transformation. To analyze the strength of Autonomous strategic behavior, the following criteria must be met;

1. Top management support: The extent to which the top management of an organization are willing and supportive towards a new venture. The incumbent Vice Chancellor and Chancellor of the university were personally supportive towards introducing an admission test in the admission criteria. A meeting was personally presided by the VC in June 2004 to finalize that an entry test would be an essential component of the admission process.
2. Entrepreneurial organizational spirit: This defines the overall culture of an organization from being conventional to entrepreneurial. An entrepreneurial organizational culture fosters change, supports new ventures, and is ready to take initiatives. The overall atmosphere of the university was largely proactive towards taking new initiatives during the previous 8-10 years. A number of new disciplines were introduced and market-driven programs were launched during 2000-2008. The university engaged in several activities to provide an enhanced access to quality education that included the development of infrastructure, improvement of IT facilities and capacity building of the human capital. Introduction of admission test was a part of this effort in becoming more result-oriented and effective.
3. Project champion: This refers to a person or group who actually develops and executes the new strategy. These are the people who visualize the

concept of the strategy and articulate it into practical and viable project. It has been observed that the chairman, admission committee 2003-2007 was particularly instrumental in taking the initiative. Also, it has been noted from the proceedings of admission committee meeting that there was substantial support from deans of university faculties.

From these observations, it can be suggested that the admission reform has been a result of the autonomous strategic behaviour of university members supported by the appropriate attitude of top management and also the university entrepreneurial spirit.

Reform Initiative

It is defined as those intentional designs and efforts that are propounded by the middle level management of an organization to convince the top level management for the initiative towards the new concept of strategy. When a new venture is proposed from within the organizational actors, the project champions develop attractive, viable and practical strategies to get approval of the higher management for execution. This development of a supportive context for the integration of the new strategy is a function of the Institutional Head's Attitudes. These attitudes are based on three measures;

1. Conventional/Anticipative Personality: It has been observed that the organizational members during the period of reform were anticipative and were ready to take initiative. It specifically includes the Vice Chancellor of the university, who was proactive towards improvement of university processes
2. Strong Commitment for the new criteria: The top management as well as Chairman, Admissions Committee were highly committed to the belief that an aptitude test is an unavoidable component of admission process at university. It was quoted in the interview, that "*without an entry test, the admissions remains faulty and unreliable*"
3. Understanding of relevance: The university management at the time of introduction of entry test realized the relevance of aptitude with the future performance of a student.

Development of Structure, Implementation and Evaluation

It took almost three years to introduce an admission test in the admission criteria in the university. It has been observed that although the environment was supportive with respect to top management support and there was a strong presence of a project champion, but there was substantial resistance from a number of organizational members and also from the public. As this change was going to affect the general public and the university is a public sector institution, the university has to face public reactions. Due to these reasons, it was difficult to develop a structure for entry test. From 2004-2008, the following incremental changes took place;

1. 2004: Decision by Admission Committee to administer an entry test for all program
2. 2004: Cancellation of decision to administer entry test for all programs due to resistance from within university members and general public
3. 2005: Decision to administer admission test; compulsory for undergraduate programs, optional for masters programs
4. 2006: Decision to administer admission test to be conducted by NTS for undergraduate programs, optional for masters programs
5. 2007: Decision to administer admission test to be conducted by NTS for undergraduate programs, optional for masters programs

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendation

Determination of admission criteria is one of the most important structures of an educational institution. These criteria must be developed after a careful assessment of the requirements of the educational degree for which admissions are being conducted. It is essential that candidates who are selected possess the appropriate education, skills, aptitude, personality and motivation. Equally essential is the fact that candidates who are refused an admission are correctly assessed as unsuitable for that program of study.

The university under discussion is one of the largest universities of Asia. Every year, thousands of

applicants apply for admissions to its various programs. It has thirteen faculties in which there are a total of seventy-eight departments where multiple programs are being offered every year. From the start of twenty first century, there were several strategic and structural changes institutionalized in the university. An assessment of these paradigmatic changes leads to the conclusion that these changes were a part of the overall currents of changing towards a management approach that was more market-driven, result-oriented and client-responsive. Because of adoption of this new type of management approach, called the *new public management* by the British scholars and theorists and termed as the *entrepreneurial government* by the American writers, institutions were subject to a number of strategic and structural shifts. With particular reference to the education sector, there were several transformations. The University Grants Commission which used to be a regulatory body only was converted into the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, which had many additional powers in addition to mere regulation of the education sector. The private sector started growing at a rapid pace with innumerable educational institutions budding from every corner of the country. Many of these were being accredited by the HEC. In addition to that, many affiliated colleges of the public sector universities were given autonomous degree granting status. Up to 2001, the university had separate and limited seats for applicant other than those graduating from university. But, from 2002 onwards, the admissions were being made on open merit. The evaluation systems of these autonomous institutions did not match with that of the university. Therefore, there was an imminent need to develop a tool for standardization of admission criteria. For these reasons, it was felt that it was essential to test the aptitude of students through an entry test before admission has been granted.

The introduction of an admission test was a process marked by slow-paced incremental changes. It took three years to completely integrate the entry test with admission criteria. The implementation of this paradigmatic shift was the result of a strong and committed attitude of the university administration which can be strongly paired with the Burgelman's Autonomous Strategic Behavior. This has been a case where "structure follows strategy"; new strategic commitment leads to the development of a

structure to implement that strategy. Initially the entry tests were conducted by the departments themselves, but as it created wasteful hassle and fatigue to the applying student, this function was outsourced through the National Testing Service; a rapidly growing institution for educational testing in Pakistan.

However, it was observed by the university management that admissions conducted through an entry test led to even more unsatisfactory selectees. Although there was no research study conducted to find the efficacy of NTS tests, but the university assessed that candidates selected through the entry test were not any better. Although the university did not have any empirical results, however, on the basis of subjective and qualitative assessment, the NTS tests were abolished for admissions in 2008. The compulsion of an entry test was also cancelled and it was left to the discretion of individual departments whether or not to conduct an entry test for admissions.

In summary, this qualitative study on admission reforms in a large public sector university of Pakistan has contributed to literature by demonstrating the applicability of Burgelman's model of autonomous strategic behavior on the reforms process in public sector. This model was initially proposed and validated in the corporate sector, but the present study has integrated literature from strategic management and public administration paradigms to uncover the dynamics of change process in a public sector institution. The study has successfully demonstrated that in a context of new public management orientation, public sector organizations follow the pattern of Burgelman's model. Presence of all the elements outlined by this model, i.e. entrepreneurial organizational spirit; top management support; and project champions was confirmed through empirical evidence gathered through qualitative analysis of interviews and archival data.

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