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## **A STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS IN PAKISTAN: KEY REFORMS AND DRIVERS**

### **Abstract**

*The paper deliberates on major reform initiatives in higher education institutions in Pakistan. It is aimed at presenting a holistic review of higher education reforms in Pakistan including the drivers behind these initiatives in the last decade. This study focus on teachers as important stake holders in the process of higher education reforms in Pakistan. This study also explores the role of HEC in introducing these reforms. By using qualitative research method the study adopts an explanatory research approach to present a holistic view of the key reform initiatives in HEIs both in terms of content and process. The findings of the study reveal that despite many weaknesses, controversies and deficiencies, myriads of higher education reforms have been introduced and implemented in the higher education institutes (HEIs) in Pakistan. The study discusses implications and provides policy recommendations in this direction.*

**Keywords:** Higher Education, Reforms, Drivers, HEC, Pak

### **Introduction**

Pakistan came into being in 1947 in the name of Islam under the outstanding leadership of Mr. Jinnah. The passion for education was clearly cited in numerous statements and policies of the Quaid (Founder/Leader). To dismay, despite very high and rhetoric attempts, education remained most neglected sector in Pakistan after its inception. Overall literacy level and especially female literacy level in Pakistan is among the lowest in the world. According to the World population prospects published by United Nations, Literacy rate for adult female population

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in Pakistan is only 45.29% (United Nations, 2015). The reasons often cited for falling low in this sector include; obsolete curriculum, orthodox examination system, poor evaluation system and ineffective university education that need to be addressed. Since creation of Pakistan, almost a dozen educational reports and four major policies have been initiated. A broad review of the reports suggests that main areas of focus of all these strategic papers and policies remained on ideological basis of formation of the country, national unity, individual and social development, economic progress, equality of opportunities and quality of education. These policies and schemes reflect that process of educational planning throughout the years remained on setting of targets, regretting the failure to achieve the same, blaming other irrelevant factors and setting new targets with unqualified optimism. Policy makers consistently played this planning process at great public expense over the last six decades.

### **Context of Higher Education in Pakistan**

Education is one of the basic human rights of every individual and higher education is necessary for development of a country (Mohanty, 2000; Nasrin R. Khalilia, 2015). Higher education is viewed today as of paramount importance and the capital investment for social and economic development of any society (Tilak, 2015). The situation of higher education in Pakistan is very alarming. It is not because people are inherently deficient in talent or moral values in comparison to any other nation in the world but because of prolonged colonial rule and imitation of other nation’s systems and political imbalance that have spoiled some of the virtues and have brought a bad name to the intellectual capacities of the people (Erdkunde, 2015). University level education had a modest start in the history of Pakistan. Pakistan had only one university- University of the Punjab, Lahore, at the time of its birth in 1947. Karachi University was formed in 1950. Expansion of universities followed in subsequent years. The first Pakistani private university was the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) established in 1984, followed by the Agha Khan University in 1985. The first major increase in the number of public universities was seen in the regime of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto from 1971 to 1977 (Hoodbhoy P. , 2009) as indicated from table 1.1 below;

**Table 1.1: Growth of Public and private Universities and Degree Awarding Institutions in Pakistan in subsequent years 1947-2007**

<b>Universities and degree awarding Institutions(DAI's)</b>				
	<b>Universities</b>		<b>DAI's</b>	
	<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>
1947	1	0	0	0
1960	5	0	1	0
1970	8	0	2	0
1980	19	0	2	0
1990	20	2	3	0
2000	32	14	5	8
2007	50	37	9	18
2007	50	37	9	18

Source: Statistics of HEC

<http://www.hec.gov.pk/new/QualityAssurance/Statistics.htm>

### **Global Context of Education Reforms:**

The 1990's can be termed as the decade of globalization, competition, and commercialization. These aspects have affected the landscapes of most of the countries in terms of economic, political and cultural contexts. The process of globalization has given rise to so called knowledge economy and has given centrality to knowledge and information which are the key economic commodities for progress. The field of education has taken central position in the knowledge economy as for developing in this new economic reform human capital is essential. Countries of the world have given tremendous importance to the issue of education because of this central and essential position of education in progress of countries. The United Nations, UNESCO, OECD and the World Bank being the supra national organizations have been continually working for highlighting the importance of education for countries all over the world. A joint conference was organized by the World Bank and UNESCO in 2000 in which all the participating governments agreed on ensuring education to all by launching and meeting collective commitments (UNESCO, 2015).

### **Major Educational Initiatives and Reforms in Pakistan:**

Coming to the situation of higher education in Pakistan, several reform initiatives have been introduced since 1990 addressing the issues of higher education as identified earlier and recommending solutions. These reforms and innovations are quite related to the issues modeled by the process of globalization, competition and marketization. Several educational initiatives and reforms that made their way in the educational discourse of Pakistan include the following:

- Privatization
- Decentralization
- Higher Education Reforms
- Generation and Maintenance of Numbers
- Quality in Higher Education Institutions

### **Objectives of the Research:**

This research has been intended to investigate and understand the different ways in which higher education reforms were initiated, perceived, conceptualized, implemented and experienced. The aim of the study is to find out the major drivers of the Higher education reforms process that initiate and drive this process in the country and also to reveal the major reforms introduced in the previous decade especially after the establishment of Higher Education Commission (HEC) in 2002.

### **Significance of the Study:**

This study will be beneficial to create awareness about education reforms among the people directly or indirectly related to education sector and will be useful for

the higher authorities and policy makers to draw attention into the issues surfaced at implementation level.

The findings of the study will contribute significantly to the existing knowledge available on higher education reforms especially from the perspectives of those who are administratively involved in this process in view of the culture specific context of Pakistan.

From an academic point of view the multiple narratives that emerge during the data collection process will be utilized to develop themes and methods of research which in turn, will be useful for further studies on the issue.

### **Research Questions:**

Based on the above research objectives of the study the following research questions are developed to address the issue in hand.

Q.1: what are the most well-known reforms in higher education institutions in the previous decade and the reasons behind their initiation?

Q.2: what are the major stake holders and their respective roles in the higher education reform process?

### **Method of the Study:**

This research is based on exploring the process of Higher education reforms in Pakistan. As the study is limited to higher education reforms so that universities are the main focus of the study. Two universities- one each from the public and private sector was selected for the study. The University of Punjab represents the government sector while Comsats Institute of Information Technology (COMSATS) represents the private/semi government sector. The faculty members of the two universities formed the population of the study. In sum fifteen participants from each of the two universities were selected to participate in the study. Purposive Sampling/Theoretical sampling method was utilized for selecting interview subjects. The participants were selected on the basis of their association with the university and reform process in any capacity. Two factors were kept in mind while selecting the respondents; one the experience of the participants, those who had large experience and witnessed the phenomenon, other those who had been personally affected by the process.

Data was collected with the help of semi structured interviews. Interviews were taken at the offices of the faculty members. It was convenient for the faculty members to communicate and address the questions at their offices.

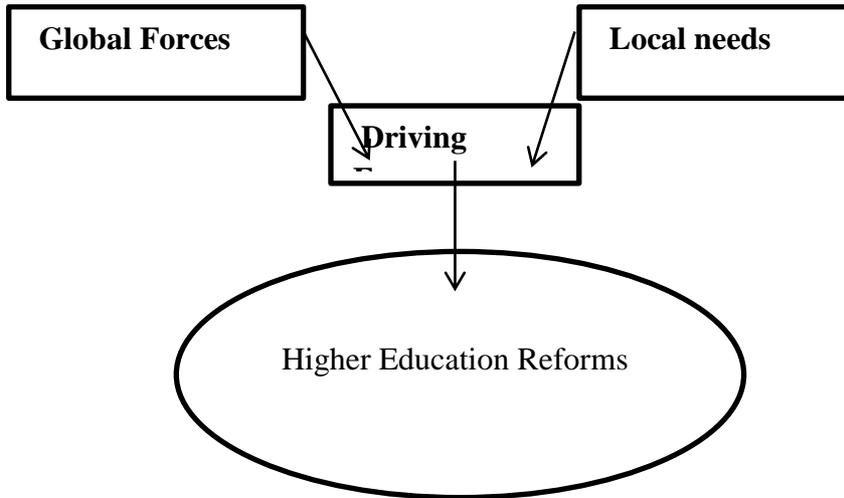
An interview guide was prepared keeping in view the research questions and literature review, in order to have some personal guideline for standardization by asking the similar set of information from all the respondents and also to ensure the reliability and validity requirements of the research.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In this study Higher education reforms is the key concept. The purpose of this study is to deeply study the higher education reforms process in line with the

global importance and indigenous requirements. The proposed framework has been presented in figure 1 below:

Figure1. Theoretical Model for Reforms in Higher Education Institutions in Pakistan



### **Research Findings and Analysis**

Information obtained through in-depth interviews with participants was analyzed with the help of Nvivo software used for qualitative data analysis. At the phase of data analysis similar patterns and themes were identified which helped to understand and interpret the responses of the respondents. Different themes and subthemes emerged after using the technique of coding when using Nvivo software that helped the researchers to understand the collected data and to relate it with the prior literature and research questions. Together, the effort helped in presenting the information better by putting it into proper perspective.

This part presents the major themes that emerged based on the analysis of interviews with respondents on the issue on hand. While dealing with explanation of themes there are some places where the exact words of the participants are used without alteration for strengthening the viewpoint of the respondents.

### **Key Educational Reforms and Initiatives:**

This study focuses on the key education reforms introduced in the previous decade specifically after the establishment of HEC i.e. 2002 and onwards. When the respondents were asked about the educational reforms in the previous decade in their institutes they came out with almost same reform initiatives as presented below:

### **Tenure Track System (TTS):**

This study found the Tenure Track System as an educational reform viewed as most popular and most well-known among the faculty members. When asked about the reforms introduced and implemented majority of the people (100%) replied that “Tenure Track System” is the most popular reform introduced in universities in the previous decade including the University of the Punjab and Comsats Institute of Information and Technology. One of the respondents from University of the Punjab viewed that “*TTS is the reform that has affected us recently, to me personally also because my hiring is also on TTS system. So you know this is the one thing that I have heard and personally experienced and now I am going to learn about it*”. Another respondent commented that “*The reform in last decade is simply with respect to the matters relating to terms and conditions of services of academic employees and the system related to the selection of teachers that is called the Tenure Track System (TTS)*”. One of the respondents from COMSATS University stated that “*COMSATS has hired the maximum faculty members on TTS basis among all the universities and institutes*”. The responses of all interviewees exhibited the fact that Tenure track system was the reform introduced and implemented in both of the universities in the previous decade.

### **Curriculum:**

The next reform that the most of the respondent talked about was the syllabus criteria by Higher Education Commission (HEC). Although many respondents pointed to some issues regarding the proper management and implementation of syllabus guidelines and criteria but they mentioned that this reform had taken place in the previous decade in their institutes. One of the respondents from University of the Punjab mentioned that “*In the last decade means from 2004 to 2014, well the recent reform was that we were told by HEC to follow specific curriculum for different courses we taught at the university*”. Another respondent from COMSATS Institute of Information Technology viewed that “*they were following the HEC requirements regarding the selection of faculty, admission of students, quality of labs, classes and curriculum*”. The responses corroborated that the initiative of HEC about the syllabus criteria was implemented in the University of Punjab as well as the Comsats Institute of Information and Technology as part of the educational reform to ensure quality in higher education institutions in Pakistan.

### **Quality and Control System (Quality Enhancement Cells (QEC), ISO 9001):**

The next reform that was frequently pointed out by the respondents was the quality and control measurements of performance of teachers. They respondents expressed much insecurity about the right kind of management and implementation errors in terms of implementation of the reform, however, almost all of them included it in the list of reforms that had been introduced in their institutes. Many of the respondents especially from COMSATS Institute of Information Technology expressed that they had implemented ISO 9001 in their institutes with its full rigor and properties. Like one respondent from Comsats Institute of Information and Technology mentioned that “*I am also the MR of ISO 9001 and a member of quality enhancement cell, these are the main projects of HEC that are being*

*implemented in all the campuses of CIIT. We have implemented ISO 9001; we are working on research assessment reports, especially quality evaluation reports and all the others quality requirements of HEC*". Another respondent from the University of Punjab viewed that "The reforms initiatives which were implemented in our institute were Tenure Track System, Syllabus criteria, Scholarship programs and performance and quality programs". Many of the respondents of the University of the Punjab generally commented about the initiative of quality and control programs but it was seen that they were not aware of all the quality and control programs because no one specifically named any program like ISO 9001 etc. It can be inferred from the findings that quality and control programs are more effectively implemented in the Comsats Institute of Information and Technology as compared to the University of the Punjab.

### **Faculty Development Programs:**

Among the last decade reforms and initiatives almost every respondent mentioned the various scholarships programs. Many respondents expressed that different scholarship programs like needy and merit and especially for MPhil and PhD programs helped their institutions to attract the students towards higher education and these programs were among the best initiatives of HEC. One of the respondents from the Comsats Institute of Information and Technology stated that "*Many scholarship schemes of HEC are also being implementing in their Institute*". Another respondent from University of the Punjab reported that "*I have completed my PhD from this University by getting indigenous scholarship of HEC. This is the HEC initiative that has been implemented in this institute which enabled me to complete my Ph.D. studies*".

By looking into the above responses it may be inferred that many scholarship programs initiated by HEC had been implemented in the universities and students as well as faculty members enrolled in these programs were benefiting from those programs.

### **Other Policies and Guidelines:**

Moreover many respondents pointed out that in the last decade reforms regarding guidelines and policy procedures regarding admission of students, utilization of resources and funds, quality of labs, accreditation and class rooms and selection and working of the faculty had been introduced in their universities. While explaining the reforms initiatives one of the respondents from the Comsats University said "*we are also following the HEC requirements regarding the selection of faculty, admission of students, quality of labs, classes and curriculum etc.*" Many of the respondents in their comments pointed towards new policies and guidelines which were given by HEC and they were following them. It was also observed from the responses that resistance rate was much higher in the University of the Punjab to implement the policies and initiatives than the Comsats Institute of Information and Technology.

## **Factors Driving the Initiatives of the Particular Reforms:**

### **Efficiency and Effectiveness:**

When the respondents were asked about the factors which drive the higher education reforms process almost all of them replied that to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education was the major driver behind this educational reform. Every respondent somehow commented regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system. One of the respondents from the COMSATS Institute of Information Technology commented that *“I think the drivers behind these reforms were to increase and control the quality of higher education”*. Through the responses it was interpreted that efficiency and effectiveness is the major driver behind all the HEC educational initiatives and reforms.

### **Research and Innovation:**

Many responses were in favor of the fact that the main driver behind the introduction of higher education reform was to eliminate the traditional practices of education system and to bring out some creativity and innovation by introducing a research culture and encouraging more and more research work in the system. As one of the respondents from the COMSATS Institute of Information Technology expressed that *“The main drivers are research and creativity. They all focus on more efficient performance by inducing more research and innovation in it”*

All the respondents were in the favor of the fact that research and innovation is a key area which lead the process of reform in higher education institutions in Pakistan.

### **Increased Performance and Publications:**

Majority of the respondents viewed that contractual mode of engagement would help improving the performance of university teachers and will help to foster the research oriented environment. They all expressed the importance of research, latest publications in authentic and recognized journals and good performance as necessary for success of higher education sector in Pakistan. According to the respondents the main driver behind Tenure track system is to increase the performance of teachers by providing tasks and evaluating their performance periodically. Moreover Tenure track system allows teachers to indulge more in research process and to publish research in HEC recognized and international impact factor journals. Financial incentives are also attached with the pay of teachers to enhance their satisfaction level. One of the respondents from the University of the Punjab expressed, *“Contractual mode of employment was introduced to keep the faculty more motivated and research oriented. Specifically if we talk about TTS the main driver is productivity of the faculty”*. The comments of the respondents reflected that desire to build an environment to enhance publication and performance was among the drivers of educational reforms.

### **Employment:**

According to the respondents the main driver behind the initiation of Tenure track system is to retain the talent in the country by providing jobs in higher education

sector with better salaries and incentives. HEC is trying to increase the number of Provincial Higher Education Departments (PHDs) in the country by providing them scholarships and opportunities. To retain those PHDs in the country was also a big challenge. So HEC introduces many projects like one year tenure system and tenure track system to retain the talent in the country by providing them better employment and opportunity to perform in the research sector. As one of the respondents from COMSATS Institute of Information Technology says that “*if we talk about TTS and there is one other project of HEC that is to hire a fresh PHD for one year tenure, this is a very good project to provide employment to the PHD’s. After all there is so much investment on one PHD scholar, if he cannot get a job that investment is in vain. To better utilize the educated people and to attract the people to live in Pakistan instead of going abroad these projects are very good*”. Many respondents commented more or less the same response about the drivers of Tenure Track system.

### **Degree of Implementation:**

Each respondent was asked about the implementation extent of particular reforms they mentioned in terms of explain its implantation in their respective universities. The respondents of the COMSATS Institute of information Technology were highly satisfied about the implementation of each reform in their institute. Their comments exhibit the fact that the management of the institute is committed to implement each and every project and reform of HEC. However many comments of the candidates exhibit the errors and weaknesses in implementation of certain reforms due to some factors. Those factors are discussed with detail in the head of hurdles in the way of reforms. When talking about the implementation of Tenure track system every respondent commented that their institute has implemented this system with its full soul. Even facts reveal that COMSATS Institute of Information Technology has the largest number of faculty on Tenure track system basis. When talking about the quality and control reforms every respondent views that they have established quality enhancement cells and ISO 9001. One of the respondents said that currently he is working as the MR of ISO 9001 and also a member of quality enhancement cell. Quoting his words, “*I am also the MR of ISO 9001 and a member of quality enhancement cell; these are the main projects of HEC that are being implemented in all the campuses of CIIT. We have implemented ISO 9001; we are working on research assessment reports, especially quality evaluation reports and all the others quality requirements of HEC*”.

Regarding curriculum policies and reforms, one of the respondents viewed that he has attended many workshops regarding the curriculum of Mathematics as an associate professor of mathematics. Likewise the respondents from the University of the Punjab also commented that their organization has implemented different projects and reforms of HEC. The comments of the respondents reveal that the university showed some resistance regarding implementation of the above reform initiatives but now many of the projects are being implemented. Teachers are getting hired on Tenure track system and syllabus criteria are also followed by the teachers. But some respondents commented that they have some issues regarding the syllabus guidelines provided by HEC, those will be discussed in details in the issues head. The comments of the respondents vary regarding the degree of

implementation of particular reforms. Most of the respondents were dissatisfied with the implementation of certain reforms in their institute. One of the respondents from University of the Punjab expressed that *“Well in this respect I will say that when it comes to economic benefits it is seriously taken and understood but when it comes to academics it is left in backyard and many times the backyard just goes for profit seeking, no one bothers about the academic improvements. The flowery statements and documentation is good but when it comes to implementations that you can say is poor”*

Most of the respondents commented that certain reforms should have enough flexibility that they could be mold according to the environment and requirements of particular institute. In this regard the role of management also comes forward to fill the gaps by contacting HEC.

### **Role of HEC in Initiating and Implementing Reforms:**

HEC was established after the recommendations of the task force with the aim to reform the higher education in Pakistan. When the respondents were asked about the role of HEC in the introduction and implementation of the particular reforms which they have mentioned, almost all of the respondents commented that HEC has full authority and participation in taking the initiatives of the reforms but when comes to the implementation in universities and institutes they all show some kind of ambiguity as they think that HEC is just involved in the introduction of the reforms the implementation is mainly the responsibility of the management of the institutes. According to the responses HEC initiated all of the above reform initiatives with the purpose to increase efficiency and effectiveness of higher education. All the reform ideas, procedures and guidelines came from HEC. Moreover HEC provided all the funds to regulate the projects. According to the views of the candidates the main role of HEC is to regulate the funds of different projects. They respondents say that they get all the policies and guidelines regarding the implementation of a project from HEC. But according to the respondents HEC limits itself to just at this phase which ends at providing the funds, resources and guidelines for implementation. Now the implementation is in the hands of the higher management of the institute. HEC does not play its part in implementation directly by coming to the institutes but its play its role indirectly. Regarding implementation of certain reforms in the institute the higher management of the institutes has a key role to play. In some projects HEC also provides training to certain members of the higher education institutions to carry out functions and tasks according to the changing requirements effectively. But it depends mainly on the institute that how much effectively and rigorously it implements that reform. As one of the respondents from the COMSATS Institute of Information Technology expressed that *“HEC plays a role in providing the main policies, guidelines, deadlines, financial aid, expertise and training for implementation but it also depends upon the commitment and the vision of the institute. COMSATS has a vision that it will become an international institute and for that CIIT is fully committed to follow all the projects and initiatives of HEC”*.

Many respondents in the University of the Punjab also commented that HEC is fully involved in providing procedures, guidelines and funds but the implementation is in the hands of the management. Their comments reveal the fact

that as this university is very old and has its own culture and philosophies so that many of the people in its management are rigid in their views and practices that creates some resistance and hindrance in the acceptance and implementation of any new initiative but gradually after the ice breaking period the implementation process has been initiated.

### **Privatization as a Reform:**

The respondents were asked for their views about privatization as a reform in higher education institutions in Pakistan. Some respondents were strictly against the privatization and hence they deny making any further comments on it. But several respondents expressed that privatization itself is not a bad concept as it increases the efficiency and effectiveness of people and organizations which in turn helps in getting increased outcomes. But when comes to its implementation in societies like ours it poses serious concerns. This concern has turned out as a serious issue as many people are now confused in the real properties and functions of privatization because from decades we are unable to decide which system is suitable for us and why. Every system has some particular characteristics that has to be matched with the society and environment in which it is going to be introduced. But we have always failed in matching systems with our indigenous needs. We always copy ideas and implement them without knowing their consequences and then when they start showing outcomes we make hurry to remove them rather than allowing sufficient time to get them settle. Majority of the respondents commented that the concern lies in the factor that whether our system requirements match with the system of privatization and how we are going to implement it. The mode of implementation is also a big concern. One senior teacher from University of the Punjab viewed that: *“Well my view about privatization is that it is not that bad. The whole idea is that privatization should be properly managed. At this time privatization has become an activity of profit making but it is not delivering the good. It has become a tool for money making for people in education system. So I will say that I am not totally in its favor but I will not negate it as well because it is a very strong system. If it is held under control you can get better performance from people. But if you want to exploit it you can earn plenty of money out of it so its control is very important”*. A few respondents emphasize on the proper management and implementation of privatization rather than opposing the very idea of it while majority of the respondents were strictly against it. One of the respondents from COMSATS Institute of Information Technology viewed that; *“I am against privatization as privatization has changed the system and shape of the institutions. It has changed the education institutions into profit making organizations. Instead of providing educations they try to earn more and more profit through education. If you privatize higher education, people will go for profits only and quality of education will go down and cost of getting education for students will rise”*.

The opinions given by the respondents were mix in nature, some were in the favor of Privatization and some were against it. A large number of the respondents were of the view that proper implementation according to the rules was important rather than passing good or bad comments about privatization.

### **Centralization as a Reform:**

The respondents were asked about the concept of centralization in higher education institutions. Majority of the respondents were in favor of the fact that there should be centralization in our education system. As one of the teachers from University of the Punjab expressed that; *“In certain situations centralization should be there because we do need it. You cannot just give the path role and assume that it will work. And especially I think in the Pakistani scenario we need it. There has to be a central command to control people for what is happening, people need to be answerable. I think lack of accountability is the first step that leads to failure. Even if there is a central command and he or she is not answerable to someone then it is not going to work”*

But the degree of centralization is a negotiable concern. The respondents were of the view that there should be flexibility while having centralization. It should be implemented to a certain degree. All the personnel should be answerable to the central authority but everyone should have some degree of autonomy to make decisions about his/her style of working. Strict centralization is not suitable for our system there should be enough freedom for individuals to make some decisions. Same formula is applied to institutes. They should be answerable to the central authority but flexibility to make some decisions according to their particular environment should be there. Otherwise things may go wrong and performance may be affected. One senior respondent from University of the Punjab mentioned that; *“My view about centralization is that it has both advantages and disadvantages. Centralization is not a very effective system. It should be implemented to a certain degree. If it is implemented at all levels very strictly then it is not good. My point of view is that centralization should be only for the total planning of the system and accountability. So while implementing the concept, the degree to which it should be implemented is important”*

The findings revealed that majority of the respondents were in favor of centralization but they were also of the view that it should be balanced and properly implemented keeping in view the concept of accountability.

### **Summary:**

This above findings report respondents views on the various aspects of HEC initiated higher education reforms in the previous decade mainly from the two HEC recognized universities i.e. University of the Punjab and COMSATS Institute of Information Technology. Primarily these findings are based on the in-depth interviews with fifteen respondents from two universities. The challenging aspect to present these findings was to not lose any minor detail assuring the representation of full information provided by the participants. In order to ensure privacy and the concerns of participants their names were not disclosed ensuring ethical requirements of the research. In sum the above findings reveal that the participants viewed Tenure Track system, Curriculum criteria, Scholarship programs, Quality and control systems (ISO 9001 and quality enhancement cells (QEC) as the most popular reforms initiated by HEC in the previous decade. The major reasons behind these initiatives were to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of higher education institutions through measuring and evaluating the performance of faculty members, to produce more and more highly educated people and to

retain them in the country by offering them employment with good incentives. After the establishment of HEC in 2001 it has introduced several reforms in the higher education sector. HEC has the central role in reform process. It has the responsibility to initiate reforms, regulate them through funding and provide guidelines and trainings to the institutes for implementation of the reforms. While implementation process involves mainly the higher management of universities, teachers are also engaged in the process of execution at the lowest level.

### **Discussion of Findings:**

This section of the study synthesizes the interpretations into a unified whole and discusses the overall findings. The main purpose of the research was to explore and analyze the nature and causes of reforms of higher education initiated by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan. Discussion of findings in relation to the research questions is as below:

Related to first question that was about the well-known reforms and the reasons behind their initiation, the study found that most well-known educational reform after the establishment of HEC was Tenure Track System. Whether the participant experienced that reform or not they were fully aware of it. When the question was asked from the respondents about the reforms that had taken place in their institute the fifteen out of fifteen participants mentioned Tenure Track System in the first stance. That showed that Tenure Track System was the most popular and widely implemented reform. The second most popular and frequently known reform was the induction of many MPhil and PhD programs funded through HEC scholarships. The next reform mentioned by the respondents was quality assurance (Quality enhancement cells and ISO certification). The further reform mentioned by the respondents were related to curriculum development. They expressed that currently they were following the syllabus guided by HEC which they were teaching in different courses. Participants also mentioned reforms about admission and selection criteria, class room and labs conditions and student teacher relations as well as ratio etc. All of the above identified reform measures fall in the categories that were mentioned in the literature as discussed earlier i.e. quality assurance, equity, relevance, research and recourse allocation (Mughal, 2008).

The findings revealed that main drivers that triggered these reforms were to improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness in the higher education sector of Pakistan. The respondents further mentioned specific drivers for each reform. Like the main driver behind Tenure track System was to provide employment to the highly educated people and to retain the talent in the country. And also to change the performance practices of teachers by indulging them in more research and innovation a step leading to knowledge based society. Further to make a difference by evaluating the performance of the teachers and to attach their performance with incentives of pay raises and promotion. The aim of achieving a knowledge based society was also mentioned in several statements of Dr. Atta ul Rehman (2007) the founding Chairperson of HEC. Behind the scholarship programs for MPhil and PhD the main driver was to increase the number of highly educated people in the country and also to spread the quest for research and publications. The higher education system was suffering since the creation of Pakistan in 1947 and was in

need of change that's why HEC initiated a set of reforms to change the typical practices converting the typical education environment into research and innovation oriented programs.

The findings revealed that participants who belonged to the teaching faculty were well informed only with some reforms because they had a limited contact with many projects which revealed that teachers were not well aware of all of the projects initiated by HEC. Related to the second question that aimed to find the major stakeholders and their respective roles in the higher education reforms process, the findings of the study revealed that major stakeholders in the higher education reform process were HEC, management of institutes, teachers and students. HEC had the central authority to initiate and implement HEIs reform. Every idea was presented and practically implemented by HEC. HEC provided funding's and resources to all public sector HEIs to implement various projects and reform. HEC in turn, had the authority to evaluate performance of institutions against implementation of the reforms.

The study also revealed that once a reform was initiated by HEC and all the resources and funds transferred to the institutions the implementation of that reform was the responsibility of the management of those institutions. The findings of the study suggested that many times the institutions took a long time to accept procedures or alterations in the previous running programs to streamline its practices and aligning the respective reform with existing programs. This type of resistance was especially visible in mature organizations that had deep rooted philosophy, strong culture and rigid structures. The findings suggested that such resistance was much greater in University of the Punjab as compared to COMSATS Institute of Information Technology. However, resistance was overcome with passage of time. In that aspect management of the respective institution had to play a vital role in implementation of the reform by putting its thoughtful efforts towards decreasing resistance through proper communication with faculty members, streamlining the new procedures with the older ones, and having negotiation with HEC about the ground level needs and demands.

The role of teachers was found very minimum and negligible in the initiation and implementation of the reform process. The findings of the study pointed out towards many factors and indicators that showed the dissatisfaction of the teachers that were eminent from their complaints for not being invited by the HEC to participate in the process. It was an important issue as teachers were among the stakeholders who were in direct contact with the ground realities. They had to cater the needs and demands of the students. They knew better what was good for them and what was not. On the basis of their experience they could give better ideas to reform the system which suffered from the repeated mistakes and malpractices in the past decades. The involvement of teachers would definitely increase their morale and motivation to work with active passion and commitment that would ultimately lead to the desired outcomes of reforms. At present teachers were on receiving ends as they worked with minimum guidelines and training from the management. Without any additional incentives or reward they felt getting overburdened with implementation of reforms. The students were another important stakeholder of the educational reform process. They represented the public and were recipients of the inconvenience caused by the change process.

They too had no role in the process of initiation of HEIs reforms. The major role in the whole reform process was played by HEC and management of the institutions while rest of the stakeholders were ignored that caused several obstacles in the implementation of the above identified reforms.

### **Conclusion and Implications:**

The paper based on the findings of the empirical study provides a holistic review and analysis of higher education reform process in Pakistan. Special attention in this regard has been given to the faculty members as critical local components in building an organization's capacity to implement change driven by reforms. The paper postulates on implementation of the reform process and provides an opportunity to better understand the context of higher education reforms at institutional level. The findings of the study reveal that key educational reforms in the previous decade include Tenure Track System, Syllabus criteria's, Quality and control systems (Quality enhancement cells, ISO 9001 certification), Scholarship programs and other policies and procedures regarding to admission criteria, utilization of resources and funds, quality of labs, accreditation etc. The findings also suggest that main drivers behind all the above mentioned educational reforms include efficiency and effectiveness, Research and innovation, increased performance and publication, employment and degree of implementation. To conclude, role of Higher Education Commission (HEC) remained prominent in the initiation and implementation of educational by having its central role in initiation and implementation of reforms. While all the policies, guidelines, funds, training and equipment were provided by Higher Education Commission (HEC) to the management of the HEIs, at institute level the management of the institutions utilized the resources provided by Higher Education Commission (HEC) and implemented the reform. At this level the management of the HEIs had the authority to decide about how and to which extent the reform be implemented in their respective institutions?

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