ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION (HEC) IN PROMOTING RESEARCH OUTPUT IN PAKISTAN

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This research focuses on examining the HEC role in promoting research culture in education institutions/universities of Pakistan. For investigating the proposition questionnaire based survey were conducted for collecting the data from the sample of 1000 respondents from the 10 public and 10 private sector universities of Pakistan. Findings of this paper confirmed that higher education commission (HEC) Pakistan has paved the way to induct the quality of higher education for the last few years in the region along with promoting the research culture in the universities of Pakistan. For the promoting the research in the region HEC gives incentives, acquires foreign faculty, grants research scholarship to the universities.

Keywords: higher education commission (HEC) Pakistan, Research culture at universities in Pakistan, HEC research policy.

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ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

Introduction

The study aims to examine and conclude the role of Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan in promoting research culture across the higher education institutions/universities of Pakistan. It’s crucial to realize that research is used to figure-out issues, and how decision making in both the corporate and governmental domains is being impacted by research. Mostly decision-makers make decisions without collecting required information to back their decisions. Research-work requires substantial evidence, and decisions based on evidence lead to a tremendous impact on future outcomes, nonetheless collecting the required information takes both considerable efforts and time. Research-work furthermore requires an in-depth understanding of the research methodologies and of data along-with a passion for theory and possible linkages, all of which can come off as rather daunting to university entrants, which is the reason why research promotion and facilitation is all the more important as it can often be both intimidating and yet indispensable. It is moreover necessary for researchers to consider the consequences of decisions based on inadequate information.

Thus, students and instructors are equally expected to take research seriously, as has been prescribed and worked upon by the HEC. Therefore, in-order to determine the actual cause behind the carelessness that is apparent from both the quantity and quality of research outcomes from across many of the educational institutes whereby HEC has been rather over-facilely awarding degrees contradictory to its own efforts and pledges of changing the situation in such a way that generations ahead may be better capable to carry-out research-work with success in-order to be able to manage recent challenges as brought about by an ever increasingly changing business environment.

On the other hand it can also be noted that over the years HEC has taken a significant number of initiatives (often extensive in scope) with aims of developing a strong research culture all across the nation, whereby various strategies as of financially incentivizing the best performing universities in terms of research (by allotting a high weightage to excellence in research) and also working towards standardization of the research process allowing for better a communication of ideas and providing the students with clear-cut guidelines to follow. Moreover, HEC has also encouraged universities to compete for funding from the HEC by competing to maintain a higher: teacher to student ratio, ratio of PHD to total faculty, and total PHD output for the year etc. By the means of which, making it indispensible for higher educational institutions to perform better in terms of research outcomes.

Furthermore, HEC has also worked towards granting the qualifying individuals with research grants and scholarships to conduct graduate, doctoral, and post-doctoral research endeavors across the various renounced institutes world-wide; HEC, in this regard, has also led more and more students to pursue research and training in specialized fields (the faculty for which may not be available at home otherwise). With both the above mentioned initiatives and yet the seeming lack of a research culture across the Pakistani higher educational institutions, it yet remains to be determined as to what extent have the various
initiatives by the HEC positively influenced the research culture across the higher education institutes of Pakistan.

**Literature Review**

Nadeem (2010) notes that the HEC task-group conceive that Pakistani higher education institutes ought to develop foremost learning places where information utilization and analysis are emphasized upon so as to construct a modernistic, accelerating, critically thinking, and a socially responsible youth and understand and appreciate the values and morality of labor and the vitality of research. Khan & Bhatti (2016) note that in order to materialize the these goals, the HEC of Pakistan had developed a criterion (as during the years 2003-2004) for funding the many Degree Awarding Institutions (DAIs); this way, the HEC could widely incentivize the promotion of research activities by apportioning up to 40% (i.e. 40 points out of a total of 100) of the weightage to “excellence at research”, which was to be judged under various relevant measures as that of: HEC approved Supervisors (5), HEC research grants approved (2), Publication in impact factor journal [2010], (5) Indigenous Scholars studying in the University (4), HEC travel grant approved (2), Number of papers published by the university [2010] (3), Citations [2010] (4), University H Index (4), Number of X, Y, Z journals published by the university (5), Internet Bandwidth (PERN) utilization (4), and the overall Number of conferences organized (2) (HEC, 2010). Other factors (student to teacher ratio, ratio of PHD to total faculty, and total PHD output for the year etc.) which are not included as a measure of excellence-at-research, but nonetheless are integrally connected to a research oriented student-base and research facilitation, have been included as measures of Quality Assurance and Teaching-Quality; all of which seems to suggest that the HEC of Pakistan is going to great lengths to promote and incentivize research orientation as across the nation.

Nonetheless, the gap as between the goals and achievements of HEC seemingly persists and examining literature as from other regional contexts leads better understand the situation at home; Tierney (1988) suggested that the lack of research culture in higher-education has been noted by many writers, and furthermore explained that a research-oriented culture was in-fact necessary and needs to be fostered something which institutions in western countries as under his study were found to lack in. Tierney moreover notes that most of the higher education institutes (HEIs) mostly shared the typical features as those of the Japanese enterprises whereby jointly made amalgamated decision-making is encouraged along with life-long employment, individual accountability, informal estimations, and whereby implicity is preferred in both words and actions. However, research in higher education is solely aligned with defining managerial techniques based on management, marketing control, and strategic plans, and thus researchers involved in higher education have made few endeavors into studying the research culture. Particularly in early 1960s, the study of culture basically pertained to student culture. In early the 1970s, Burton Clark created distinctive work studying the different colleges as cultures. The role of the integrity of and belief in college
organizations along-with the organizational narrative working as a tool to generate identification with the institution, all suggest that the culture at a university is one of the more powerful determinants of students’ orientation as towards a particular academic value; hence making it essential to measure HEC’s contribution as towards developing a research culture as across the HEIs.

Kiani and Adiqa (2011) stress that the role of higher education is a fundamental part of most of the developmental strategies. Higher Education Commission of Pakistan whereby has adopted the same approach and aims to foster a high-quality of higher-education by awarding distinctive universal scholarships (adding to study scope by awarding fellowships for specialized fields, while also aiding fellows with their post-doc initiatives etc.); all of which eventually contributes towards improving the living standards of students, allowing them to qualify for better jobs at distinct institutions across Pakistan, further aiding to both the corporate and academic landscape of the country meanwhile also providing opportunities for the research-oriented.

In the context of the standard of faculty at the HEIs of Pakistan, it can be noted that HEC allots a significant weightage when taking into consideration the ratio of PHD faculty as to the students at an institute, which is similarly noted by Aniedi and Effiom (2011) as being an effective tactic whereby the research analysis suggests that in order to add to the prevailing knowledge it is essential that more and more of the teaching and research staff is engaged in research work and products. The study also suggests that the most junior of the academic staff are the ones in most need of the support of their superiors to carry out and conduct research-work and to in-turn be able to impart that knowledge and overall research-orientation as to their students. HEC unsurprisingly matches the identified criteria as it can be noted from its incentive schemes that it encourages both a higher number of research-work produced and thus in-turn also incentivizing it for universities to enroll a higher number of students while maintaining competitive student to teacher ratio while also maintain a high ratio of PHD to total faculty.

Batool, Hussain, and Raouf (2010) also point that HEC attempts to play its major role in developing a knowledge based economy in Pakistan. The HEC undertakes a systematized procedure of execution, known as the five-years-plan (2000-2007), for reorganizing the overall framework in accordance with HEC’s Medium Term Development Framework (MTDF). Under this reorganization HEC developed an all inclusive plan only classifying the basic strategic purpose being that of reforms so as to increase quality in research and learning, development of faculty, relevancy to national priorities, and improved access. All of the mentioned strategic objectives derive from the Institutes primary goals of development of technological infrastructure, management and governance, building leadership, promoting research culture, and quality of assessments and accreditations. Whereby all of the institute’s revised policies are aimed towards enabling teaching, scholarships, and learning services that help in the creation of a research culture as across the accredited institutions.
Khan (2010) examined that HEC has established its objectives under the framework of medium term development, which was based upon stimulating the progress of faculty, attaining a higher admittance to higher education services, quality promotions in research and learning. HEC perceives that the first most problem that higher education in Pakistan faces is that of the problem of low an admission-ratio at the higher education institutions, meanwhile the demand for higher education is increasingly growing as with an increasing population. The HEC evidently recognizes the obstacles and along-with the implementation of policies aims to raise students’ access to educational-institutions from 3 percent to 5 percent by the year 2009. HEC has moreover been taking important measures to develop a quality education-system in Pakistan by drawing attention of HEIs all across the country to research and also by working towards the development and faculty at these institutes. Similarly, specifically for the promotion of research HEC has devised standardized curriculums for the DEAs to follow, whereby writing research reports and research-project or thesis are compulsory requirements that must be undertaken and met by the students in-order for them to graduate. Nonetheless, the gap in both the quantity and quality of academic contribution from the country of Pakistan remains intact; meanwhile students seemingly remain unaligned with the research process. Which is primarily the phenomenon that this research aims to delve into, in-order to first identify whether HEC and its policy implementations have led to a positive impact on the various domains of research-culture, the following factors (as identified from the review of research-literature on the subject) will be measured for as under this research: research-oriented faculty, PhDs in specialized professional fields, opportunities for post-doctorate research, encouragement of female faculty to practice research, standardization of the research procedure, the scope of research writing and publication in class-rooms, masters training-programs, English Language Teaching Reforms (ELTR), Continuous Professional Development (CPD), student admission ratios (numbers of students with access to higher education), standard of faculty (in terms of educational levels and research experience), and overall research promotional activities.

**Methodology**

For investigating the proposition of this paper followings hypotheses are framed and evaluated.

Hypotheses
1. Through HEC reforms, more competent research-oriented faculty is available.
2. HEC has widened scope for freshly appointed PhDs in specialized professional fields.
3. HEC provides opportunity for post-doctorate research study.
4. HEC scholarships have encouraged female faculty to promote research culture.
5. Research culture in universities is possible through research writing and publication.
6. HEC-Based master trainer programmers are rich sources of promoting research culture.
ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

7. ELTR programmers’ are likely to produce effective language faculty for universities.
8. CPD programmers promote tendency to carryout research initiative for effective teaching.
9. HEC research policy provokes the increase in research students in Pakistani universities. HEC faculty induction criteria at higher education level have enhanced and improved research effort.

Description of Sample and Data Collection

Un-restricted non-probability sampling technique was deployed for collecting the primary information from sample of 1000 respondents for the proposed study. All the stated respondents were selected from the 10 public and 10 private sector universities of Pakistan. While one sample T-Test was applied to evaluate the stated hypotheses and the proposition this research.

Findings and Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Mean values</th>
<th>Test values</th>
<th>Comparison of MV &amp; TV</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Empirical conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1: Through HEC reforms, more competent research-oriented faculty is available.</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>MV &gt; TV</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2: HEC has widened scope for freshly appointed PhDs in specialized professional fields.</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>MV &gt; TV</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3: HEC provides opportunity for post-doctorate research study.</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>MV &gt; TV</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4: HEC scholarships have encouraged female faculty to promote research culture.</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>MV &gt; TV</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5: Research culture in universities is possible through research writing and publication.</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>MV &gt; TV</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6: HEC-Based master trainer programmers are rich sources of promoting research culture.</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>MV &gt; TV</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7: ELTR programmers’ are likely to produce effective language faculty for universities.</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>MV &gt; TV</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8: CPD programmers promote tendency to carryout research initiative for effective teaching.</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>MV &gt; TV</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H9: HEC research policy provokes the increase in research students in Pakistani universities.</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>MV &gt; TV</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TV= Test value= 4 Implies the minimal level of Agreement with the statements of hypotheses by respondents of this research survey. N= Nos. of respondents in the collected sample = 1000
Findings of this study as shown in above table, confirms that we are failed to reject all nine hypotheses which are; H1: Through HEC reforms, more competent research-oriented faculty is available, H2: HEC has widened scope for freshly appointed PhDs in specialized professional fields, H3: HEC provides opportunity for post-doctorate research study, H4: HEC scholarships have encouraged female faculty to promote research culture, H5: Research culture in universities is possible through research writing and publication, H6: HEC-Based master trainer programmers are rich sources of promoting research culture, H7: ELTR programmers’ are likely to produce effective language faculty for universities, H8: CPD programmers promote tendency to carryout research initiative for effective teaching and H9: HEC research policy provokes the increase in research students in Pakistani universities as as the observed mean values of the respondents’ responses are found higher than the minimal level of agreement with the statements of hypotheses at p < 0.000.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study is based on to check the role of Higher Education Commission in promoting culture of research in Pakistan's educational institutions and results are revealing that the Higher Education Commission has a pivot and the significant role in promoting culture of research in Pakistan's educational system. Past research findings have also shown that HEC is putting maximal efforts in improving performance of universities by taking many initiatives to enhance learning and development of teachers for the progression of research culture in Pakistan. To encourage research culture HEC gives incentives, acquired foreign faculty, granted scholarship to go overseas to present research. The quality of research is a major focal of HEC and HEC also foster the higher education by giving distinctive universal and primitive scholarships which eventually improves the living standards of students and fulfillment of better accounted jobs in distinct institutions of Pakistan which leading to poverty reduction in the region.

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ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION


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