

## **Higher Education Reforms and Tenure Track in Pakistan: Perspectives of Leadership of Regulatory Agencies**

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### **Abstract**

The researchers shed light on the interaction of tenure track as higher education reform with the socio-cultural context of public universities in Pakistan. The paper postulates on the perception of leaders of central and provincial regulatory bodies on this intervention. The researchers adopt a qualitative research design, and the data were obtained through semi-structured interviews and relevant documents. All of the participants hold top leadership positions in regulatory bodies. The study revealed that there were many challenges before the implementation process of TTS began in public universities. The process remained slow due to a lack of alignment of TTS content with the structure and culture of public universities. Interviews were analyzed using the interpretive phenomenological analysis. The researchers utilized institutional and structural perspectives to explain the phenomenon of TTS content and process in the contextualised settings of HEIs in Pakistan. The research study found that the leaders of HEC, the content of policy guidelines of TTS, the culture of higher education institutions (HEIs), the administrative structure of HEC and implementing HEIs as major factors influencing the implementation of TTS. It suggests policy recommendations that the performance evaluation and eligibility criteria need to be determined according to the nature of the work of faculty members. Leaders of HEC should give autonomy to leadership of universities to decide matters of their faculty members, and they develop a mechanism of strong accountability for university leaders and managers for effective implementation of higher education policies.

**Keywords:** Tenure Track, management, higher education policy, academic career, institutional change, institutional reform.

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## Introduction

Universities around the globe have passed through a series of New Public Management (NPM) related reforms during the last two decades. NPM based reforms challenged the mode of governance of universities based on steady-state regulations and academic governance. There were fundamental changes that took place in the universities and transformed the identity of universities into organizational actors. That means universities are like corporate entities which are competing for resources. The Bologna Declaration of 1999 and the Lisbon Strategy of 2000 are the two examples, which aimed to increase the global competitiveness of European Universities (Krüchen, 2014).

Paradeise et al. (2009) compared some recent European reform experiences; and analyzed the role of the nation-state and the relationship between state and universities. Paradeise et al. (2009) concluded three underlying assumptions about the sequence of events driving the reform process in European countries. First, a managerial approach to universities was quite dominant in the 1990s. This kind of approach was shared among governments. Second, the standard governance model did not emerge even though there are similarities in discourse. Third, the rise of management in universities was recent and incomplete. This rise of “managerialism” in universities springs from a different kind of social and political interaction with civil society and state. They defined managerialism as “stronger multilevel steering in one local context, withdrawal of the state in another and democratic revitalization in another.”(p. 104). They provided insights about reform policies and change process in Europe, which has some similarity with the higher education reforms process in Pakistan. The leaders of the Higher Education Commission adopted a top-down approach for the implementation of education reforms.

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has taken several initiatives for reforming higher education over time. There were a series of reforms introduced to improve the overall performance of public sector universities. These reforms were part of a global wave of New Public Management reforms. Tenure-track system was introduced as one of the higher education reforms.

Dictionary definition of the term tenure is “period” or “term”, but for the academic purpose of the specific study, it has been used as a scheme which was introduced by HEC in higher education institutions of Pakistan. Faculty who joined this scheme is referred to as Tenure-Track Faculty. After serving tenure probation period, a faculty member on tenure track can get a tenure position, which is a permanent position in the university.

Tenure Track was introduced in higher education institutions to attract qualified people and improve the performance of academic faculty of the concerned institutions. The critical question about TTS was to address why states choose to implement specific reforms and what were implications of these changes on the performance of organizations, in this case, public sector universities

New Public Management related reform program aims to change public sector universities identity into corporate identities. A basic premise of NPM reform states that the performance of public sector universities can be improved, and stable business identities can be created by introducing business-like practices. A review of the literature suggested a research gap for linking these concepts and understanding the dynamics of their relationships. The research enriched understanding of the implementation of education reform in HEIs in Pakistan.

Public sector reforms and public administration reforms have been the subject of many studies (e.g. De Vries & Nemec, 2013; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011; Rieder & Lehmann, 2004). Higher education reforms come under public sector reforms, and with the rise (or decline) of NPM related reforms, questions about content, process and implementation of reforms became topics of theoretical discussion and practical challenges for implementing countries (Vigoda-Gadot, 2016). Knowledge about reforms have been increased theoretically and practically (Curry, 2014), and the pertinent question is the experience of different countries with reforms. There researchers address these theoretical gaps in the literature on tenure track management and higher education with the specific context of Pakistan. Main research objectives are as follows:

### **Research Objectives**

Following were objectives:

1. To describe the process of design and development of Tenure Track System in Higher Education Institutions of Pakistan.
2. To explain the role of regulatory bodies to establish TTS in higher education institutions of Pakistan.
3. To elaborate on how the process of interaction between HEC and implementing universities contributed towards developing the content of TTS.
4. To elucidate common concerns of universities before implementation of TTS, and the role of HEC leadership to motivate universities towards the implementation of the reform.

### **Research Questions**

Following were objectives:

1. How did the leaders of regulatory bodies perceive the process of design and development of TTS?
2. What was the role of HEC to establish TTS in HEIs of Pakistan?
3. How did the process of interaction between HEC and implementing universities develop the content of TTS?
4. How did the leaders perceive their role for motivating and addressing concerns of the implementing universities about the content of TTS?

The researchers utilized perspectives of phenomenology (Patton, 2015) and Institutional Theory (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) to understand the context, content, and process of Tenure Track System (TTS) in higher education institutions of Pakistan. This qualitative multiple case study consisted of interviews of top leaders of the Higher Education Commission, Pakistan (HEC) and Provincial Higher Education Commission, PHEC. The data came from semi-structured interviews and archival reports. The data were analyzed with the help of word and excel worksheets.

### **Theory**

Instrumental and institutional perspectives were used to explain content and process of Tenure Track System in higher education institutions of Pakistan. This section briefly explains these theoretical perspectives (Christensen, Laegried, Roness, & Rovik, 2007).

Christensen et al. (2007) described those Instrumental hierarchical and Instrumental negotiations perspectives share the assumption that the logic of Consequences influences political and administrative actions. These perspectives highlighted that there are long traditions in organizations, which considered organizations as instruments. The classical scientist, Max Weber, influenced the organizational theory through his analysis of bureaucracy. According to this perspective, the structural design is essential for achieving organizational goals. The structural features of organizations can influence the organization actions and behaviours of their members. Therefore, changes in organizational goals reflect changes in organizational structures. This perspective focuses on formal structure, a division of labour, specialization, and decision-making rules.

The Cultural Perspective emphasized informal norms and values that evolve and become famous for the organization over time through the process of institutionalisation, and this implied that an organization adapts to internal and external pressures. The norms and values which help organizations to survive in the presence of these pressures become underlying assumptions of the organization. These underlying assumptions form the soul and culture of the organization. Path-dependency means that values and norms that make their mark on an organization during its early and formative years will heavily influence its later development.

Myth perspective also known as a neo-institutional theory is based on classical works by American researchers such as Meyer (1977), Rowan (2012), DiMaggio (1983), Powell (2007) and Scott (1987). The central premise of this perspective describes organizations as a part of institutional environment, and they encountered with a lot of socially created norms and value that how should they operate and function (Christensen, Lægreid, Roness, & Røvik, 2007, p.57).

## Context

Higher education in Pakistan refers to education above grade 12. The higher education of Pakistan is made of two major sectors. First, the university/degree awarding institutes and second their affiliated degree colleges. The Federal Higher Education Commission (HEC) established in 2002 for improvement and promotion of higher education research and development, previously the apex body for higher education was the University Grants Commission (UGC). The Higher Education Commission is an autonomous body responsible for the allocation of public funds to public universities and degree awarding institutes. After the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment to the constitution of Pakistan, where higher education devolves to the provinces. Punjab and Sindh formed higher education at the provincial level. The creation of higher education at the provincial level has been challenged in the Supreme Court of Pakistan by First Chairman of Higher Education Commission, Pakistan. The provincial act formed Punjab Higher Education Commission (PHEC) in 2014. The aims and objectives of HEC and PHEC, mentioned in their respective ordinances, are almost similar.

In 2000, World Bank and UNESCO published a report titled, "Higher Education in Developing Countries – Peril And Promise." This report made various recommendations to improve higher education in developing countries. The Government of Pakistan initiated the Education Sector Reform programme in 2001, which include higher education. The World Bank report triggered the formation of the Taskforce on the improvement of Higher Education in Pakistan. The Federal Minister notified the task force for Education on April 29, 2001. The task force had 17 members from the private and public sector and Co-Chaired by Syed Baber Ali, Pro-Chancellor, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Lahore and Dr Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, President, The Aga Khan University, Karachi. The terms of reference included an in-depth study of higher education of Pakistan, and recommendation for improvement in various functions like governance and management, monetary and financial systems, quality assurance with particular emphasis on public sector higher education institutions. The secretariat office was established at LUMS, Agha Khan University, and The World Bank provided funds for the report. After passing through the rigorous exercise of review and consultation with stakeholders, the task force presented its recommendation to The President of Pakistan on January 11, 2002. It recommended the establishment of an autonomous body, the Higher Education Commission, to improve the overall state of higher education in Pakistan. It recognized contributions of the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) towards developing the recommendations of the study. This report laid the foundations of several reforms including tenure-track introduced by HEC in the following years. The Task Force recommended tenure appointment for faculty members and mentioned that tenure should be awarded based on performance. However, BCG recommended US style Tenure Track System for the appointment of faculty members in public universities of Pakistan (Khan & Jabeen, 2010).

Report by the World Bank on higher education of developing countries paved ways for the creation of higher education commission in Pakistan. The World Bank provided financial support for TTS under Tertiary Education Support Program (TESP). HEC introduced many reforms which were inspired by a program in US higher education; this included TTS as well as 4-year Bachelor program in public universities.

Higher Education Commission was established in 2002 through Presidential ordinance, known as the Higher Education Commission Ordinance, 2002. HEC introduced a series of educational reforms under the chairperson during the years 2002 – 2008. The mission of HEC is “to facilitate institutions of higher education to serve as an engine of growth for the socio-economic development of Pakistan”. Another participant highlighted that report by the World Bank on higher education of developing countries paved ways for the creation of higher education commission in Pakistan. This raised a question of why the World Bank financing TTS program under the Tertiary Education Support Program (TESP). A participant said that the World Bank wanted to influence higher education reforms of this country. This can be inferred from their statements that the World Bank influenced the creation of HEC and subsequent reform package for public universities. HEC introduced many reforms which were inspired by a program in US higher education, which included TTS as well as four year Bachelor program.

Major programs of HEC were: Foreign and local scholarship for M. Phil. and PhD programs, Foreign Faculty Hiring Program, Digital Library to provide access to books and international journals to all public universities, increased funding for research projects, faculty development programmes, establishment of offices of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC) in public universities, establishment of Quality Enhancement Cells (QEC) in public universities, Business Incubation Centers, search committees for Vice Chancellor, and Tenure Track System as performance-based compensation for faculty members of public universities. TTS was one of the critical reforms, as it affected performance and reward system for academics. The primary goal of TTS was to bring excellence in research, teaching, and service of faculty members.

### **Tenure Track System in Pakistan**

TTS was intended to motivate faculty to engage in research activities. Through TTS higher salaries were introduced to attract qualified young persons to the academic profession. There was resistance from the Ministry of Finance, Govt. of Pakistan for offering high salaries to university professors. The Chairperson of HEC made many efforts in this regard and argued that TTS would be a competitive system, TTS required teachers to publish articles, they would not have job security, and they would work hard for promotion. A chairman convinced the Establishment and Finance Ministry on the bases of these arguments. TTS was a cover on the long-term contractual job, which

embedded job insecurity and absence of pension. The chairperson had a network of support of influential people in Govt. of Pakistan. This played a significant role for approval of TTS, like The Executive Director of HEC, who came from the Finance ministry, played an essential role for approval of TTS from Finance Ministry.

Generally, salaries of public university teachers were low at the time of the establishment of HEC. Compensation of faculty members in the university linked with national pay scales and these national pay scales are known as Basic Pay Scales (BPS). Public universities adopted this Basic Pay Scale for their employees, and this compensation increases with an increase in national scales. This necessary scale ranges from 1 to 22. University faculty scales range from 17 to 22, whereas Tenure track has three academic scales – Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor.

When TTS was introduced, it doubled the salary of faculty members working at Assistant Professors level and quadrupled at Professors level. This financial benefit would become challenging to deny for many faculty members since they were at the lower end of compensation as compared to other professions. Traditional employment system at public universities was based on the British system of employment for faculty that encouraged regular appointments. It was not entirely based on performance; seniority was an essential factor for promotion. Under the old system, any administrative experience became valid for promotion to professor. People became Professors without having a PhD degree and research profile. Even if a faculty member had research publications and books on credit, he had to wait till next position became vacant in the respective department. Sometimes, they waited for a lifetime and retired as an Assistant professor, and the position was not advertised. HEC wanted to improve this situation by introducing an internationally competitive system of employment of faculty. TTS was introduced to recognize the efforts of a high performer. TTS was better in these terms; it liberated professors from the traditional career ladder. In a traditional system, productive time spends in waiting for a promotion. TTS aimed at promoting merit by offering a track for performing faculty. A participant said; our focus was on younger people and those who were productive and doing research. This group was in the minority and actively engaged in research. People call them crazy as they were researching without any rewards.

Earlier drafts of TTS developed in 2002 and discussed among senior leaders of the Higher Education Commission. A Chairman, HEC, sent letters to Vice Chancellors for the adoption of TTS in 2003, and few Universities implemented TTS in 2005.

**Table 1***Distribution of TTS faculty according to discipline and academic title*

Title/Discipline	Sciences and Engineering	Social Sciences, Humanities, Management Sciences	Total
Assistant Professor	2300	418	2718(91%)
Associate Professor	106	21	127(4%)
Professor	131	8	139(5%)
Total	2537(85%)	447(15%)	2984(100%)

Table 1 illustrated that 85% of TTS faculty members belong to sciences and engineering disciplines whereas 15% of TTS faculty members came from Social Sciences, Humanities, and Management Sciences. TTS has a bent towards sciences and technology since its beginning. There are 2718 (91%) Assistant Professors, 127 (4%) Associate Professors, 139 (5%) Professors in 78 higher education institutions of Pakistan as on June 30, 2018. This can be inferred from the data that TTS shifted its focus from Professors to Assistant Professors. This would be a challenge for HEC to deal with many available cases of promotion on TTS faculty members from all public higher education institutions of Pakistan.

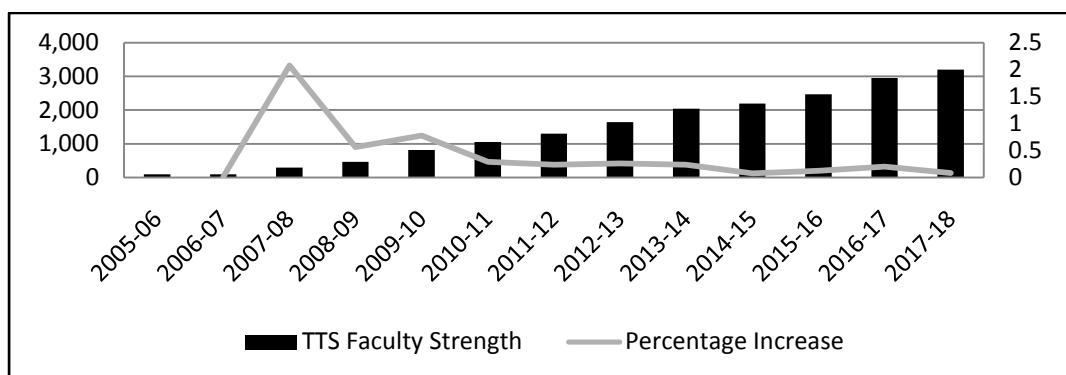
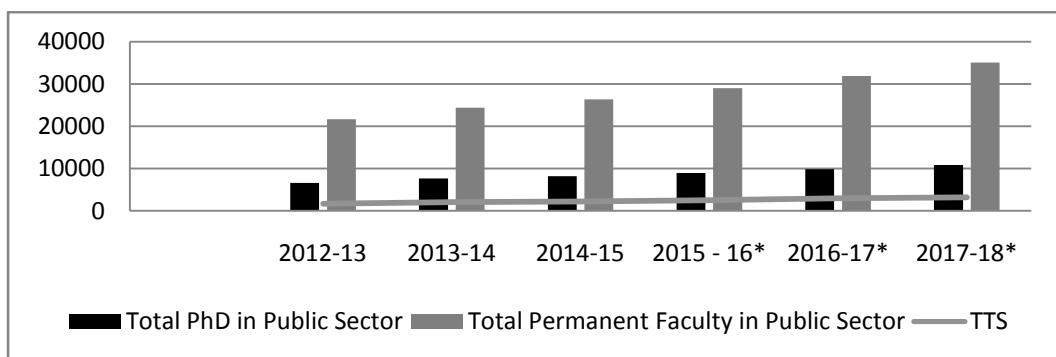
**Figure 1** Total No. of TTS faculty and percentage decrease of TTS faculty

Figure 1 depicted that there is a percentage decrease in new induction on TTS, and it can be inferred that TTS is moving forward with snail pace in HEIs of Pakistan. The percentage to total faculty was high during last years of First Chairman of HEC, and later it decreased on yearly basis.



**Figure 2.** Number of TTS faculty as a percentage of total permanent faculty, total PhD

Higher Education Commission (HEC) endorsed 2984 cases as on June 30, 2018. The total number of permanent faculty members in public universities of Pakistan is 35,089 in 2017-18. That means that TTS faculty members are about 8% of total permanent faculty members, and it is 8% for the last seven years, and this trend has been shown in Figure 2. This percentage of TTS faculty can further reduce if adjunct and part-time faculty added in total faculty members. The researcher did not find exact numbers of adjunct and part-time faculty members in public universities, but this trend of engaging adjunct and part-time faculty members for teaching assignments increasing day by day.

**Table 2**

*TTS faculty as percentage of total permanent faculty, total PhD faculty in public universities*

Year	Total PhD in Public Sector	Total Permanent Faculty in Public Sector	Total TTS Faculty	TTS Faculty as % of Total PhDs	TTS Faculty as % of Total Permanent Faculty	Total PhDs as % of total faculty
2012-13	6564	21672	1648	25%	8%	30%
2013-14	7622	24366	2038	27%	8%	31%
2014-15	8146	26363	2190	27%	8%	31%
2015 - 16*	8961	28999	2466	28%	9%	31%
2016-17*	9857	31899	2955	30%	9%	31%
2017-18*	10842	35089	3198	29%	9%	31%

Note: \*estimated with an assumption of 10% annual growth in permanent faculty members, and PhD faculty members

Table 2 elaborated that percentage of PhDs among permanent faculty is about 29% in 2017-18. The percentage of TTS among permanent PhDs faculty is about 30%. These percentages of PhDs faculty and TTS faculty members almost remain the same for the last seven years. This might be an intention of leaders of HEC to limit TTS faculty to a certain percentage of total permanent faculty members. TTS concentrated in a few higher education institutions. For instance, COMSATS Islamabad has the highest number of TTS faculty members (25%) among all higher education institutions.

## **Research Methodology**

The focus of this study is to understand how the leadership of the two regulatory bodies- HEC and PHEC perceived the process, content, and context of TTS. The researchers focus on deriving meanings given to a phenomenon; hence, qualitative research has been considered as more appropriate than quantitative approach.

Participants represented top leaders of Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Provincial Higher Education Commission (PHEC) which include – Chairman PHEC and Director PHEC, Chairman HEC, Executive Directors HEC, Adviser Quality Assurance HEC, Advisor HRD HEC. The above Interviews took place in Islamabad, and Lahore, Pakistan. All participants had been part of this process of change.

Based on the literature review of the subjects, interview questions are developed regarding the implementation of TTS keeping in view the focus of the study to capture the perspective of leaders of regulatory bodies. Interview questions probed participants to provide detail narrative about experience phenomenon. Case study sites and interviewee were identified through purposeful sampling procedure. The researchers preferred face to face semi-structured interviews. In this regard five face to face,semi-structured interviews and telephonic interview were conducted. Duration of each interview varied from 30 to 80 minutes. The interviews were conducted at the workplace of the interviewee, and participants were relaxed and open to interviewing questions.

The interviews were conducted in the English language, sometimes respondents answered in Urdu. These parts were later translated into English. All interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the participants.

The process was inductive and deductive. The inductive process worked from raw data to codes while the deductive process was utilized for developing themes, generated from the literature to raw data. This process of data analysis was abductive. and analysis procedure was as follows:

First, Transcript and field notes were typed; second, Text files were read for general sense; Third, Memos written for data analysis; Fourth, The researcher, read the text of interviews line by line, highlighted segments, and assigned a code label to each segment.

These codes set the basis for description and themes. The first level of coding was based on the words of participants. Similar codes were merged. Codes were compared with already developed themes from the literature. Codes were then segregated under related themes. Those codes, which did not come under any theme developed from literature, were separated. Codes were then aggregated to form new themes. Themes reported significant findings of the study. Themes consisted of codes, and evidence of

codes was quoted statements of participants. Themes were merged into more significant themes. Finally, the discussion was organized under four major themes relevant to research questions.

Rich description of themes along with long quotes was written. Rich interpretations were added. Themes were grouped under the study research question. This procedure was applied to individual interviews which were cross-analyzed for convergent and divergent themes.

## **Findings**

This section is divided into two case studies, and each case has two themes. The first theme, process, addressed research objectives one and two. The second theme, content, answered research objectives three and four. Based on the findings of the two case studies, i.e. PHEC and HEC, emerged themes are utilized to answer the research questions.

### **The case of the Higher Education Commission, Pakistan**

The Federal Higher education (HEC) was established in 2002 for improvement and promotion of higher education research and development through replacing the University Grants Commission (UGC). HEC was an autonomous body responsible for the allocation of public funds to public universities and degree awarding institutes.

#### **Process**

Series of actions were taken to introduce TTS in public sector universities. The Chairman of HEC shared that they had regular meetings with VCs, faculty members, teacher's associations about projects for universities. HEC tried to engage universities in a strategic planning exercise for developing a vision statement and long-term goals. This exercise helped universities to think about their purpose and future directions.

The participants explained that the primary purpose of TTS was to improve research productivity of public universities. The research output of higher education institutions in Pakistan was small. However, some people worked hard and engaged in research despite all odds and resistances. One of the participants expressed, "*we had to focus on creativity and research activities that need to be going on in the country. There was an activity going on; they did experiments and published papers. TTS provided support to them and made them blossom*". To achieve this goal, TTS was supplemented with high compensation.

HEC leaders assumed that BPS was not motivating faculty for research. TTS was designed to put faculty under pressure for performance. Initial probation period was six years for an assistant professor, and four years for Associate Professor, Professor. This extended period was provided to give time to faculty to establish research. A participant said that there was a need to improve the overall research productivity of public universities. HEC packaged TTS with high monetary benefit, but that came with a price tag. The price was to increase the number of research publications. Many faculty members tempted with monetary benefit, and later they realised the price of that benefit.

The chairman brought many interventions in the higher education sector in 5-6 years. He had a supportive team and had President of the Country as a powerful ally. Financial support for educational reforms was there. The Chairman said that 1/3rd of the entire portfolio of government projects were HEC projects in 2007. A strong team and robust network helped him to implement his vision of educational reforms in a short time frame. The Chairman HEC appreciated the support of the President was critical for higher education reform programs. The Chairman asserted that they adopted a consultative approach during the implementation of these reforms. It appears that they engaged universities through feedback during the formulation and implementation of reform programs. He stated:

It was a period of intensive consultation and interaction with the universities, with faculty during the implementation of all those reforms because we can not have an ivory tower approach, you say, sitting in Islamabad and directing them.

The chairman asserted that HEC was respectful towards university autonomy. He was concerned about the autonomy of public universities.

Many members of the earlier senior management of HEC were the product of the US education system. They knew the system and had a natural bias towards TTS. Some of them had vast experience of public universities of Pakistan. They understood the issues and challenges of higher education in Pakistan. The Chairman and Executive Director were two critical persons in HEC for bringing higher education reforms. University Grants Commission was replaced with HEC. The agreement was made that HEC would keep the employees of UGC. Chairman of HEC kept the accord. Leadership changed, but the administrative structure and staff of UGC remained there. This administrative structure was used to bring a series of interventions in public universities. HEC leadership had this inhibition that the President of the country would be removed from power due to political instability, and this might be a reason to come up with a half-cooked TTS scheme. HEC leadership wanted to take a benefit of the presence of the President who was a big supporter of higher education reforms initiated by the Chairman, HEC. Leaders of HEC launched TTS with this assumption that the scheme would be strengthened over time. There were issues of leave, maternity leave, casual and other types of leaves and. Seniority among faculty gets affected.

In order to improve acceptance of TTS in public universities, HEC did a little arm twisting by developing a formula for allocating grant based on the number to PhD faculty. If the university wanted to increase their funding, then they need to have more PhDs. More PhDs can come through TTS scheme. HEC assigned some numbers for PhD faculty in their ranking. Through this structure, they influenced public universities to implement TTS. Initially, HEC gave a full salary of TTS, and then they gave a half salary. A participant considered these practices as an injustice against universities in the distant area. He said that Universities in major cities have high numbers of TTS; their ranking went up and had more funding. Universities in distant areas like Zob, Banu, where there was a shortage of TTS faculty got low numbers and less funding.

The initial challenge for leaders of HEC was to change the mindset of faculty towards the permanent job in government sector. TTS challenged that mindset and provided an option to the faculty to leave their permanent jobs and join a contractual job of TTS. HEC focused on fresh PhD as it was easier to orient them for performance-based compensation. This was not easier to bring change in human behaviour. TTS was not just changing in rewards of faculty; the change was in the entire orientation of faculty towards their work as expressed by one participant:

So, you are changing mindsets; you are changing systems. Moreover, that was difficult, but it also caused much excitement. The people who were worked horses and who were toiling away.

It appears that earlier leaders of HEC were responsive about queries of Vice Chancellors and faculty. They had consultation meetings with Vice Chancellors of public universities about the implementation of reforms. Then, there was a section who worked directly with faculty members on issues relating to TTS. A participant stated, "*Everybody was on email, and there was immediate action on any issue. So, we were very responsive in this regard.*"

A theme emerged here that HEC senior management came from a science background. The scale for the social sciences was different. They used the same scale for social sciences as they used in the sciences. There is a need to look at social sciences from a different angle. A participant said, *The Chairman said make Pakistan economy like the economy of Korea, Singapore, become a knowledge economy, if the country is facing issues like terrorism Physics was not going to address that.* This can be implied that there is a need to focus on social sciences.

Many members of an initial team of senior management of HEC were graduates of the US education system. TTS was a common term for them, and TTS became an obvious choice for introducing performance-based compensation in public universities. TTS was a dominant system of organizing teacher's work at US universities. Some members of senior management of HEC were part of public universities in Pakistan. They considered that the environment of public universities was politicized, and they expected that TTS would promote merit and performance in public universities.

Chairman HEC argued that reforms were introduced according to our priorities. He refused that World Bank report had an impact on the reform movement in higher education in Pakistan. The chairman HEC asserted that inspiration of the TTS came from reward system implemented in his research institute. He worked in a research institute, and rewards system there focused on the evaluation of researchers. The main work of faculty was research in his institute, employment arrangement for faculty focused on research work, and it suited the institute, which was primarily a research institute. Later, this employment arrangement became a model for all higher education institutions, and that created problems during implementation of TTS in all public universities. There were a variety of public universities, and university faculty was primarily engaged in teaching activities. This created conflicts during the implementation of TTS among stakeholders, a new pay system for faculty – TTS, focused on the research productivity of teachers. This narrow down focus of teachers on TTS to produce research papers. This can be implied from statements of the chairman that he was not aware of the wave of NPM inspired reforms spread in many developing countries, and its links with the World Bank and IMF.

### **Content**

Participants explained that main purpose of TTS was to improve research productivity of public universities. Pakistan higher education research output was small, but some people worked hard and engaged in research despite all odds and resistances. A participant said *we had to focus on creativity and research activities that need to be going on in the country. There was activity going on; they did experiments and publish papers. TTS provided support to them and made them blossom.* To achieve this goal, TTS was supplemented with high compensation. HEC leaders assumed that BPS was not motivating faculty for research. TTS was designed to put faculty under pressure for performance. Initial probation period was six years for an assistant professor, and four years for Associate Professor, Professor. This extended period was provided to give time to faculty to establish research. A participant said that there was a need to improve the overall research productivity of public universities. HEC packaged TTS with high monetary benefit, but that came with a price tag. The price was to increase the number of research publications. Many faculty members tempted with monetary benefit, and later they realized the price of that benefit. Generally, salaries of public university teachers were low at that time.

HEC leaders were adamant that public universities could not make changes in guidelines of TTS issued by HEC. There was minimal flexibility in making any changes in guidelines of TTS without the approval of HEC. HEC intervened selection and performance management system of public universities. They required universities to get that document approved by their Syndicate. They tried to centralize the selection and performance management system of public universities through these guidelines. The document became a control document for TTS matters. Chairman HEC asserted that these statutes need to be tougher for university teachers. He stated, *Yes, institutions can make minor changes, but in the consultation with the HEC, so the spirit of tenure-track would not be violated.*

Guidelines of TTS were provided to public universities. The question was how much implementing universities has the discretion to change these guidelines. The university cannot make small changes without the approval of HEC. This seems contradictory to his claim that they had given autonomy to public universities. It appears that education reform programs provided HEC with a way to curtail the real autonomy of public universities.

Faculty and university management tried to adapt these TTS guidelines according to their university requirements. Spirit of TTS narrows down to increase research publications. It appears that HEC leaders assumed that if faculty published research articles, then they would become better university teachers. TTS was already struck in meeting procedural requirements, and the basic spirit of TTS might be compromised. TTS faculty found many ways to meet the number of requirements of research papers. This would be more convenient in case of sciences, social science faculty still struggling to find their feet in the system. TTS guidelines were revised in 2008. There was a need that every policy of HEC including TTS get reviewed. A participant encouraged young researchers to research this domain.

Participants of the study did not consider any inherent bias in the content of TTS. A participant said that the way it implemented made it controversial. The question was how TTS guidelines were implemented. The context of TTS guidelines was different from the context of public universities of Pakistan. HEC leaders are adamant that guidelines were best as one participant said, *It is not discriminatory, but the way it has been implemented in certain universities was discriminatory.*

The tenured faculty has a role in evaluation. Initially, HEC put all faculty members on the tenure track. The question arose that who would be tenured faculty for evaluation. HODs, who were generally on BPS, were involved in the evaluation of tenured faculty. HODs role was defined as necessary for the evaluation of TTS cases.

### **The Case of Provincial Higher Education Commission (PHEC)**

The main objective of this study was to gain insight into the perspective of the regulatory body about higher education reform and particularly TTS as education reform. PHEC was formed through the bill passed by the Punjab assembly on December 29, 2014. The researchers explained the perspective of the leadership of PHEC about the implementation of TTS in public universities. The following themes emerged during the interviews:

#### **Process**

There was resistance from the Ministry of Finance, Govt. of Pakistan for offering high salaries to university professors. The Chairperson of HEC made many efforts in this regard. The chairperson argued that TTS would be a competitive system, teachers need to publish articles, they would not have job security, and they would work hard for promotion. He convinced the Establishment and Finance Ministry on the bases of these arguments. He made many efforts to get the salary package of TTS approved by the Finance Ministry, though the ministry resisted a lot. TTS was a cover on the long-term contractual job, which embedded job insecurity and absence of pension. The chairperson had a network of support of influential people in Govt. of Pakistan, and this played a significant role for approval of TTS.

There were a series of actions taken before implementation of TTS including the advocacy of TTS to stakeholders of public universities. These actions were taken to convince public universities to implement TTS. The formal process of implementation of TTS started with sending letters to Vice Chancellors for implementation of TTS. Since public universities were not legally bound to follow guidelines of HEC. Later, HEC asked public universities to get the scheme approved by their Syndicate – the approving authority to amend approval of such initiatives. Through this way, TTS became legitimate for public universities.

Vice Chancellors of some universities influenced their PhD faculty to join TTS. HEC made it compulsory for universities to recruit PhD faculty on TTS only. HEC influenced and convinced public universities' management to implement TTS. Consequently, Vice Chancellors of different universities convinced their faculty to join TTS. Many universities implemented TTS as HEC provided separate funding for it. TTS was implemented partially, as leaders need to see the integration of TTS with the culture of public universities.

HEC introduced structural changes in university recruitment system to increase TTS faculty in public universities. Even though many universities did not implement it fully, it appears that Universities and faculty accepted TTS partially. One of the participants stated that *HEC came up with TTS and wished that everyone should join it. VC of our University recruited faculty on TTS. He teased faculty by refusing them to recruit on BPS basis.*

The process of implementation got slow in public universities due to concerns of the current faculty. HEC wanted to phase out BPS from public universities. They asked implementing universities to recruit fresh PhD only on TTS. Through this way, HEC wanted to increase the number of TTS faculty and gradually phase out BPS. Many faculty members were inclined towards BPS due to job security. Moreover, confusion and ambiguities in procedures and processes of TTS were discouraged young faculty from joining TTS.

The specific objective of TTS was to offer higher salaries for the promotion of research, but it can be perceived as a scheme to remove pension benefits by senior professors, and brought job insecurity among them. It can be implied from answers of respondents that HEC did not succeed to make TTS as a profession of choice for public universities despite making it compulsory for public universities to recruit PhD faculty on TTS. They made various changes in initial guidelines of TTS to make it suitable for existing faculty of public universities. HEC was able to form an island of “elite faculty” in public universities, but the questionis often raised about the level of scholarship in public universities.

### **Content**

Content includes written guidelines of TTS. TTS guidelines were taken from the Faculty Handbook of The University of New Mexico, USA. These guidelines were incongruent with the culture of public universities of Pakistan. These guidelines were modified many times, and many versions of TTS came over time with the last version that came in 2008. This local version of TTS had many differences with TTS in the US. Cultural factors modified TTS according to its realities. The name remained TTS, but it was quite different from TTS at US universities. Several confusions arose due to the difference in the guidelines and practice of TTS in public universities. The major difference between TTS at US and TTS at Pakistan were cultural context. These guidelines were written in US academic context, where TTS was a major reward system for academics. Basic Pay Scales (BPS) is a major reward system for faculty in Pakistan, and this links with national pay scale of the country and provides permanent job to teachers. The TTS guidelines were interpreted in the local context and developed ambiguities during implementation.

Conditions laid down in TTS guidelines became a source of resistance for existing faculty of public universities. A large number of existing faculty members did not meet the eligibility requirements of TTS. PhD was essential requirements for applying to tenure track positions. There was a large number of university teachers at that time, which did not have PhDs. This condition of PhD put them at a disadvantageous position. Therefore they resisted the condition of PhD for tenure track positions. The initial condition of public universities of Pakistan was mostly at dismay. A participant said that First Chairman of HEC considered many university teachers as deadwood. He said, the *chairperson publicly answered queries of protesting teachers that you had not been teaching for 20 years. You taught one year and then repeated for 20 times. You had not done any research and had not read any new books.*

Existing faculty resisted implementation of TTS for three major reasons. Firstly, TTS did not have a pension benefit. Secondly, this did not make sense to those faculty members, who already served the university for ten years or more. As if they would join TTS, then they would lose pension and seniority benefits of the previous service. Thirdly, TTS guidelines stated the condition of resignation from the previous job, and this was addressed, and the condition of resignation was removed for the current faculty.

As the number of TTS faculty grew, HEC came up with clarifications about TTS guidelines. It was clear that policy guidelines were not developed according to the context of public universities — this created confusions among university management and teachers. Initially, there were cases when faculty came on TTS and then went back on BPS. The academic community made fun of TTS and treated it as a short-term incentive. They moved like a pendulum between BPS and TTS. Later, HEC amended TTS guidelines and mentioned that faculty members who had joined TTS, would go back on BPS once and would not be allowed to join TTS again. This provision was for existing faculty as they had the insecurity of losing a permanent job.

There was another notification which barred TTS faculty from having an administrative office in the university. That letter intended to stop TTS faculty to assume full-time administrative office in universities to give more time to teaching and research. They could become a member of the Departmental Technical Review Committee (DTRC) and other committees. This notification became controversial in public universities. Many TTS faculty were working on administrative positions. They resisted leaving administrative positions. University management came up with different definitions of administrative office to accommodate their teachers

## Discussion

Initially, TTS was rejected by many universities. Then some universities adopted it reluctantly. TTS remained decoupled with the main structure of the specific universities. Faculty of old universities resisted due to the effects of this new form of governance on universities as cultural institutions (Readings, 1997). However, new universities quickly coupled TTS with their system due to their transition state. TTS is still considered as an alien in the culture of old universities. TTS has been criticized as faculty becomes more divided, more supervised, more evaluated, and more powerless in defining their work after implementation of higher education reforms (Teichler & Yagci, 2009). Under the ‘new managerialism’ and the ‘new bureaucracy’ (Murphy 2009), faculty are treated ‘as workers who need to be monitored rather than as professionals who are trusted to work according to internalized standards’ (Gumpert, 1997, 128).

From an *instrumentalperspective*, TTS was introduced to improve research performance of university faculty. TTS provided an opportunity to earn more money and get the promotion of Assistant Professor. Bounded rationality was an assumption here. High compensation and promotion were highlighted so that the individual would ignore other factors of TTS. This happened in public universities, where there was a wave of joining TTS.

Legal document of TTS created confusions and ambiguities during implementation. There was a division of labour between HEC and implementing public universities. HEC sent guidelines of TTS to public universities. Universities did not have real discretion to make any changes in guidelines without permission of HEC. HEC developed a centralized structure for endorsement of cases of TTS which increased control of HEC over TTS faculty in public universities.

HEC influenced university management to implement TTS. Large universities resisted implementation of TTS. HEC negotiated with teachers’ association for implementation of TTS. HEC made various changes in TTS guidelines to accommodate the interests of dominant coalitions of large universities. Leaders of public universities faced resistance from existing faculty. It appears that many faculty members did not want to leave their permanent BPS position, which provides them freedom of boundary-crossing and meaningful projects of their choice. They viewed that TTS would restrict them to limited topics or top academic journals. They declined to participate in the TTS. They can be labelled as faculty, who opted out from tenure-track by choice.

The leadership of HEC played a significant role in the development of the support network for implementation of TTS. HEC tried to convince university leaders to implement TTS. It provided financial support for the scheme and provided extra funding for PhD faculty. It was a rational argument for University leadership, as they did not finance TTS through their funds. Later HEC provided partial financial support for TTS. The required coordination among various stakeholders was missing. These higher education reforms raised a need for better governance and management of universities. The notion of permanent employment with long term benefits was challenged, and contractual arrangement in the name of tenure track introduced with long probation periods, which favour managerial paradigm that values pressure on faculty to respond to increase research publications in public universities (Sultana, 2012).

Isomorphism partly elucidates about the process of implementation of reforms in public universities. The concept also explains why HEC came up with TTS. HEC intention may be explained by mimetic isomorphism, where they wanted to introduce academic employment system accepted globally. The fundamental reform of the autonomy of public universities was never realized. Under neoliberalism, universities are under attack (Readings, 1997), and many wondered that whether intellectual work is possible in institutions which governed with the mindset that undermined what is essential to be human: critique, debate, imagination, and desire of freedom.

Introduction of tenure-track in public universities of Pakistan can partly be described as coercive isomorphism or pressure from the central regulatory body (DiMaggio & Powell 1983). TTS was presented as a solution to improve research performance of public universities. Coercive isomorphism stems from the pressure of newly formed central regulatory body – HEC. HEC was funding the TTS. Therefore they put pressure on public universities to implement their given guidelines of TTS. These guidelines were not developed according to the socio-cultural context of public universities. In the US, tenure was discussed under the context of academic freedom. Academic freedom was not a concern here. Herbert and Tienari (2013) argued that tenure-track and its effects need to be measured in light of the local context. They elaborated the importance of local context for the implementation of tenure. They stressed that tenure-track could be modified and adapted according to the implementing university context.

‘Socially created norms in the institutional environment are called myths’ (Christensen et al., p.57). Higher education institutions in Pakistan were exposed to NPM inspired reforms. There were attempts to transfer private sector ideas to public universities. TTS was presented as performance-based compensation which to increase academic standards in higher education institutions. Public universities were characterized as full of dead wood faculty and situation of research was presented as

worse. TTS was presented as a recipe to address problems of performance at public universities. TTS was a rationalized myth as it was presented as a logical arrangement of academics' work. TTS provided a higher salary, fast promotion track, and wrapped as some elite system. The symbol of elite identity was created in the form of TTS. When some TTS faculty engaged in unethical and non-professional work, then this identity of the elite was busted. TTS was symbolized as a quick way of making money in universities. Many professors found TTS as a rational choice for earning a good income while engaging in research work. Institutional logics of society affected the decisions of these professors. They are living in society, where the teacher waited until their retirement to get basic amenities like reasonable accommodation, vehicles and other perks. TTS provided them with an opportunity to improve their living standards during the service.

## Conclusion

The researchers inferred that the magnitude of change was enormous and the pace was fast; that developed confusion and ambiguities among other stakeholders. Public universities and administrative structure of HEC were not able to keep up their pace with his vision. This magnitude of change produced such significant ripple effects that universities and HEC got struck in unanticipated and unintended effects of reform programs. Therefore, many programs did not intend to achieve their goals.

Many members of the Initial team of HEC management had exposure to US education; therefore they introduced new performance-based compensation of faculty with the name of TTS. The intention was to improve the performance of the faculty. TTS would hope to become a medium to improve the performance of faculty. The use of tenure track system for faculty employment in US universities is declining (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Levine, 1997), but The Chairman HEC asserted TTS as best compensation system for faculty members in public universities.

The focus of the tenure track system was shifted during the implementation of TTS. TTS was perceived as a scheme for earning good money. TTS main objective was set aside, and the scheme was narrowed down to its monetary benefits. HEC unintendedly introduced the culture of greed where they monetised the work of faculty. A participant said, "*HEC gave money for all efforts. There were many beneficiaries of these efforts. This monetization of TTS undermined its other benefits.*" The reform process that began in 2005 was not a straight linear process; these reforms passed through a series of cycles-implemented in different cyclical activities (Krücken, 2014). New Public Management (NPM) reforms put into question the traditional model of governance of universities based on state regulation and academic self-governance (de Boer, Enders, & Schimank, 2007). Interestingly, in the case of Pakistan state regulation was increased and academic

self-governance of universities was curtailed. Now present discussions on ‘post-New Public Management’ (Paradeise et al. 2009) or the ‘neo-Weberianstate’ (Pollitt & Bouckaert 2011) presented an argument in favour of reforming some of the reforms without taking them further.

Tenure Track System was introduced as a part of the higher education reform program, and there were internal and external factors which influenced the reform program. There were problems in guidelines of the content of TTS, which were not coherent and aligned with socio-cultural realities of public universities of Pakistan. Moreover, the same guidelines were tried to implement in all kind of public universities. The context of a public university did not weight these guidelines. There was a careful process, where stakeholders were involved during policy formulation and implementation. HEC exercised their power to influence public universities to implement TTS. Financing of TTS routed through HEC, and this allowed HEC to increase their control over governance and management affairs of public universities.

Consequently, real autonomy for selecting faculty on TTS shifted to HEC. HEC centralized the whole process, which created bottlenecks due to bureaucratic procedures and lack of responsiveness at HEC. However, HEC leaders asserted that merit and transparency were maintained in the process. The researchers inferred that TTS was centralized to mitigate the influence of local politics of public universities.

To conclude, our analysis suggested that momentum and drive of earlier leaders of HEC diminished in the subsequent years. The number of teachers on TTS increased, but ambiguities and problems increased. After the 18th Constitutional amendment, the environment of public universities even became more complex.

Tenure Track System at Pakistan was an imitation of TTS at US universities, where it was the significant employment arrangement of the faculty. TTS as an institution is on a downward slope, as many US universities were moving towards long-term contractual arrangement (Finkin, 1998). There are noticeable commitment and costs associated with the implementation of TTS in public universities. Decision makers at universities were conservative in implementing TTS with universities own resources (Goodrick & Salancik, 1996). TTS has markedly declined in the last four decades in US universities, and many faculty positions were filled through fixed-term contractual arrangements (Park, Sine, & Tolbert, 2011).

New Public Management related recipes influenced the local version of TTS. This was a contractual arrangement which was symbolized as TTS. Mostly, TTS was narrowed down to producing research papers for promotion and increments. TTS was acceptable to an international organization like The World Bank which supported TTS financially under the Tertiary Education Support Program (TESP). HEC and universities leadership can sit and decide about the future direction of higher education and what kind of faculty compensation and merit system can help to improve teaching and research quality in higher education institutions.

### **Recommendations**

The findings of the study suggest that HEC ought to grant more autonomy to public universities to decide about the content of TTS guidelines, performance and evaluation criteria and procedures, selection of TTS faculty, promotion of TTS faculty. TTS was not meant for everyone and when faculty members were forced to join on TTS, it created problems for university management and faculty members. HEC needed to make the scheme attractive enough, so that faculty should apply for TTS on their own choice.

Future of TTS is linked with the vision of HEC, and how HEC motivates and encourages the university stakeholders to implement TTS. The TTS is taking roots in public universities with a slow pace, and the number of TTS faculty members remain small in public universities of Pakistan. HEC required to improve their response and capacity for timely processing of their promotion cases. TTS is a performance-based system, and its practical implementation required timely decisions about the position of tenure. Presently, decisions were delayed, and faculty members, university management, and HEC management were responsible for these delays.

The creation of Provincial HEC complexed the environment of public universities of Pakistan. Leaders of HEC termed creation of Provincial HEC as backed by political interests. Leaders of PHEC asserted that leaders of HEC did not succeed in their reform agenda, and HEC could not implement these reforms as per their intended goals. HEC and PHEC areas of jurisdiction overlap, which opened confrontation between the two regulatory bodies. The coordination and alignment of strategies between regulatory bodies required to improve the implementation of higher education policies.

TTS and BPS faculty members are learning to co-exist with each other. The pay difference between Assistant professor (TTS) and Assistant Professor (TTS) got narrowed due to the delayed revision of TTS scales. Conflicts and confrontation would arise if the pay gap between the two systems gets widened. Any pay revision, without addressing fundamental matters of TTS, and cultural matters of public universities, would not lead to achieving intended goals of TTS. The researchers recommend that i) starting salaries

would remain the same for each Assistant Professors on both systems. ii) Faculty members can choose any track based on their inclination. iii) Compensation band consisting of different levels should be introduced at professor level, this would create pay variations among professors. iv) there shall be multiple tracks for university faculty members like research intensive, teaching intensive, service intensive. The performance evaluation and eligibility criteria shall be determined according to the nature of the work of faculty members. v) There is a need to share the power of leaders at different levels of a public university. Delegation of power will help top leaders to spare their time for strategy formulation and execution. vii) There is a need to build capacity and skills of HEC staff related to TTS for timely processing of cases of TTS faculty members.

Last but not the least, it is time for HEC leadership to take an introspection of the program keeping in view the purpose of Higher Education. Many countries have learnt these lessons after three decades of implementation of higher education reforms. It is high time to revisit TTS and other reforms which are not achieving their intended objectives.

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