

Internationalization of Higher Education: Trends and Policies in Pakistan

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Abstract

This paper studies the globalization of higher education in context of Pakistan. Pakistan is following the policy of internationalization of higher education that gained momentum since 2002 after the formation of HEC. The outbound ratio of students is increasing with a fast pace. However, the inflow of international students is becoming vital. Pakistan can attract international students by following a precise strategic plan that can exert a positive impact on the economy as well. The aim of this study is to provide a policy framework for the inflow of international students in Pakistan.

Keywords: Internationalization, higher education, pakistan

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Introduction

UNESCO (2006) defines internationalization of education as “It is higher education that takes place in situations where the teacher, student, program, institution or provider and course materials become cross-national. The cross-border education may include higher education by public, private, not-for-profit and for-profit providers. It encompasses a wide range of modalities in a continuum from in person (students traveling abroad and having campuses abroad) to distance learning (using technologies and including e-learning).” In simple words, internationalization is a way of introducing an international outlook into education.

In the contemporary world, globalization has become a revolutionary development in higher education. It has become an important part of national trade policies. It creates financial resources to academic institutions and spurs growth in economies. It brings intelligent students from different parts of the world and offers an opportunity to improve diplomatic relations with other economies. The overall demand for international education and professional training is increasing in most of the countries. The annual report published by UNESCO (2012) shows that the international movement of students has increased from 2.1 million to 3.4 million students from 2002 to 2010. Several factors have contributed to this, for instance, development of information technology, population growth, desire for higher education, etc. With this increased demand of higher education, the ability of domestic educational institutions to attract foreign students is entailed. Several countries are designing different policies to internationalize the education and to attract as many international students as possible. To recruit international students, domestic universities must meet the international educational standards since the students have to compete internationally and are expected to solve problems from multiple perspectives.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses various types of international education. Section 3 explains the issues related to the quality of internationalization in higher education. Section 4 focuses on higher education in Pakistan. Section 5 sheds some light on internationalization of higher education in Pakistan. Section 6 suggests some strategic and policy framework for internationalization of higher education in Pakistan. The final section concludes the paper.

Types of International Education

There are mainly two types of international education. First, students do not leave their home countries and receive international education through distance learning. It offers convenient flexible way to get degrees. Instead of attending on campus classes, the students can participate in courses such as hybrid and online courses, through television, and also the print based courses.

Second type of international education focuses in campus study, where students move across borders and get their degrees in person in foreign countries. This type of education is increasing gradually. Foreign degree providers or the affiliated domestic partners or both of them jointly award credits for the course. Franchising, dual degrees, distance education and various articulation models are important forms of internationalization of higher education. A brief overview of these methods is as follows;

- *Franchise:* In this scheme, domestic country allows a well reputed foreign institution to start degree program in home country. Terms and conditions like teaching arrangements, management, profit sharing, etc. are set mutually by the partners.
- *Dual degree:* In this case, universities in different countries offer a program jointly and the students get qualification from both institutions.
- *Distance education:* Under this criterion, universities educate students in different countries by employing different technologies and offer online courses.
- *Articulation:* In this system, universities in different countries compare the course contents with the course work completed at some other universities and permit students to transfer their credits. Students can benefit from this mode of internationalization to transfer their credit hours in other universities.

From an academic point of view, these types of international education improve the quality of education, research and development at domestic universities, since it also increases competition. From a cultural perspective, it offers an opportunity to socialize with other nations.

Quality Concerns in Internationalization of Higher Education

Globalization and internationalization in any field need a lot of effort, standard and quality. In education quality is implied with research and learning at university level and it is also integrated with professional responsibilities of

academics (Harvey and Newton, 2004). The growing interest in the quality of higher education became global in late 1990s. Since then quality is the main concern for institutions and government agendas for designing the policies for higher education. In Pakistan the policies of internationalization are designed without much apprehension to assure quality. Thus there is a need of an international and national recognized quality assurance system that can guarantee the transparent control of programs of higher education, so that the degrees and diplomas of the students are accepted internationally.

Harvey and Stensaker (2008) define the quality of higher education in five ways, i.e.

- Exceptional: Achieving the excellence with surpassed standards.
- Perfection: Aims at the procedures and to set standards to meet the goals.
- Fitness for the purpose: Defined by the institutions to reflect course objectives.
- Fitness of the purpose: Assess that the institution's quality related intentions are sufficient.
- Value for money: Assessment of quality by accountability in education sector.
- Transformation: Ongoing process of quality enhancement in education sector to empower and enhance the quality of students and researchers.

All over the world the agencies are working for the quality assurance at international and national level with different approaches. Their jobs are to ensure the quality by employing the techniques of evaluations, accreditations, quality audits, etc. Vlasceanu *et al.* (2007) assert that the higher education academic quality is kind of multidimensional in context of education model and it covers the objectives and missions of the institution, standards that needs to be maintained in institution, disciplines and programs.

Higher Education in Pakistan

Higher education in Pakistan has increased many folds in the last few decades and has gained momentum since HEC started its functions in 2002. The number of universities has increased from 2 to 138 from 1947 to 2012, out of which 75 universities are from public sector and 63 are in private sector. As a result, student enrollment has also increased many folds from 276274 in 2001-02 to 1594648 in 2012-13.

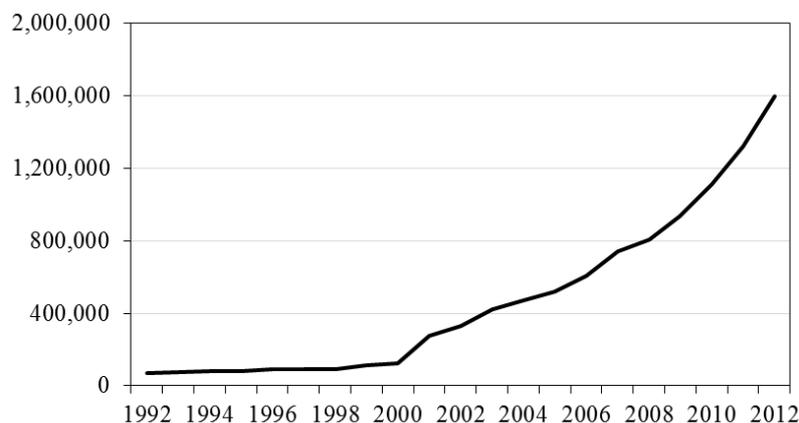


Figure 1: Enrolment of Higher Education in Pakistan

Figure 1 shows trend analysis that clearly indicates that higher education enrollment has increased many folds in Pakistan since 1991-92.[†] Practically, there is no difference between public and private universities in Pakistan because many public universities like private universities charge high tuition fees. Similarly, private universities are eligible for public funds.

Internationalization of Higher Education

The details about internationalization of higher education are presented as follows:

Global Trends

Annual report of UNESCO (2006) has shown that demand for international education will increase up to 7.2 million international students in 2025 from 1.8 million in 2000. Recent data from the Institute of International Education (IIE, 2011) has shown that international student enrollment has increased from 690,923 in 2009-10 to 723,277 in 2010-11 (4.7 percent increase). It has created both challenges and opportunities for the countries for international education by increasing the demand for programs and institutions. Countries with high rates of inflow of international students include USA, UK, Australia, and Canada (UNESCO, 2012). These countries have shown tremendous growth from 2002 to 2009. Canada has shown the highest rise as international students enrollment has increased from 52,650 in 2002 to 87,798 in 2009 (67 percent increase). In UK international students enrollment has increased

[†] For Figure 1 data is taken from Pakistan Economic Survey.

from 227,273 to 368,968 (62 percent increase). Similarly, in Australia international students enrollment has increased from 179,619 to 257,637 (43 percent increase). International student enrollment in USA has increased from 582,996 to 660,581 students (13 percent increase). Although in growth terms USA lag behind in international student recruitment; however, in absolute term it remained the leading country and enrolled 20 percent of all international students globally in 2009. However, due to increased competition and the opening of new markets, the share of these countries is likely to decline in future[‡].

Internationalization of Education in Pakistan

Pakistan has also adopted the policy of internationalization of higher education quite liberally. As a result, many students went abroad to get higher education and the trend has increased with fast pace that can be seen in Figure 2.[§] In 2012, approximately 35086 students went to foreign universities for study mainly to USA and UK and also to Australia, Germany, Malaysia, Canada, etc. (UNESCO, 2012). Table 1 reflects the outbound mobility of Pakistani students according to countries. Although, parents in Pakistan are mainly financing higher education of their children studying abroad, Pakistani government through HEC is also providing finance for higher education abroad. Under the HEC overseas scholarship scheme, a total of 4986 scholars have been sent abroad/financed under various programs for MS, PhD and post-doctoral research. Out of these, 2375 have successfully completed their studies and returned to serve Pakistan. Most of the students went abroad in the field of Engineering & Technology followed by Physical Sciences. Further, under Faculty Development Program of HEC a total of 1569 overseas scholarships for PhD studies have been awarded. Out of these, 178 scholars have completed their PhDs. Under the program of 'Development of High Level Manpower S&T through Split PhD Program' 86 scholars have been sent abroad for split PhD. Advanced countries are also providing scholarships to students from Pakistan. The world's largest Fulbright Scholarship Program provides scholarship to many Pakistani students each year to study in the US. Similarly, many students travel to Australia for study under the Australia Pakistan Scholarship Program.

[‡] More details can be found in students' global mobility trend see Choudaha and Chang (2012).

[§] For Figure 2 data is taken from UNESCO (2012).

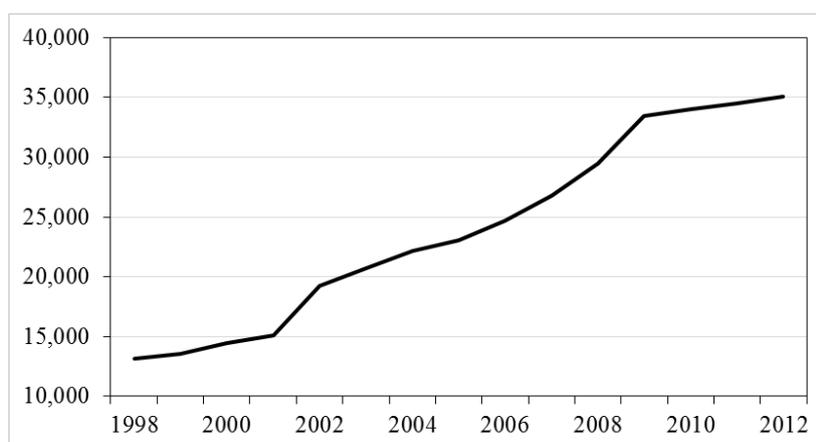


Figure 2: Outbound Student Mobility

Table 1

Outbound Students

Country	Number of Students
United Kingdom	9754
United States	5176
Australia	3078
Sweden	3044
Canada	1560
Germany	1406
Malaysia	1367
Cyprus	1215
Cuba	934
Kyrgyzstan	911
Saudi Arabia	766
France	673
Finland	420
Austria	317
Norway	291
Others	4174
Total Number of Mobile Students abroad	35086
% of global internationally mobile students	1
Outbound mobility ratio	2.6
Gross outbound enrolment ratio	0.2

Source: UNESCO (2012)

Pakistan also adopted the Foreign Faculty Hiring Programs. Under this program so far more than 300 experts and scientists from various top leading universities/institutions of the world have been hired. Similarly, under Visiting Scholars Program 61 experts have come to Pakistan. These experts spend two to eight weeks at public sector universities/DAIs to share their knowledge and conduct workshops/seminars for graduate indigenous students. It helps to increase the interaction between Pakistani and foreign universities that will open for future research collaboration and faculty change. HEC has also started the program of Travel Grants for Pakistani Researchers. Under this program financial assistance is provided to university faculty members, university staff, and the PhD scholars from the public and private sector universities/DAIs going abroad to attend international conferences, post doctorate research or any other kind of research. During 2010-11, HEC approved 986 travel grant cases.**

HEC has signed MoUs with partner agencies abroad including DAAD (Germany), SFERE (France), NUFFIC (Netherlands), KTH (Sweden), CSC (China), OAED (Austria), KTH (Sweden) and Massey and Auckland university of New Zealand for successful implementation of scholarship schemes for the admissions, monitoring of its scholars and discounted tuition fee. Further, an MoU has been signed in January 2011 with the Cambridge Commonwealth Trust and Cambridge Overseas Trust. HEC succeeded in receiving funding for its scholars from different countries like Sweden, UK, the Netherlands, China, etc. This resulted in saving approximately 0.3819 million Euros to the government of Pakistan. In addition 52 HEC scholars successfully funded PhD positions based on their outstanding achievements. HEC also encourages local universities to establish linkages with international universities for collaborative research and study. Pakistani universities have established linkages with 32 well reputed international universities mostly with US universities (13) followed by UK universities (6) and German universities (5). These universities can run programs in Pakistan.

HEC has been given the mandate to uplift higher education in the country by encouraging Pakistani nationals and foreigners to take admission in universities/DAIs of Pakistan. HEC processes the admission cases of foreign nationals and dual nationality holder Pakistani origin students against reserved seats in the discipline of MBBS, BDS, BE/BSc Engineering, Pharm-D under self-finance scheme. In 2010-11, 248 students were admitted in different educational and professional universities/institutions in the field of MBBS (106 students) followed by Pharm-D

**For more details see HEC annual report (2011-12).

(70 students), engineering (67 students) and BDS (5 students). In addition in 2010-11 HEC has processed 1225 cases of admission of foreign nationals for NOC. The detail of international students who came to Pakistan during 2010-11 is given in Table 2.

Table 2

International Students in Pakistan: Place of Origin

Sr. #	Country	No. of Foreign Students Admitted
1.	Afghanistan	440
2.	China	315
3.	Somalia	133
4.	Turkey	60
5.	Saudi Arabia	46
6.	Sudan	24
7.	Others	207
	Total	1225

As the table reveals international students from various countries are studying in different universities in Pakistan. Most of these students are studying on culture scholarships, expenditures of which are mainly provided by government of Pakistan. Therefore, net cash inflow from foreign students is trivial. International students studying in Pakistan have nagged about bureaucratic procedures they faced when taking admission, visa, etc.^{††} Further, there is no coordinating body to resolve their issues and provide linkage facility among government institutions like HEC, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, and Economic Affairs Division. Moreover, war against terror and bad image of Pakistan is also major hurdles to attract foreign students in Pakistan.

Pakistani government is striving hard to turn Pakistan into a knowledge based economy. To this end, the Pakistani government has planned to offer international level education to Pakistanis in the country. The objective is to make Pakistan a hub of international higher education in South and East Asia. For this purpose, Pakistan has taken steps to establish good quality science and technology universities in the country in collaboration with well reputed international institutions. It is basically a \$4.3 billion project to establish 9 international level engineering universities in Pakistan equipped with foreign faculty (Agarwal, 2008). These universities will be established with the help of Germany, France, Sweden, South Korea, China and Austria. Pakistan will bear full development costs, recurrent expenses, and salaries of

^{††} Recently, HEC has revised the admission procedures. Hopefully, it will facilitate international students taking admission in Pakistani universities and in getting NOC, visas and its extension etc.

foreign staff. These universities are expected to have technology parks and linkages with the industry which will help to make technological base in Pakistan. It will provide full opportunities to attract and retain foreign students. Particularly, students from China, Middle East, Central Asia, North Africa and SAARC countries could be the source of future cash inflow for Pakistan as the Muslims student from these regions are facing difficulty in seeking admission in America and Europe due to 9/11 incident.

Internationalization Policy for Higher Education in Pakistan

Following the Malaysian model the internationalization policy for higher education in Pakistan should be formulated with six critical aspects with the aim to recruitment maximum number of international students. These six points are:^{**}

1. Student Mobility
2. Staff Mobility
3. Academic Programs
4. Research and Development
5. Governance and Autonomy, and
6. Social Integration and Community Engagement

Mission Statement

To promote international higher education in Pakistan, government should:-

- accept that internationalization of higher education is an essential part of globalization process.
- design strategic plans and give utmost priority to internationalization of higher education.
- recognize that internationalization will improve the quality of education, carry financial benefits, promote Pakistani culture abroad and spur growth in Pakistan.
- assist universities to introduce internationalization.
- realize that international linkages are indispensable to improve teaching and research in the country.

^{**} For more details see MHEM (2011).

Steps government needs to take

To promote internationalization of higher education in the country, government should take the followings steps:

- Take suitable actions to create a peaceful image of the country abroad. For this a committee may be established with the mandate to promote Pakistani education abroad.
- Pakistani embassies in foreign countries should also disseminate information about higher education opportunities available in Pakistan. They can do this by conducting seminars, etc.
- Allow Pakistani universities to open offshore campuses abroad and encourage distance learning.
- Application and visa procedures are required to be simplified.
- To promote inflow of foreign students' financial assistance and scholarships needs to be offered to foreign students.
- Create a main website to strengthen and spread information.
- Encourage expatriate Pakistanis to send their children to Pakistan for higher education.
- Engender high autonomy to universities/DAIs to recruit international students and to make linkages with international universities.
- International marketing, for which the services of recruitment agents can be hired.
- Last but not least, the security and welfare of international students must be assured.

Steps universities need to take

Universities/DAIs should take the following actions:-

- Universities/DAIs that recruit foreign students should have enough facilities & infrastructure to provide international level education. They should set high international standards in everything.
- Identify disciplines that can attract large number of foreign students at different levels.
- Simplify the admission procedure.
- Operational framework (coordinating body) be introduced for international student management.
- Universities/DAIs should develop linkages with internationally well reputed universities to increase the capacity of research and development.

- Develop international standards curriculum that genuinely encompasses international and global issues.
- Arrange English language classes for students coming from non-English speaking countries.
- Provide the facility of international credit transfer to international students.
- Universities must introduce special short-term courses on culture and heritage, natural beauty, languages of Pakistan for international students who visit Pakistan.
- Universities should organize activities to promote social and community engagement for international students.
- To recruit international students, local universities/DAIs should establish research centers like Asian study center, African study center, etc.
- Encouraging international, intercultural and inter-faith awareness throughout the university community is also required.
- Ensure a culture in which people of all backgrounds feel equally welcome.
- Seek faculty from around the world.
- Alumni activities should be organized around the world.

Why foreign students should study in Pakistan?

Pakistan has many advantages for international students to study. Some of the advantages are discussed below:-

- Pakistan is at the geographic, historical and cultural cross-roads of the world with different civilizations (Arian, Indian, Islamic, Western). It is also a gateway between developing and developed world.
- Pakistan is a multi-cultural society especially in big cities and is becoming a more open society with the concept of enlightened modernization.
- Have a reasonable infrastructure.
- Highly “privatized” education sector in the region.
- Many universities in Pakistan have good recognition and claim to offer degrees with international standards.
- The cost of education in Pakistan is very low as compared to other foreign countries.
- English is the medium of instruction in all universities, which is a very significant and encouraging feature for foreign students.
- Since Pakistan is at the early stages of internationalization therefore the availability of seats in universities/DAIs is high.

Conclusion

The current problems in Pakistan's political and social systems have led the country to lag behind in providing its students a high-learning environment addressing the globalization, technological innovations, quality education and a credible course offering, as compared to the western states (Parveen *et al.*, 2011). The internationalization policy for higher education in Pakistan is an initiative towards transforming Pakistan into an education hub to become a knowledge-based economy and to attract international students. In recent years European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) under the spirit of Bologna Process is an excellent example in internationalization of higher education efforts. Similarly, it is very much important for Pakistan to broaden its cooperation in bringing harmony in their higher education system on regional and international basis on student and faculty mobility forefronts. Student mobility initiatives, strategies initiatives and process will surely facilitate accomplishment of the end objectives of internationalization efforts in Pakistan.

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