

**PUBLISH OR PERISH: DECONSTRUCTING RESEARCH CULTURE IN HIGHER EDUCATION
INSTITUTES OF PAKISTAN**

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Abstract

Pakistan has witnessed a conspicuous reformation in the higher education landscape since the establishment of Higher Education Commission (HEC) in 2002. One of the most vibrant indicators of this transformation has been the HEC's unswerving tenacity to develop a research culture at Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). Consequently, the obsession of research in Pakistani universities is now in its full swing and research productivity has become a matter of survival both for the faculty and students with a neologism, publish or Perish. However, the quality, originality, philosophical and applied contributions of the research outputs have remained under serious criticism engendering severe apprehensions over the ontological configuration and philosophy of contemporary research enterprise. This ethnographic exploration is based upon the participant observation (PO) in 4 public and private universities in Islamabad explores whether mere pressure to publish for survival is enough to produce a genuine research culture? The narratives of researchers were explored to comprehend those issues which impede the development of conducive research culture. Methodological triangulation was applied using In-depth-interview and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with faculty members and research students of M.Phil and PhD degrees. The findings suggest that although the pressure to publish has ominously increased the research output, departmental politics, lack of research and writing competency, and philosophical estrangement from research credo deterring the establishing of an ingenious, creative and vivacious research culture at Pakistani Universities.

Keywords: Research Culture, Higher Education, Publications, Quality, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

The higher education sector in Pakistan has undergone major restructuring over the past decades to meet international educational standards. In this regard, large-scale reforms were introduced and implemented across the country that mark a dramatic change in the underlying educational philosophies, practices and research culture of higher education institutions (HEIs). Universities in Pakistan, for the sake of their stature, rely heavily on research reputations rather than teaching excellence (Kirp, 2003); and the higher education institutes which were traditionally recognized predominately for their quality teaching have shifted their focus to producing a high number of research publications. Consequently, over-emphasis on research has been conspicuous in the universities across the country while faculty being awarded, evaluated and

promoted progressively on the basis of research produced (Rosemary, Riaz & Ali, 2019). The change in the current scenario of higher education, its emphasis on academic research and the challenges faced by higher education institutes have been investigated (Rao, 2003; Jawad, 2015; Mughal & Manzoor, 1999; Hayes, 1987; Muhammad, Akhtar & Kalsoom, 2012; Shabbir, Khalid & Bakhsh, 2016; Ali, & Tahir 2009; Tarar, 2006; Usman 2014) predominantly focusing on instructor's approach towards the system of higher education and research productivity in Pakistan. However, the influence of institutional policies and the role of students in developing productive research culture has been under-research area. Albeit the increased number of higher learning institutes, enrollment, and the number of publications, on one hand, is appreciated, overemphasis on research is also a subject of great controversy among academics and analysts at the national and international levels. In view of the foregoing, the current ethnography explores how the research culture in Pakistan is experienced, conceptualized and perceived by the university faculty members and students? What are impediments and institutional factors that influence the academic research culture in Pakistan?

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

The origin of the existing higher education system in Pakistan can be traced back to 1857 when East India Company established universities in the subcontinent to educate local bureaucrats (Rehman, 2004). Later, Pakistan acquired an interim constitution in the form of the Government of India Act (1935) and the Indian Independence Act (1947) at the time of its independence in 1947. Under these statutes, education was the joint responsibility of both the federal and the provincial governments. More precisely, administration and finance were the federal government's responsibility and implementation and research were the responsibility of the provincial governments (Ahsan, 2003). The former Prime Minister of Pakistan Liaqat Ali Khan revised education policy and established universities and colleges all across the country. In the 1960s, the colossal budget and revenue were spent to encourage development in the higher education sector. Nationwide colleges were converted into research universities. The parliament, after 1971 war, passed three acts including the University Grants Commission Act and the Centres of Excellence Act of 1974; and the Federal Supervision of Curricula, Textbooks, and Maintenance of Standards of Education Act (1976) to safeguard the state power to release its obligations (Ghaffar, 2003; Ghaffar & Arshad, 1994). In order to coordinate higher education more efficiently, the University Grants Commission (UGC) was established in 1974. The main function of the UGC is to promote and coordinate university education and maintenance of research, examination and standard of teaching in the universities.

During this period (1947-2002), various education policies¹ doomed and ended in the closure of the University Grant Commission (Shami, 2005). Further, eight to five years plan was also suggested for the improvement of the Higher Education system in Pakistan. In 2001, the Education Sector Reform (ESR) strategy was introduced, aimed at encouraging student enrollment and Public-Private Partnership in the education sector (Ali and Tahir, 2009). Correspondingly, the National Education Policy of 2017 focuses on Vision 2025 aiming at recourse allocation for higher education institutes, an increase in PhD faculty, growth in the Tenure Track system, promotion of research culture and academic linkages (GOP, 2017). Following UGC, Higher Education Commission (HEC) was established in 2002 to manoeuvre as a sovereign body that works under the supervision of the Prime Minister with responsibilities of designing and implementing policies for the advancement and promotion of higher education research.

1 Report of the Pakistan National Educational Conference 1947, Report of the Second Pakistan Educational Conference 1951, Report of the National Commission on Education 1959, Proposals for New Education Policy 1969, New Education Policy 1970, Education Policy 1972-78, National Education Policy 1979, National Education Policy 1992, National Education Policy 1998-2010, National Education Policy 2009.

The immense development in higher education in terms of research productivity is witnessed after the inception of the Higher Education Commission. HEC has launched various short, medium and long term reforms to advance the status of higher education. According to estimates from the publishing-services company Clarivate Analytics, Pakistan in 2018 witnessed 21% increase in the research output that is highest in the world. The number of research papers produced increased by fourfold in the year 2006 to 2015 (Makri, 2018). According to Reuters, the citation of papers authored by Pakistani scholars has increased from 9 to 98 articles in 2006 and 2015 respectively. The HEC reports advancement in PhD enrollment from 3298 in 2002 to 1118 in 2015 (Memon, 2015). Now every year around 445,000 students are graduated from Pakistani universities (Majid & Anwar, 2019). Based on these achievements, Pakistan has won the prestigious TWAS² award (Italy).

Pakistan at the time of partition inherited a weak higher education system (Ahsan, 2003). In 1947, there was only one university - the University of Punjab and forty colleges expanded across Pakistan (Mac & Hamid, 2006). Presently, a total of 185 universities serve in both the public and private sectors of education. Out of these, 110 (59%) universities are functioning within the confines of the public sector, while 75 (41%) are working under the private sector. At the post-graduate level, the total enrollment is 1.463 million, thereof 81% of students are registered in government universities, while 19% of students are enrolled in private universities (Government of Pakistan, 2018).

Regardless of the above-mentioned figures, the present scenario of the research culture in Pakistan is highly criticized by senior academics as well as analysts. The major criticism regarding research culture in Pakistani universities is its focus on quantity rather than quality. The academics claim of a drastic increase in research output is rejected by the critics as it does not necessarily mean better research quality. Dr. Pervaz Hoodbhoy, a well-known Pakistani physicist and analyst is of the view that HEC has played a key role in promoting the number game in terms of research work and because of this, the standard of research in Pakistan has largely declined. Further, he added that research published by the universities of Pakistan is based on *wholesale plagiarism* (Hoodbhoy, 2017; Internews, 2010).

Moreover, higher education institutes are heavily criticized because of the incompetency of university teachers as they lack knowledge regarding research methodologies and thus are unable to produce quality research. *Further, it is argued that the research collaboration within institutes is poor and there exists a pitiable attitude towards research quality making mediocrity the trademark. In Pakistan, institutes oriented towards higher learning faced various challenges including poorly staffed, lack of competent administrators and faculty and low salary, under-resourced and incompetent in terms of producing original and quality research* (Yusuf, 2012).

Thus the yielding criticism on universities in Pakistan is its emphasis on the number of research output rather than the quality of research. In the existing higher education system, the philosophy behind publish or perish presents shifting rigours but at the same time cause problems within higher education institutes. The phrase "Publish or Perish" refers to the pressure

² TWAS-The World Academy of Sciences. The TWAS awards are considered among the prestigious awards given for research in the developing countries. The prizes are awarded in the various fields including biology, chemistry, engineering, mathematics, agriculture, medical sciences, and social sciences.

to maintain a research career by publishing in reputed journals, thus it provides a roadmap to educators to meet the requirements for job security and promotions (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2011). *Subsequently, teaching effectiveness is no longer considered valuable or awarded by higher education institutes. This shift from teaching effectiveness to research and publication is not greeted eagerly by academics.* The trend to publish has created pressure on faculty working in higher education institutions that require them to make their scholarly output recurrently productive and prolific in order to secure job offers, for job security, and advancement, as well as for universities to remain relevant and competitive and to garner positive image (Plume & van Weijen, 2014, Rawat & Meena, 2014; Murray & Cunningham, 2011; Holmes, Tewksbury, & Holmes, 2000; Smith, 1990; Rowson, 1988; Budd, 1988; Guraya, Norman, Khoshhal, Guraya, & Forgione, 2016). The changing landscape of higher education and its immense pressure to publish has brought positive changes towards research whereas concomitantly has originated many issues. Thus the present study aims to investigate the prevailing research culture and related issues in Pakistani universities concerning the views of faculty as well as students. The results will be helpful for the policy implications and the improvement of the research culture in Pakistan.

The current research employs postcolonial literary theory as a theoretical framework in order to analyze the research narratives of faculty and students as 'creative spaces to engender agency and power' in the backdrop of a competitive environment, which is a 'war of survival' both for faculty and students. It also helps to understand the discursive formation of hegemony and subjugation in the institutionalized research traditions where researchers face different obstacles hindering their quality of research. In the context of Pakistan's befuddled research culture where there is a lack of consensus on the essentials of ethical, intellectual and operative dynamics of research, the lens of postcolonial literary theory will assist the exploration of such conflicting discourses (Matheieson 2019) that impede the development of conducive research culture. Bhaba (1992) explains this clash of discourses, which in this case, breeds a precarious situation for pro-intellectual research milieu at the institution of higher learning.

Its split narratives are tragic and painful in the extreme, but it is their agony that makes them exemplary texts for our moment. They represent an idea of action and agency more complex than either the nihilism of despair or the utopia of progress. They speak of the reality of survival and negotiation that constitutes the lived moment of resistance, its sorrow and its salvation – the moment that is rarely spoken in the stories of heroism that are enshrined in the histories we choose to remember and recount. (Bhabha 1992:46–57)

Based upon an individual's research output and capacity, different meta-narrative are used in the research world to explain the success in the academic world. However, the clash of narratives among research and academic fraternity and prevailing chaos have serious implications for the research culture. In this conflicting backdrop, using postcolonial techniques of narratological analysis, this study asks where does research quality stand and how researchers' narrative voice (both students and faculty) explain this perplex situation.

METHOD

The ethnographic research methodology was used to obtain insight into the research culture in Pakistani universities as it allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of the participants. The research employed participant observation and in-depth interviews as main methods for data collection which were further triangulated by using other methods such as focus group discussions and field observations. The ethnographic research was

based upon 6 months of fieldwork conducted in four universities of Islamabad (Quaid-i-Azam University, Iqra University, Bahria University and Air University), both public as well as the private sector. Employing participant observation method, the researcher also attended various lectures and research meetings after seeking the consent of the concerned authorities and participants of the study. Using purposive sampling technique, 5 focus group discussions and 25 in-depth interviews were conducted from 10 faculty members and 15 students (both male and females) of M.Phil and PhD levels from various departments of social sciences. In order to gather the relevant data, an interview guide was constructed comprised of questions related to the following categories such as Academic/Research Environment (resources, Seminars, exposure, discussions), research structure (research schedule, logistics), supervisor competence and issues related to research environment (available skills, time allocation, professionalism, honesty/commitment, motivation, supervisor ethics), issues of plagiarism, Higher Education Commission (HEC) criteria of promotion, a research collaboration between departments and intra-departmental politics, power-politics and its impact on research, the autonomy of faculty, the voice of students in research, research as passion or degree/job attainment, and university as teaching or research institute, which covered the main research objectives. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the collected data.

RESEARCH CULTURE: “PUBLISH” OR “PERISH”

In academia, the scholars demonstrate their academic ability by frequent publications in reputed journals. Additionally, the number of publications made an academician visible to the academic community and hence became an important contributor behind the increased popularity of the institute (Bok, 2013). Successful research output and productivity bring attention to the researchers and their respective institutions ensuring academic success and attract funding for the institute. Academic institutions use these publications as a measure of competency (Rawat & Meena, 2014) and for recruitment purposes also. Ironically, the demand of research publications has now become a part of eligibility criteria demanding a particular number of publications while recruiting for an academic post/job and scholars with more publications are given preference while overlooking their teaching skills. Faculty who focus on other academic tasks such as teaching undergraduate and masters found themselves stuck in the same positions, whereas, the faculty who are more concentrated on the research had their ways open for promotion and success which has increased the pressure on faculty to publish. One of the respondents, who has 16 years of teaching experience in a public sector university, argues about the idea of frequent publications saying that:

“The emphasis on research publications has declined the resulting scholarship as academics spend more time in publishing whatever research quality they can produce. They are not concerned about the quality of published research. Also, the pressure “publish or perish” deviates academics attention away from teaching” (Personal Interview, 2016).

After the inception of HEC, various schemes have been launched to increase the research capacity of the universities and the academicians across the country. The new criterion is implemented for the hiring and promoting the faculty, according to the which, scholars are judged, evaluated and promoted on the basis of their research output. Based on it, the number of publications to one’s credit has been given immense importance thus making it an individual’s gateway to job attainment, carrier success, and promotion. Either scholars have to “Publish” or they will “Perish”.

When faculty are hired, administrators pay attention to the published list. This exclusive focus has decreased the value of research produced because researcher rush to publish whatever

he or she can manage rather than giving more time and effort to enhance the quality of research. The pressure to publish has also impacted the teaching negatively which is also an important task of university faculty. The rewards for research are far better for the faculty than teaching which results in compromising the later. The sole focus on research and the role of the faculty as a researcher resulted in ignorance of many other responsibilities including teaching. The assistant professor from the department of International relations (Bahria University) responded:

“The performance of faculty in teaching and supervision is not visible as such. However, on the other hand, publications are visible. So faculty compromise on teaching and supervision than research” (Personal Interview, 7.9.2015).

Another factor that Higher Education Institutes emphasize more on research is that HEC considers it as one of the important parameters while evaluating the success of these Institutes. Although ranking the institutions has always been controversial, however, it is argued that ranking helped in policymaking and visibility of the universities. The components important for the scoring and ranking of universities in the light of the criteria of HEC includes HEC approved PhD supervisors per total full-time faculty, indigenous scholars studying in the university per total full-time PhD faculty, HEC research grants approved per faculty, HEC travel grants approved per full-time faculty, number of conferences organized per faculty, total PhD output, and most significantly, publications in impact factor journals per faculty, the total number of papers published in impact factor journals by the university, number of W, X, Y, Z journals published by the University.

Moreover, students are also encouraged within the universities for research-related tasks. In some disciplines, conducting a research or thesis writing is compulsory for the students to complete the degree at the undergraduate and master's level. Students are also given mini-research assignments as part of their course work during the completion of the degree. Further, teachers who are more active in research encourage their students to participate in research-related activities and projects. It is now considered important for the survival of the scholars that he or she must publish to secure or continue the job, and in terms of students, for the sake of completing their degrees.

Furthermore, Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) is established in every university to check and ensure the standard of teaching and research and to maintain the quality of higher education in the university. The quality assurance criteria devised by HEC has the components including criteria for enrollment in Masters, M.Phil and PhD, Peer Perception Surveys, Plagiarism Standing Committee and appointment of faculty. Although the research output and the number of publications have increased due to the aforementioned factors, yet these increased numbers of publications have been criticized by analysts and scholars from various fields. The highlighting criticism is the indulgence of universities in the “number game” that has lowered the standard of research and the quality of the publications produced by the universities.

RESEARCH CULTURE: QUALITY OR QUANTITY?

There is a tremendous increase in the research output of Pakistani universities due to the huge importance given to the research work and publications within the higher learning institutes which has made it the most important factor and significant contributor behind the success of the scholar. Research projects and publications are important in terms of ranking of the universities and that leads towards the increased enrollment and the popularity of the Higher education institutions. Furthermore, universities are equipped by HEC with research-related infrastructures such as High-speed internet, digital library and research grants.

According to the respondents, the “number game” in research culture is prevalent in Pakistan in recent times and academic advancement and promotion are dependent on how many articles one can get published yearly (Hoodbhoy, 2016). The academicians particularly hired on TTS are required to publish at least 2 publications in a year and their work progress is evaluated and they get promoted based on the number of publications. Faculty members who are hired on Tenure Track System (TTS) are more pressurized as compared to the faculty members who are employed on the Basic Pay Scale (BPS). This increased pressure on academicians led towards the low quality of research publications. Some of the respondents argued that, although the number of research publications is increased, it has no value since it is not being applied or used for the development of society. In this regard, the assistant professor in the department of history at Quaid-i-Azam University elaborated the situation:

“If I wrote one book and it is cited and read by a huge number of scholars than writing 20 articles are not worth which are referred by a minority of researchers. Research publications can be increased this way but they do not contribute to the improvement in society.”(Personal Interview, 2015)

According to the respondents, the institute or the academicians’ performance should not be judged merely based on the number of publications rather these publications should be seen in terms of their contribution in the society and industry. Successful research increases the market, the number of jobs, and research followed by the number and the type of patents. The counting of the number of publications has a serious loophole as it ignores the quality of the research produced (Chaudhary, 2016).

According to 80% of the research produced in Pakistani universities is not cited (Khattak, 2017). This proved that these publications neither have any importance to the industry nor they are cited by the peers. Research is significant for the growth of a specific field but unfortunately research within the developing countries especially Pakistan is conducted and published only to improve the Curriculum Vitae (CV) of the researcher. In practical terms, such publications have no significance. The face validity of the CV has spared the researcher to the thought of improving the quality of the research. The number of publications to one’s credit and the ideology of “publish or perish” is an approach that has an impact on the overall research environment of the university. According to the majority of the respondents, nowadays research that is conducted in universities has no contribution to the overall well-being of the society. Most of the research that has been conducted in the universities is not innovative and the same research is produced again and again.

RE-INVENTING THE WHEEL

Both faculty, as well as the students who belonged to Quaid-i-Azam University, were of the view that the research produced within various departments of social sciences is not innovative and is a mere repetition of the same work that has been done before. The same methodology is used again and again and even the topics that were previously researched are repeated. Unfortunately, according to the respondents, repeating the same research is a very common phenomenon; students took the research which had already been done in their own or other universities. The PhD student of the psychology department from Bahria University told the researcher:

“I have attended the synopsis seminar of an M.Phil student. She was developing a scale. Faculty told the girl that the scale she is about to develop has already been developed and the girl has got no explanation

regarding it... Students took the entire thesis from other universities and submitted in their institutions”(Personal Interview, 20.8.2015).

Faculty consider it important that if the researcher reads more and more research articles and discusses it with their colleagues, this can avoid the chance of repeating the research and in turn avoid the publication of research whose findings are already published. One of the major reasons for repeating the same research was highlighted that both students and faculty members are not aware of the already existing research and the published work. The lack of dissemination of information is the major cause behind choosing the same topics for research and publications (Chaudhary, 2018). There exists no mechanism through which research is disseminated even within the same university or across different universities of Pakistan which makes it easier for both the faculty as well as students to work on the already existing study. Another reason faculty highlighted was that students are not interested in reading and therefore they are ignorant of the previous studies which lead to the repetition of the same work. According to the faculty, students do not want to make an effort to explore other methodologies or to be innovative in their research approach. The lecturer from the department of computer sciences of Iqra University responded:

“Both faculty and students do not have any idea what research is. It is not the students who are to blame but the faculty members who should be ashamed of their degrees that they received from the reputed international universities and still have no idea regarding research and research methodologies” (Personal Interview, 2015)

Most of the respondents argued that there lacks something new and thought-provoking in the research works which is due to the poor attitude towards research. The only motivation that provokes individuals for research is the pressure to complete the degree or the promotion and securing a job, however, they lack an aptitude or interest towards research-related activities. Nonetheless, in the case of physical sciences, ‘re-inventing the wheel” is a common phenomenon but in Social Sciences, originality is the key. For many years Pakistani universities have not produced single research that is innovative or on the other hand appreciated by the academic community at large. As recommended, universities should have the necessary databases of all the research in progress across the nation.

The immense pressure to increase the number of published work resulted in various practices that are considered as unethical including plagiarism i.e. copies a form of data without acknowledging the source. Other than the increased pressure to publish, respondents highlighted many reasons for plagiarism including job stress, the barrier to language, lack of commitment, knowledge and critical thinking. Additionally, fraud in the reporting of the data, ghost authors, and duplicate publications are also some of the issues that exist in the research filed. The fabrication of the data, while writing the research results, is being reported within the universities where researchers produce many pieces of research in a year that is practically not possible considering the long process of single research. In regard to the ethical considerations, some respondents argued that being a supervisor automatically implies that the student, who has done his/her research, has to bear his/her supervisor’s name in the publication even without any contribution in the publication process which is an unethical practice.

PLAGIARISM: THE CULTURE OF “COPY & PASTE”

There exists a perception among students and faculty that the practice of plagiarism, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, is on the rise since the last 8 to 15 years. Most of the

respondents are of the view that research currently conducted within the universities is highly plagiarized because of the lack of awareness regarding what plagiarism is and the existing rules and regulations and current policies of their respective institutes have contributed in the rise of plagiarism cases (Ramzan, Munir, Siddiq, Asif, 2012). Since 2006, HEC has received 104 plagiarism cases from various universities of Pakistan and only 86 cases were resolved (The Nation, 2016). With the two year ban on the incentives given by the HEC, 20 faculty members were blacklisted in the result of the charges of plagiarism. One of the senior faculty members was charged because of “self-plagiarism” while others for copying materials and books from various resources. Dr. Haroon Rasheed – the recipient of Sitara-e-Imtiaz, his doctoral thesis was found to be 72% plagiarized (Haq, 2015). He was the Pro-Rector in Comsats Institute of Information Technology, Islamabad, and also the CEO of National Testing Service (NTS).

Concerning the intellectual property rights, few students argued that unfortunately giving the due credit to the actual source is not the part of research culture in Pakistani universities. It is assumed to be normal practice in Pakistan to copy text or any other forms of intellectual property and publish it as one’s own work without providing the proper citation which defies the basic principles of intellectual property rights. Pakistan is the country where exists a perception that an individual’s high level of education will lead towards his/her economic prosperity and attending a university to gain knowledge is not the aim rather universities are considered to be the gateways for a successful life and the career. According to the respondents, pressure for the attainment of the job, and promotion is one of the major reasons why plagiarism is on the rise. Faculty is afraid that if they are unable to publish 2-3 papers a year then their chances of promotion become limited. Because of this increased pressure, there exists less effort in ensuring the quality of the research work both by the students and faculty members. Most of the respondents are of the view that students who are enrolled in the universities are not passionate about learning and knowledge rather their only aim is to get a better job. A PhD student from the education department of Iqra University responded:

“Students who did not get any job after masters or M.Phil admitted themselves in PhD shopping they might secure a better job after completing the higher degree. It is not the passion for learning that motivates them to enroll in PhD rather they are in the pursuit of getting a good job” (Personal Interview, 2016).

Many respondents argued that, due to this reason, faculty and students started finding various management techniques and alternatives, even though those are unethical, to fulfill the required criteria of a degree, job attainment or promotion. According to one faculty member belonged to the Quaid-i-Azam university:

“The increased pressure both on students and faculty leads towards solutions such as combine teacher-student researches, more quantitative research than qualitative. And because of this reason, various cases of academic corruption were seen in the past” (Personal Interview, 19.8.2015).

In most of the universities particularly among undergraduate students, there exists a lack of knowledge regarding plagiarism and how it can be minimized which has made normal to copy-paste a text without acknowledging an author. Students read the material somewhere on the internet and copy the material as it is without citation. According to most of the students, the sudden change in the education system was also a reason for their failure to understand the phenomenon of intellectual copy-rights and plagiarism. Further, they explained that the university system was completely alien to them as they came after passing matric and intermediate where cramming was the best way for gaining good grades but at the university level they have to give their opinion and

demonstrate their creativity and critical thinking. Faculty is of the view that students are unaware of the various kinds of plagiarism, either they copy-paste the material as it is or change the wording but in both cases, they do not acknowledge the author or quote the source from where they are referring to. Students blame the faculty for not providing them with enough guidance and training. According to some students, there is no proper mechanism in universities regarding giving training to the students about plagiarism.

Lack of interest in research and commitment are the major reasons that lead to the weak research culture in Pakistan as viewed by the respondents. Pakistan is the country where economic prosperity is considered important. Faculty members consider that students do not want to put their efforts while conducting research. The thesis and research projects are mostly done to receive a degree. On the other hand, faculty is only interested in research because it is their job requirement. This in turn is the reason that students and teachers plagiarize as it requires less effort and more work can be done in lesser time. Faculty suggested that in order to gain interest in research, students from the undergraduate level should be indulged in research activities and trained regarding the use of resources and the policies about copyrights.

According to the students, faculty also lack in critical thinking and they blame the overall educational system of the country that encourages cramming of the syllabus. According to them, the importance of education and the sole purpose that is stressed from childhood is to attain a good job. From this mindset and ideology, children are enrolled in the schools and they do not study to know and understand the subject and its application in society rather gaining good marks in the exams is the only goal.

REASONS FOR WEAK RESEARCH CULTURE IN PAKISTAN

The section covers the respondents' views regarding the issues that cause hindrance for the development of a productive research culture in the universities or are the major cause of weak research culture in Pakistan. It covers issues both at the individual and environmental level that runs counter to productive research culture in universities.

DEDICATION & COMMITMENT

There is a competitive environment in the universities that require their stakeholders to work hard and perform beyond expectations. However, research in Pakistani universities suffers from the deficiency of vision, dedication and commitment as viewed by the respondents. One of the M.Phil. Students from the department of development studies of Iqra University responded:

“We don't want to work, that's it. Research is perceived as a burden. Students do not want to put their effort into the research or research-related activities and the same is the case with teachers” (Personal Interview, 20.10.201).

Most of the respondents are of the view that because of the lack of commitment and dedication towards research will affect the overall performance and will affect the reputation of the university. Less motivated faculty members impart this to their students resulting in low participation of students in research-related activities. Respondents do not blame university rather the overall society which according to them are not aware of the importance of research and forces the individuals to gain an education to gain economic prosperity. Pakistan after six decades of independence is still a country whose citizens have low income per capita. In Pakistani culture, people are closely tied in family circles and economic prosperity is needed not only for the individual

but also for the overall well-being of the family. So any base or a source that provide economic stability will stronger the commitment of both students and teachers. Students indulge in research as it required for degree completion whereas, for the faculty, research is a gateway for the promotion. Hence, the number of research works and publications increased but the quality is compromised. The researcher observed the lack of commitment of students towards their thesis and research projects. As though the thesis is the requirement, students found various alternatives to pass the burden such as paying money for thesis write up, skipping fieldwork and cooking data, and plagiarizing someone else's work. On the other hand, faculty who believe that there are people in the universities who are passionate about research, however, they are being discouraged by some of the HEC policies and over workload. According to the faculty members, most of the research work that is of the international standard is not recognized by the HEC approved list of journals and hence is rejected. However, ironically, research articles published in Z category journals in Pakistan are recognized by the HEC. An Associate Professor from the History department of QAU elaborated in this regard:

“I have written five books but HEC does not give credit to more than two books. Chapters written in the books of internationally recognized editors are not given any recognition” (Personal Interview, 2015).

Faculty is of the view that there are not enough incentives given to the faculty by the university which could motivate them to focus on the quality of the work. If they have to attend an international conference, the university will not pay any expenses which demotivate the faculty.

LACK OF NECESSARY RESEARCH SKILLS

Sufficient skills and expertise are required for productive and good quality research. However, according to the respondents, faculty do not have sufficient knowledge regarding research. Researchers are not well-equipped with the knowledge of research design and various techniques regarding quantitative and qualitative research (Nouman, 2017). Skills required for the interdisciplinary research is lacking and students are allotted with supervisors having a different area of expertise which leads to the compatibility issues between the supervisor and his/her student. A PhD student from the psychology department of Bahria University responded:

“Some supervisors worked in an area for several years that they do not have any flexibility for the other areas. I have changed my area of research only because my supervisor has no expertise in my area of interest”. (Personal Interview, 2016).

Respondents highlighted that following skills and expertise are non-existent among faculty members such as lack of interdisciplinary approach (holistic thinking, creativity, intercultural competence and communication, not up to date with the latest literature specific to their area, no grant writing skills or confidence, not skilled in computing and data analysis software, lack of writing skills, inability to manage workload (Zardari 2014).

WORKLOAD AND TENURE TRACK SYSTEM (TTS)

One of the major reasons for the weak research culture, highlighted by almost all respondents particularly faculty, is the increased pressure and workload. There are three main tasks distributed among the faculty of the university - teaching, research and administrative duties. The imbalance between the demands and the resources in hand resulted in lower performance

(Smeltzer, Sharts-Hopko, Cantrell, Heverly, Wise, Jenkinson & Nthenge, 2014). According to the faculty, the increased workload is not only damaging for an individual's psychological well-being but also a threat to University's intellectual culture. An Assistant professor from the department of business administration of QAU highlighted:

“There are multiple tasks required from faculty. We do not only teach and research rather supervision, checking assignment, quizzes, and sessional are also required from the university faculty along with the administrative duties” (Personal Interview, 2016).

One of the major initiatives of HEC is the appointments under TTS. The basic aim of the Tenure Track System is to enhance the efficacy and the performance of the faculty members. The particular initiative allows healthy completion among researchers, freedom of teaching and research as well as financial independence (Allen, 2016). The appointment of the faculty under the Tenure Track System not only involves the universities' authorities but Quality Assurance Division is also the major stakeholder in this regard. The appointment process involves the applicant to apply against the vacant positions available at the universities. The selection process involves positive recommendations by at least two TRP members, the selection board of the universities and finally the syndicate. The university is responsible to check the publications and other eligibility conditions of the applicants including their original documentary evidence.

The minimum eligibility criteria for Assistant Professor is the PhD degree, apart from that the PhD holders from Pakistan have their thesis evaluated by two foreign experts. For the Associate Professor, apart from PhD, a minimum of 4-6 years of pre-PhD experience and 6 years of Post PhD experience is required. Moreover, 10 research publications in the past ten years with at least 4 publications in the past five years in the journals recognized for appointment on the tenure track. For the Professor, apart from PhD, a minimum of 12 years of pre-PhD experience and 7 years of Post PhD experience is required. Moreover, 15 research publications in the past ten years with at least 5 publications in the past five years in the journals recognized for appointment on the tenure track. In the context of Tenure Track, the applicant must have also recommended by at least two neutral foreign experts. The evaluation techniques used in universities for the evaluation of the faculty under tenure track system involve teaching that includes personal knowledge regarding the area of knowledge, information regarding latest developments, communication skills and ability to induce critical thinking among students. Research and creative work are also the major elements in terms of evaluating the faculty on the tenure track. It involves factors such as PhD students under supervision; PhD students successfully defend their thesis, M.Phil students successfully defend their thesis, publication in referred impact factor journal, publications in HEC approved journals, citations of the best two papers, books edited/reviewed, patents, research grants, editors of the journal, examiner of international universities. Community services are also important such as members of a professional society, administrative assignments, members of university committees, management of social events. Moreover, peer and student comments and interest of students in class evaluates the faculty members.

The Faculty appreciated TTS, as according to them it is started with a good spirit. TTS system is started with the spirit that it will increase the competition among faculty, research output and will change the quality of the research. Conversely, according to some respondents, the way the system is implemented has many loopholes in it which have increased the number game but have no checks on quality. Faculty are required to publish at least two research papers a year which is difficult for the faculty particularly to the social science faculty that have other tasks along with the research. An assistant professor from the department of economics of QAU responded:

“The one thing that I lost when joined TTS is the “Peace of mind” (personal Interview, 2016).

One of the major issues that faculty on TTS face is the lack of dissemination of information. Faculty are notified late regarding policy changes and other such notifications. After the initiation of the BS program at Quaid-i-Azam University, faculty is more overburdened as the quantity of the teachers is less as compared to the students enrolled. Faculty who are currently at TTS also blamed it for the increased burden.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT: POWER POLITICS AND ITS IMPACT ON RESEARCH

Students come from different backgrounds in universities at MSc, M.Phil and PhD level; some having a rich background and knowledge of research while others are raw and lack in research information. The university environment lets them be independent and their boss which gives the students with research knowledge an edge over the students who do not have the background knowledge of research. Also, the teachers prefer mostly a student who does not bug them a lot and is already trained in research so that they do not have to invest much time in the students' work checking. Unfortunately, such situations lead to fights, jealousies, and forms an unhealthy work environment with negative impacts on productivity. Quaid-i-Azam University offers faculty freedom to design courses, flexible timings and in many decisions but viewing the private institutions like Iqra University and Bahria University there is centralization and less freedom in terms of courses and less to no flexibility regarding timings, holidays and other decisions rather they have to follow the existing pattern and cannot take decisions independently.

Overall, public sector universities offer more freedom collectively to the faculty and students. In terms of research, Public Sector University offers students freedom and flexibility to choose the topics of their own choice for research while private universities are more inclined towards commercialized research so the topics that are more focused on theoretical and academic nature are not encouraged and appreciated. Similarly like other institutions of Pakistan, there is power politics present in the universities too. Internal politics present in universities disturbs the work environment badly. According to respondents, its impacts involve the problem in promotions of faculty members, due grants and benefits are denied, making false cases against the faculty. Some respondents named them as “academic culprits” but there is no action taken against it as the entities have political backings.

University politics have impacts at the student level as well where the student face hard questions during the viva from the faculty and sometimes even the research projects are rejected. While comparing the private institutions and public sector universities in terms of infrastructure of research which includes well-equipped libraries, computer labs, internet facilities, research committees, quality assurance cell, there are more technically upgraded and well-equipped computer labs present in private institutions, however, the access to digital libraries and research journals is more ensured in public sector universities like Quaid-i-Azam University.

Although HEC has made quality assurance cell compulsory in both public and private sector universities, there is no check and balance regarding their efficiency of work. According to the respondents, quality assurance cells among universities are not delivering their services properly adding that there are no proper research committees functional in Pakistan. Many students argued that there are no quality national or international seminars arranged or training programs and workshops conducted for research students. Furthermore, students claimed that there are no sufficient funding or grants available for researches based upon the field works and the expenses for

the research trips are not bearded by the university rather they have to bear expenses on their own to carry and complete their researches. Even when HEC grants scholarships, those are mostly limited to PhD level and there are no funds available for the MSc level. However, most of the PhD students do not even avail these opportunities due to the lack of proper information and guidance. As compared to girls, boys are more active socially so they are more informed and up to date about certain grants and scholarships. Some respondents were of the view that research in social sciences does not need much funding as compared to the natural sciences as there is no proper settings or equipment require such as laboratory, machines and apparatus rather research in social sciences is carried in the natural settings. The funds granted to the universities for social sciences researches are sufficient but their distribution is not proper and is highly questionable. There are following renowned agencies that provide funds for research projects in Pakistan: Pakistan Higher Education Commission, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific, European Research Council, EU funding and grants, the Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, International Development research center, International Foundation for Science. Despite the views and opinions, it is noticeable that research funding helped in producing trained manpower in the form of M.Phil and PhD graduates and other staff appointed in the projects, patents, and promoted the number of local and international publications overall.

CONCLUSION

The pressure to publish is ubiquitous phenomena realized both by tenured and non-tenured faculty members. This pressure is the enduring consequence of HEC recommendations and institutional policies. The growing number of faculty is affected by this pressure both positively and negatively. The pressure to publish though has increased the research output of the faculty but has seriously decreased quality, creativity and innovation in pedagogical culture Also, This pressure-induced research culture proved to be a momentous hindrance for engendering a genuine research milieu at universities:

Often, academic career paths are shaped by a researcher's success in publication rather than his/her passion for research. The number of publications to a researcher's credit seems to matter more than the quality of the work done. How did the publishing industry get to this point? How can you not only withstand but beat the pressure and continue to reap the rewards that research itself brings? (Cerejo, 2013).

It is important to realize that research outputs should be based on intellectual pleasures and reasons such as institutional pressures to generate research papers, promotions and universities prestige affiliated with the number of research papers might produce a huge volume of researches, however, this raises a serious quandary that whether the knowledge produced under aforementioned stresses would be able to contribute to the human intellectual growth or is capable to offer solutions to the real-world problems. The institutionalized hegemonic research traditions in Pakistan require reconceptualization and reconfiguration of ethical, intellectual and research narratives to engender research-friendly ethos in Pakistan.

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