**SOCIAL CONCERNS ON HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS DURING**

*FORUM*

**2002 -2012 IN PAKISTAN: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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**PREAMBLE**

*The domain of higher education in Pakistan experienced a drastic change during the past ten years. This time frame, which coincided with two regime changes in the country, is the span where many far reaching changes were brought about in the sector. These include transformation of the erstwhile University Grants Commission (UGC) into Higher Education Commission (HEC), drastic expansion in the funding opportunities, development of infrastructure, creation of new universities, facilitation of the private sector in the realm of higher education, induction of foreign faculty on a rigorous basis, emphasis on research and scaling it through peer reviewed papers, shoring of local doctoral programmes, scholarship schemes initiation of university rankings, tenure based hiring options and many more. In general perspective, the moves and actions of the management of Higher Education Commission – the key institution responsible for these spread out tasks – were viewed with appreciation. As the challenges were daunting, the tally of tasks also continued to multiply. However, the policies and actions of HEC received criticisms on several counts.*

*This paper aims at outlining the social concerns that have been repeatedly cited in discussions and debates on this subject. Taking an objective approach, the paper begins by reviewing the evolution of the reform. It expands into social concerns including accessibility to various sections of the society into higher education sector, distributive justice, relationship with the elementary and higher secondary school education, geographical distribution of universities and related variables. Methodology of this work comprises review of official policy documents, personal interviews with key informants and literature references that appeared in the press. Based on the analysis, conclusions and recommendations are also presented in the paper.*

**INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

According to official definition, ‘higher education in Pakistan refers to all levels ofeducation above grade 12. It normally corresponds to the age bracket of 17 to 23 years’ [GoP, (2002) p.9]. The Musharraf regime which took over the reins of the government in 1999, laid high emphasis on the reform of higher education. There were many reasons behind this policy and implementation initiative. Pakistani youth was viewed by many as a potential human resource by the fundamentalist elements for incorporation into their ranks through the conduit of orthodox seminaries and clandestine organizations of dubious credentials. An effective higher education sector was considered as the counter alternative to attract the highly energetic but seemingly disoriented youth into what was tagged as modern education opportunities. The structure of higher education was in place for more than five decades without any administrative or academic overhaul. Even the creation of erstwhile University Grants Commission in 1974 did not prove to be compatible to the emerging needs for different trajectories in higher education. The 1998 Population Census and subsequent demographic studies informed about the massive increase in the numerical count of youth. Thus investment in higher education became a corresponding need. The enrolment capacity of the existing institutions in public and private sectors was found inadequate, more due to inappropriate facilities, hardware, faculty and staff deficiencies as well as basic numbers (see Table-01).

**Table 1: Categories and distribution of universitiesand other degree awarding institutions**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **Sector** | **General\*** | **Agriculture** | **Engineering** | **Medicine** | **Degree Awarding Institution\*\*** | **Total** |
| Azad Jamu and Kashmir | Public Private | 1  2 | -  - | -  - | -  - | -  - | **1**  **2** |
| Baluchistan | Public Private | 1  - | -  - | 1  - | -  - | -  - | **2**  **-** |
| Federal  Territory | Public Private | 6  1 | -  - | -  - | -  - | 2  - | **8**  **1** |
| NWFP | Public Private | 4  4 | 1  - | 1  - | -  - | 2  1 | **8**  **5** |
| Punjab | Public Private | 5  1 | 2  - | 2  - | -  - | 3  1 | **12**  **2** |
| Sindh | Public Private | 3  7 | 1  - | 3  1 | 1  2 | 2  7 | **10**  **17** |
| Sub Total | Public Private | 20  15 | 4  0 | 7  1 | 1  2 | 9  9 | **41**  **27** |
| **Total** | | **35** | **4** | **8** | **3** | **18** | **68** |

*\* A general university has more than one Faculty*

*\*\* Degree Awarding Institutes may have more than one Faculty.*

The proportionate enrolment in higher education institutions was another major issue. In a country of 120 million people, the total full time enrolment was 139,320 (see Table-02). The total funding allocated for higher education was very small in proportion to the needs. For instance, total funding for all the public sector universities was Rs. 6.5 billion which was less than one percent of GDP. Universities were facing serious shortage of development funds also.

**Table2: Enrolment in universities and degree-awarding institutions (UGC data for 1999-2000)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Public Universities** | **Enrolment and Percent** |
| General (excluding AllamaIqbal Open University) | 79,940 (57%) |
| Engineering | 23,680 (17%) |
| Agriculture | 14,210 (10%) |
| Sub Total for Public Universities | 117,830 (85%) |
| Sub Total for Private Universities | 21,490 (15%) |
| Total Enrolment in Universities | 139,320 (100%) |

*Source: Various unpublished archival records of University Grants Commission consulted between 2000 and 2008.*

During ministerial deliberations, follow up consultations with experts and some university managers, it was decided by the government to institute a process of higher education reform in April, 2001 (GoP, 2002a).

**PROCESS OF REFORM**

The then Minister of Education, Government of Pakistan notified the formulation of a Task Force for Improvement of Higher Education (TFIHE) in 2001. It was led by the heads of two private sector universities namely Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) and Aga Khan University, Karachi. It had a term of reference that was to be completed in about eight months (see Box-1). Few other tasks were added to the list of ToR such as right sizing of UGC and recommendations towards administrative re-organisation of Ministry of Education.

After many deliberations with academic fraternity of public and private sector universities in the country, think tank type contributions from overseas Pakistani/international academics, seminars and colloquia, the TFIHE presented its report to the government. The said report suggested changes and improvements in curricula, collegelevel education, governance format of universities, funding needs of institutions, hardware and staff support to research endeavoures, assessment criteria of academic work and data base for higher education pursuits (GoP, 2002; Ahmed, 2002a). In specific terms, the task force suggested the promulgation of a new act on higher education, creation of a Steering Committee in order to develop a plan for implementation for higher education and search for appropriate candidates for the proposed board of governors of the Higher Education Commission (HEC)/universities (GoP, 2002; Ahmed, 2002a).

**Box-1: Terms of Reference of TFIHE**

1. Recommend ways of improving higher education in Pakistan with reference to national and international reports, studies and recommendations, and with consultation with the leadership, faculty, staff and students of institutions of higher education and Ministry of Education.
2. Identify ways and means of funding higher education in Pakistan, including new approaches for financial sustainability.
3. Recommend methods of effective governance of higher education, and their implementation.
4. Recommend the role of federal and provincial governments, and their departments and agencies in improving the quality and functioning of higher education institutions.
5. Recommend improved systems of higher education management, including development of faculty and support for student performance.
6. Recommend methods of improving the quality of higher education, including systems of quality assurance, academic audit and accreditation.
7. Specify a prioritized plan for implementation of the recommendations for improvement of higher education.
8. Submit a final report to the Government of Pakistan by December 2001.

*Source: GoP, 2002*

A Steering Committee on Higher Education (SCHE) was eventually formed. It took upon itself to focus on the recommendations of TFIHE. The Higher Education Commission Ordinance was promulgated in 2002 which gave rise to the creation of Higher Education Commission (HEC) in the same year. An elaborate agenda of reforms was prepared by the HEC where in the universities – which traditionally received financial grants only from UGC– were advised to participate. Some of the components of this agenda included adoption of uniform legal / governance structure by all universities (Ahmed, 2003), revision in the faculty hiring criteria with an emphasis on doctoral qualifications; facilitation of private sector education institutions; institution of a ranking criteria for universities; extension of development funding and scholarships with emphasis on doctoral scholarships; quality control and assurance mechanisms; raise in the salary structure of university academic staff; facilitation of research, travel, conference and seminar grants and many more. The HEC also embarked upon an ambitious programme of opening new universities in the public sector as well as upgrading many colleges to the status of degree awarding status and even universities.

Commonly observed indicators and viewpoints of key stakeholders make us believe that the HEChas been successful in implementing a significant part of its reforms agenda. Whereas a detailed qualitative analysis of HEC’s cumulative performance merits a detailed study which is beyond the scope of this paper, it can be safely said that the stated objectives were rigorously followed. Some salient mentions include a sizable raise in the funding of universities (which stood at over Rs. 46 billion in 2007-2008), support for faculty development programmes, setting up a national testing service to judge educational attainment levels, up gradation of more than a dozen collegiate institutions to university status, inception of over twenty new universities in the public sector and developmental assistance to a greatly enhanced status [for details see HEC website (www.hec.com.pk)] (Table-03). Little success could be achieved in the domains of changing the governance structure of universities, ranking yardsticks and what could be termed as cumulative qualitative enhancement, particularly general universities. Some headway was made in research participation of faculty, though not comparable to international norms.

**Table3: Evolution of universities**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Universities** | | | **Degree awarding institutions** | |
| Year | Public | Private | Public | Private |
| 1947-48 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1950-51 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1960-61 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 1970-71 | 8 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| 1980-81 | 19 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| 1990-91 | 20 | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| 2000-01 | 32 | 2 | 5 | 0 |
| 2005-06 | 49 | 4 | 8 | 18 |
| 2007-08 | 07 | 02 | - | - |
| 2009-10 | 02 | 01 | - | - |
| 2011-12 | 02 | 03 | - | - |
| 2013 | 01 | - | - | - |

*Source: Compiled from HEC website, 2007*

As per current status, there are questions raised about the future of HEC in the wake of 18th Constitutional Amendment where extended autonomy is granted to provinces. HEC has been troubled by the gradual reduction in its grant since new regime took over in 2008. Many observers believe that perhaps due to the role of HEC and Universities in the controversial episode of degree verification exercise of law makers, the entire sector of higher education has been made to suffer. Pressure is mounting on university managements to raise the fee structure to balance the accounts! It is feared that many bright but financially disadvantaged youth shall not be able to acquire admission in universities under price-hike situations.

That said, the gradual rise in the number of universities – both public and private – as well as the involvement is a positive trend. A recent scenario is presented in Table 04.

**TABLE4: CATEGORIES AND DISTRIBUTION OF UNIVERSITIESAND OTHER DEGREE AWARDING INSTITUTIONS (2010-2012)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **Sector** | **General\*** | **Agriculture** | **Engineering** | **Medicine** | **Total** |
| Azad Jamu and Kashmir | Public Private | 2  1 | -  - | 1  - | -  - | 3  1 |
| Baluchistan | Public Private | 2  2 | -  - | 2  - | 1  - | 5  2 |
| Federal  Territory | Public Private | 9  7 | -  - | 5  4 | -  1 | 14  12 |
| NWFP | Public Private | 11  4 | 1  - | 4  2 | 1  1 | 17  7 |
| Punjab | Public Private | 15  20 | 1  - | 5  1 | 3  - | 24  21 |
| Sindh | Public Private | 13  16 | 1  - | 6  3 | 2  3 | 22  22 |
| Gilgit-Baltistan | Public Private | 1  - | -  - | -  - | -  - | 1  - |
| Sub Total | Public Private | 53  50 | 3  0 | 23  10 | 7  5 | 86  65 |
| **Total** |  | **103** | **3** | **33** | **12** | **151** |

*\* A general university has more than one Faculty*

*Data obtained from the Higher Education Commission website 2013.*

Many concerns from the social perspective were cited by concerned quarters in this overall process. They were found during direct discourses with the HEC staff/leadership, statutory developments, administrative changes, voices forwarded by teaching/research fraternity, student groups and intelligentsia in general. A review and analysis of some important concerns is the focus of this paper.

**SOCIAL CONCERNS: REVIEW AND ANALYSIS**

**Accessibility**

Despite the commendable efforts of HEC, a sizable ground has to be covered to make up for the extraordinary deficiency regarding access to higher education opportunities. Pakistan is a developing country with a very underdeveloped social sector. About 42 percent population – as per official statistics – is literate. Access to higher education, according to safe estimates is below 2 percent. With the exception of few large cities, there is an acute shortage of trained personnel to manage the most basic of functions. The other aspect of importance is the overall income level in the country. More than 40 percent of population is infested with abject poverty. Access to basic amenities of human survival is extremely constrained. For many, even one decent meal per day is a remote possibility. Education is perhaps the only option available for social mobility. If the education becomes a saleable commodity like most of the other essentials of life, then the probability of this lowest lot to improve its destiny will reduce to an absolute minimum (Ahmed, 2002a).

Every nation-state decides about provision of services to its citizens on the basis of priorities drawn by its own local conditions. Even when a question of tough choices comes up, the benefit to the society as a whole remains the supreme consideration. Such a tough question is now confronting the Pakistani nation. It is now up to the decision makers and the society as a whole to decide whether they wish to uphold the universal access of meaningful education to ALL in line with the national need or they intend to join the donor’s pet club by submitting themselves to the ruthless doctrines of the so called market economy. Consolidating the capacity of public universities all across the country is the appropriate strategy that needs to be adopted with consistent effort.

**Relationship with Elementary and Higher Secondary Education**

It is common sense that improvement in higher education cannot be achieved without corresponding input in elementary and higher secondary education. Although this domain was beyond the scope of HEC, it had a sizable bearing on the efforts. In Pakistan, there is a multitude of different type of educational systems that are practiced. It will be useful to discuss the dominant of them. The most conventional and largely prevalent is the normal schooling system leading to Secondary School Certificate (SSC) earned after ten grades of schooling. This makes the basis of Higher Secondary School Certificate after completion of studies at a high school (college) where two years of study are undertaken after SSC. This constitutes the basic eligibility for admission to a university. Chances of getting admission in a discipline of choice depend upon the performance in the HSC. Other main systems of education prevalent in the country include the *Madrassahs* leading to various scales of theological qualifications and GCE Examinations conducted by the University of Cambridge System for ‘O’ levels and ‘A’ levels with a cumulative thirteen years of schooling. The students pursuing GCE either aim to go abroad for university education or seek an equivalence to enter the local universities according to prescribed procedures (Ahmed, 2002b).

There has been considerable decline in the standards of education in the schools and high schools. It is due to several reasons. Curriculum in the 9th and 10th grade prescribed by the Boards of Secondary Education is considered as too weak and often in contrast to the relatively better education received by good private school students. On the contrary, in government schools due to shortage of teachers, over populous class rooms, lack of academic discipline and absence of academic infrastructure, inferior curricula are followed in the junior classes that makes the SSC examination tough for the students. Language also becomes an issue though the students, in most Boards now have the flexibility to attempt all the courses – except English – in Urdu according to choice or the availability of such facilities. This creates a divide right in the beginning between English medium and Urdu medium students. Only exceptions are able to break the barriers in their careers. Rise in tuition centres, dependence on typical solved and unsolved examination papers, memorization as a sole test of comprehension and knowledge, incomplete coverage of full curriculum in the classes, absence of adequate teachers training facilities, ridiculously low salaries of primary and secondary school teachers are only a few issues that make the pre-university education worthy of a massive but well thought out reform.

**Academic Governance and Social Relevance**

As per standing statues, the University administrations are autonomous entities as per law. At different levels of routine functioning, participation from the society ensures representation of public concerns in the policy making prerogatives. Public sector universities function according to the laws promulgated for their existence and working. The laws lay down the clear mandate, academic structure, nature and extent of operation as well as jurisdictional framework. From the functioning of a teaching department to the university, an overall administrative and academic skeleton is normally prescribed. Boards of Studies, Faculties and Research Bodies, Academic Councils, Finance and Planning Committees, University Development Working Parties, Syndicates and Senates are the normally constituted organs to run the routine affairs of the university (see Figure-1). Almost all the bodies are managed either entirely or with a majority of university professors and staff/officers. Only the Vice-Chancellor is appointed by the Governor of the respective province who is also the Chancellor of public sector universities on the recommendation of search committees. As the chief executive, Vice-Chancellor is an all-powerful officer capable of running the university without interference. Even the Provincial Governor can not directly exercise any operating powers – the only dire action he can take is to sack the Vice-Chancellor and appoint a new one. Although normally the Vice-Chancellor used to be a senior professor of the university, practicing professionals, civil servants and even retired/serving military personnel have also been appointed to this most important position of the universities. This approach has generated mixed results. Universities where a competent and forthright individual has been posted as Vice-Chancellor have shown remarkable progress (Ahmed, 2002a; Haq and Ahmed, 2006).

Two key questions emerge from this debate. One is the administrative arrangement of the universities entirely responsible for the cited factors of academic decline. And two, is the total re-structuring of Senate/Syndicate the only appropriate solution to improve the public sector universities. The flat answer to both the questions is in negative. While a detailed scientific study into this state of affairs is direly needed, some of the arguments that justify this standpoint are outlined below.

**FIGURE1: EXISTING FRAMEWORK OF UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENTIN THE PUBLIC SECTOR**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Body** | **Main Functions** | **Usual Composition** |
| Board of Studies | Academic matters at the departmental level | * Senior teachers of the concerned department. * Eminent professionals of the concerned field.  Chaired by the Chairman of the Department |
| Board of Faculty | All academic matters at the faculty level | * Senior teachers of the concerned faculty.  Chaired by the Dean of the Faculty |
| Academic Council | All academic matters at the University level, affiliated colleges and institutions. | * Deans * Professors * Chairmen of teaching departments * Nominees of the Chancellor * Principals of affiliated colleges * Librarian * Representative/Secretary of Provincial Education Department * Experts of the fields pertinent to the University  Chaired by the Vice-Chancellor |
| Syndicate | * Main executive body * Manage university funds and properties * Affiliate/disaffiliate colleges * Inspect affiliated institutions * Appoint officers and teachers * Oversee service matters of all the officers concerned | * Member of the provincial assembly * Members of University Senate * Chief Justice of the concerned High Court (or a Judge of the High Court nominated by him) * Secretary of the Provincial Education Department * Nominee of Universities Grants Commission * Deans * Members of provincial legislatures * Representatives of University Professors/Teachers * Nominees of the Chancellor * Principals of affiliated colleges  Chaired by the Vice-Chancellor |
| Senate | * Statutes * Review annual performance of the University * Appoint members to various bodies * Budgets and finance overlays | * Members of Syndicate * Officers * Professors * University teacher’s representative (other than professors) * Member of provincial legislature * Principals of affiliated colleges. * Students representatives * Civil society members * Alumni’s representative * Vice-Chancellor * Pro-Chancellor  Chaired by the Chancellor |

*Source: Ahmed(2002a)*

It is a historically prevailing practice in Pakistan that, in the name of “reforms”, thoughtless and baseless revamping is done unabated. Initially, institutions and bodies are created without feasibility and later dumped without justification. Whether politics, development or vital sectors including education, the same dilemma prevails. The current approach adopted for managing universities is also a case in point. While a lot of general perceptions, hearsay and assumptions are cited against the malfunctioning of universities, no scientific study has been hitherto carried out to study the issues in their management, performance and outputs.

The universities are adequately independent in running their routine affairs. However a great deal of this independence is linked up to the kind of leadership the university is possessing. If the leadership – primarily the Vice-Chancellor and his academic and administrative officers – are able to understand their actual role and can steer the working of their sub ordinates, it alone can make a great deal of difference. While the routine hang-ups, delays, bureaucratic conflicts remain a part and parcel of the scenario, the autonomy within the University laws provide sufficient independence to the university administration to work without influence of external forces.

**Quality Assurance Issues**

The reputation of universities remains a pressing issue. Many universities, especially in economically and socially deprived locations, face the problem of basic performance and image. These universities need assistance in raising basic teaching standards, shortage of quality faculty and academic discipline. Quality assurance needsto follow a different yardstick. Borrowed ideas of quality assurance can seldom relate to the inherent problems faced by local institutions. However this is not properly applied. Under normal circumstances, ranking is used as a tool to provide the performance measure of an institution in a comparative scale. It is conventionally aimed to inform the stakeholders (and the society at large) about the status of various institutions; empirical reasons behind the relatively better or worse performances; potential case studies for replication based on success/good performance and a support instrument for the respective stakeholders to re-position their goals and strategies. Universities and colleges, being the prime knowledge dissemination mechanisms, benefit greatly from such exercises. However looking at the past performances of Pakistani universities and the endemic conditions that are all vital to be considered, a careful approach for ranking must be worked out (Ahmed, 2006b).

Unlike the universities in the developed world, the decision making by the prospective students to join an institution is governed by very different considerations. It is not necessarily the academic merit or performance that helps in making such choices. Public sector universities open admissions to residents of the same division/district and province. It is next to impossible for an aspirant from Punjab to study in the University of Sindh or vice versa, at least at undergraduate level. Well aware about the captive clientele, some of these universities do not attempt to enhance their academic potential. The post-degree employability which is confined to some disciplines is also a very important consideration. Such disciplines which are in market demand are chosen, even if the quality of instruction or research is not up to the mark. For this reason many well performing departments in social sciences and humanities are not able to attract bright students. On the contrary, computer and information technology or telecommunications related departments are flocked by hundreds – certainly not always due to the overall teaching quality in those places. This factor becomes a prominent characteristic in labeling a ‘good’ and ‘not so good’ academic outfit. For instance, a department teaching a regional language is looked down on, irrespective of its teaching and research capabilities.

Often research by the university departments and faculty members is conventionally mentioned as a yardstick in ranking. Practically referring, it is an absolutely grey area to be applied for judging the performance. A convenient medium to judge this attribute is to count the number of papers published in journals. Many faculty members usually find the easy way out. They limit to the bare minimum level of publications to obtain promotion or appointment in a higher grade post. In some cases these publications are merely restricted to their doctoral or master’s thesis reports. Some faculty members never bother to take interest in new research work once their mandatory requirement of publications is met. If a review of Ph.D. holders in Pakistan and their status of publications are separately conducted, it is likely to paint a very bleak scene. Self-motivation towards research does not make a determinant in any of these assessments. Avenues for research funding are also limited to select area of operation.

**Financial Sustenance**

University funding and disbursement of annual grants is a central controlling chord that keeps all under strict tutelage of the federal government. The grants, till the previous decade, were disbursed through the University Grants Commission – a centrally organized body that evolved into a giant bureaucracy. The universities, therefore were left with no choice but to follow the prescriptions of federal agendas into their working. Although provincially governed, financial control created a sizable niche for the federal government to intervene. Obviously financial control led to academic and even administrative subservience. Obviously, the state universities had to ‘behave well’ in every respect of their operation not to displease their funding arm. The creation of endowments, as suggested by the SCHE is a commendable recommendation which should be supported. HEC has been disbursing funds in a satisfactory manner till 2007 after which the new regime gradually reduced the allocation to higher education. This short sighted approach can have grave consequences in socio-economic respect. Building up a viable human capital can only be facilitated through the provision of quality education to masses at affordable charges. As these individuals contribute in the stimulation of economic activity in their respective spheres of operation, the nation indirectly recovers the investment done in the provision of education at what can be called subsidized rates. If done otherwise, society will confront a large mass of frustrated and agitated people capable enough to bring down the whole state super structure.

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Although the issues pertinent to public and private sector universities are grave from many respects, there are several potentials that need to be fully exploited in order to make these universities worthy of their academic status. One, public sector universities still draws the best of intakes from the high schools. All this meritorious lot requires is provision of a reasonable amount of academic facilities and quality learning conditions. If a favourable learning environment is created, this student body can surely evolve into an all useful human resource for the service of the nation. Two, with some exceptions, still the public sector universities have some of the best and highly qualified faculty members available in the country. They however need encouragement, support and freedom to operate in line with their academic pursuits. Most of the faculty members are well meaning and willing to contribute. Favourable working conditions and a strong university leadership is needed to streamline their inputs. Three, the federal government is the main provider of the funds in the form of periodic grants. Instead of keeping the disbursement a continued process, efforts should be made to help develop endowments which can be independently managed by the university syndicates. In this way the universities will also acquire working independence. Almost all the prestigious universities around the globe such as Oxbridge in the United Kingdom or Ivy league institutions in the United States are structured in this manner. Four, the universities possess potential researchers. The need is to create commercially viable research ventures that could generate such results which can be utilized by the society at large. And five, the composition of existing Syndicates and Senates should also draw membership from the society, industry and business related to the type of the university. This will help reduce the communication and working gap between the university and its surrounding context.

The ranking exercise needs to be revisited. It may be worthwhile to develop a rationale leading to a realistic and purpose oriented criteria (see Figure-02). Besides, the objectives of the ranking process must be clearly spelled out to generate consensus among the universities. The Vice-Chancellors Conference under HEC auspices may be a good launching platform. Thereafter, a draft document prepared through such an exercise, may be sent to all the participating universities for the consideration of their academic councils and boards. The determination of ranking must comprise teaching, research, publications academic services and interface with industry/market/society. The statutes governing the routine functioning of each university/institution possess a well formed set of statutes. The prescriptions for performance determination are clearly laid down in them. Every university may be encouraged to come up with a self-assessment report covering these aspects. External support for detailed review and analysis may be sought whenever required. However the aim of external input must be largely kept as proactive to help the concerned university/institution take corrective steps.

**FIGURE2: ESTABLISHING A RANKING PROFILE FOR UNIVERSITIESA PROPOSED LIST**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Teaching** | **Research** | **Publications** | **Academic Services/ Management Outputs** | **Interface with Society, Industry and Market** |
| * Undergraduate programmes * Postgraduate programmes * Faculty members performance * Students assessment * Employer feedback * Special purpose programmes * Curriculum development and revision process * Course delivery mechanism | * Research objectives * Peer guided research * Innovative research programmes/ projects * Collaborative research * Faculty’s participation in research * Student participation in research programmes * Impact factors and relevance * Original contributions to knowledge | * Peer reviewed/ refereed publications * Monographs * Reports * Proceedings * Abstracts * Bibliographies * Catalogues * Compendia * General publications * Readership * Circulation * Citation * Impact | * Academic calendar * Quality of programmes * Student services (such as provision of transcripts, certificates, etc.) * Outreach mechanisms for general public | * Responsiveness to social, economic and development issues * Capacity to address specific problems * Producing human resource as per the need of society / market / enterprises * Accommodating the market and society * Leadership role |

*Source:( Ahmed, 2006b)*

It may be pragmatically hoped that the said ranking may be used as a baseline study in order to review the conditions and performance. This shall help identify common problems of the universities as well as specific problems observed at the individual cases. This strategy can evolve a support criteria for the universities where after they can become worthy for any internal or external assessment.

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