

CHAPTER – 7

THE PROBLEMS of QUALITY

The general perception is that the quality of education has deteriorated. Some obvious reasons for this are as under:

- a) The level of competence and dedication of the teachers stemming from poor remuneration and lack of social status.
- b) Poor standards of students' intake from the schools and colleges.
- c) Outdated curricula and books.
- d) Poor teaching methods and lack of teaching aids.
- e) Illequipped laboratories and libraries.
- f) Lack of discipline amongst the students, the teachers and the subordinate staff.

MAJOR ISSUES HAVING A BEARING ON QUALITY**UNPLANNED OPENING of NEW DEPARTMENTS**

In some universities new departments are opened without any consideration of their utility. Neither the staff, space, furniture, and equipment are provided, nor are the necessary funds made available for these departments. Funds already allocated for the existing departments are diverted to them. The result is that on the one hand, the new departments do not reach the takeoff stage, and on the other hand, this adversely affects

the development of existing departments. New departments should, therefore, be opened only when additional / adequate funds are made available, and teaching should commence only when all the necessary arrangements have been made. Teaching laboratories, in science subjects and professional subjects, should be equipped with modern facilities for bench work. This should be done through a grant for new equipment, followed by its periodical maintenance and renewal. Clearly, with the present level of grants to universities, they cannot bring about the desired changes.

THE DURATION of the COURSE of STUDIES

Another major factor affecting the quality of education at the higher level is the shorter duration of the degree programme. At present the first degree in Arts and Sciences is given after 14 years of education. In most of the countries the first degree is given after 16 years of schooling. In a few countries it is given after 15 years. It is, therefore, imperative that we must bring the duration of studies of our first degree to international standards.

TEACHING and RESEARCH

At the university level, teaching and research are inseparable components of education. A university is committed not only to disseminate knowledge through teaching, but also to create new knowledge. High standards of teaching can be maintained only if there are unceasing endeavours in pursuit of greater knowledge. In this

way it is hoped to produce in the youth, not only competence in various skills and fields of learning, but also an inquiring and critical mind.

Research in Universities can be built up with research programmes around highly qualified teachers. Fortunately, promotions to higher cadres in universities are linked with acceptable research performance to be proved through publications of these results in journals of international repute. A personal incentive is also attached with good publications for the researcher then gets an opportunity for attending international conferences and getting international recognition. There is a feeling that this is not enough and promotion needs to be tied up also to the production of approved text and reference books or books of general reading.

The needs of modern teaching and research dictate a constant supply of consumables and spares, and maintenance and renewal of equipment. In some areas, for example chemistry and biology, the costs of consumables have become prohibitive. Yet these must be made available, if the universities are to compete with international standards. The university teacher must attract funds from various national and international research funding agencies. In summary, substantial financial inputs are needed for strengthening the graduate study programmes and for updating research facilities and co-curricular activities in universities.

Table Expenditure on research in universities - 1995-96 ⁽¹⁾

| Name of University | Annual Budget <i>Rs. in million</i> | Expenditure <i>Rs. in million</i> |
|---|--|--|
| Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad | 199.061 | 0.000 |
| Azad Jammu & Kashmir University, Muzaffarabad | 85.696 | 0.499 |
| Bahauddin .Zakariya University, Multan | 101.939 | 1.008 |
| Balochistan University of Engg. & Tech. Khuzdar | 16.329 | 0.000 |
| Gomal University, D.I. Khan | 109.108 | 0.006 |
| International Islamic University, Islamabad | 111.032 | 0.000 |
| Islamia University, Bahawalpur | 86.812 | 0.956 |
| Mehran University of Engg. & Tech. Jamshoro | 100.703 | 0.000 |
| NED Engg University, Karachi | 89.761 | 1.475 |
| NWFP Agricultural University, Peshawar | 82.459 | 1.195 |
| Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad | 113.705 | 3.696 |
| Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur | 85.967 | 0.163 |
| Sindh Agriculture University, TandoJam | 124.952 | 0.210 |
| University of Engg & Tech. Taxila | 31.379 | 0.000 |
| University of Agriculture, Faisalabad | 211.882 | 2.968 |
| University of Balochistan, Quetta | 103.581 | 0.322 |
| University of Engg & Tech. Lahore | 160.143 | 2.768 |
| University of Engg & Tech. Peshawar | 94.803 | 2.167 |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| University of Karachi, Karachi | 285.425 | 8.003 |
| University of Peshawar, Peshawar | 254.215 | 2.000 |
| University of Sindh, Jamshoro | 224.111 | 0.000 |
| University of the Punjab, Lahore | 375.112 | 4.978 |
| Total | 3048.175 | 32.414 |
| Percentage | 100% | 1.06% |

Table Comparison of Research Funding in USA and Pakistan as a Percentage of Total University Budgets ⁽²⁾

| * USA | | PAKISTAN | |
|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| Public Sector | Private Sector | Public Sector | Private Sector |
| 10.2% | 7.8% | 1.06% | Nil |

Against 1-2% research allocation in the recurring budget in Pakistani Universities, we see that about 10.2% of public universities' and 7.8% of private universities' budget in the USA is spent on research.

Need to Improve the Situation: Traditionally, Pakistani universities have been content to undertake basic research. However, societal and economic demands call for an entrepreneurial role of universities. Generally, the research effort is much below the desirable level.

There is, therefore, a need to modernize Pakistani university education, by improving inputs and relating such education to national needs. A new orientation of university research is, therefore, needed. The results of the initiatives taken today will unfold in the coming years. The philosophy of self-reliance will not materialize, unless the knowledge generating base of the educational machinery is expanded, and used for societal development.

THE MEDIUM of INSTRUCTIONS:

Pakistan is a land of great diversity in the people inhabiting it and the languages they speak. There are many factors that unite the people of Pakistan. Islam is one of the strongest uniting factors for the people of the country. We have to accept the fact that it is a large country with people of diverse races, cultures and links inhabiting it. We have, therefore, to learn and achieve unity through our diversity.

Different provinces have different provincial / local languages which are spoken by the people. These languages are written and have rich literature and traditions which are jealously guarded by the people. Under these circumstances, there has to be a common language which is spoken and understood by the people in addition to their local

language. Fortunately, Urdu is the language which is spoken and understood by the people in the farthest corners of the land and therefore, it is the language that is generally used as the medium of instruction in the school system. It is another matter that in many places the teacher would be explaining the contents of the book in the local language but the text book would be in Urdu language and the examination would be held in Urdu language. In the rural areas of Sindh, however, Sindhi language is used as the medium of instructions and the text books are also in that language. Everybody learns Urdu and acquires considerable fluency in its use.

When Pakistan became independent the higher education system generally used English as the medium of instruction. This position continues till today. This is not to say that there has been no controversy over the use of English as the medium of instruction. The official policy remains that gradually Urdu will replace English as the medium of instruction at all levels. However, there have been practical difficulties in the implementation of the above policy of the government.

In the first instance our educational system does not produce new knowledge particularly in the fields of Science and Technology. This makes our whole system dependent upon new knowledge produced in other parts of the World. The English speaking people have contributed greatly to the explosion of knowledge that has taken place in the latter part of the 20th Century. In fact the predominance of writings both in Humanities and in the Sciences in English language is such that English is fast being recognized as the lingua franca of the world.

Thus we see that the process of globalization which has been heralded with the advent of the 21st Century will make it essential for us to continue our higher education in the English language. Were we to make an attempt to discontinue it at this stage we should be the losers. If we consider language as a mean of expression or a means of communication with other people of the world then there should be no conflict between the use of English in our higher education system and use of our national and provincial languages for our internal communication and social and cultural activities. Therefore, it appears to be high time that we as people come to terms that the global reality and to accept English as a medium of instructions for our higher education system. A conflict like situation between Urdu and English will not be in the interest of the country.

THE REVISION of CURRICULA

The UGC has the responsibility for carrying out periodical revision of curricula. It is essential that this process must be :

- a) Continuous.
- b) Frequent.
- c) Participative with all stakeholders involved.
- d) Followed by suitable teacher training.

The University Grants Commission has to perform the following major functions with regard to the revision of curricula as given in the UGC Act: ⁽³⁾

- a) Supervise generally the academic programmes and development of various Institutions of Higher Learning and Education in the country.
- b) Recommend to the universities the measures necessary for the improvement of university education.

The hands of the UGC were further strengthened in 1976 with the passage of the "Federal Supervision of Textbooks and Maintenance of Standards of Education Act, 1976" ⁽⁴⁾. Under this Act the UGC has to play the lead role in the revision of curricula for the graduate and post-graduate levels. The need for this Act was apparently felt in the wake of the breakaway of East Pakistan and the realization that faulty curricula totally controlled by Provincial Agencies had failed to serve the role of national integration.

The UGC has been active in the periodical revision of curricula. The methodology adopted by the UGC is:

- i) An assessment / analysis of the existing curricula is carried out with the help of experts in the relevant field from all universities and some affiliated colleges where the subject is taught.
- ii) Thereafter, the Vice-Chancellors of such universities both in the public and private sector all over the country are requested to nominate suitable

teachers for the constitution of the National Curriculum Revision Committees (NCRC) on the concerned subject. The representatives from industry, concerned users and local colleges are also invited for the meetings of the NCRC.

- iii) The NCRC meeting prepares a draft of the revised curriculum after meeting for three or four days at the UGC Head Office or the Regional Centres located at Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar.
- iv) The draft curriculum prepared by the NCRC is circulated to all concerned universities and other user organizations. These drafts are then taken to the University Board of Studies and their comments are invited.
- v) The comments are then taken up in the second meeting of the NCRC and a final draft prepared.
- vi) The implementation of the revised curriculum is through the concerned university bodies. The UGC provides follow-up through training of teachers and revision of textbooks.

With the internet in operation, it is a comparatively simple task to obtain the curricula of almost any institution in the world. The object of the meetings conducted by the UGC is to bring those curricula in line with our requirements and our ability to teach at a particular level. The other objective of the UGC exercise is to motivate the teachers to accept the new curricula as their own.

Conclusion:

The problem does not lie in the curricula alone. If the requirement was merely to produce an up-to-date curriculum in a subject and raise the standards, then there would have been no problem. The issue really is the reluctance of the teachers to acquire new knowledge and the absence of books and teaching aids, to successfully teach the curricula. The poor knowledge base of the students is another limiting factor. These are the issues that we must tackle, if we are going to raise the standards of education.

LABORATORY EQUIPMENT / INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL

Universities and some colleges have already invested heavily on capital development, hence the emphasis is now on improving the quality of teaching and research. Therefore, a carefully planned strategy has to be developed for investing in laboratory field equipment and computers as a priority. Thus, there is strong justification for providing resources for the purchase of laboratory/field equipment. Deficiency of laboratory and field equipment is also a major constraint to imparting meaningful practical training to the students.

The libraries should be properly equipped and book banks established with multiple copies of expensive textbooks. In this connection the National Book Foundation

can play an important role. The teachers may be required to produce textbooks and books of general readings of the course that they teach.

INDIGENOUS POST-GRADUATE EDUCATION

Foreign training has helped in building a small cadre of qualified teachers at the universities. It has not paid enough dividends in terms of improvement in the quality and relevance of education and research on the campuses. In fact, in many cases the trainees, after return, have not only performed poorly, but have become a liability to the employing institutions. Training in foreign universities has also made the academics more alien in their outlook and philosophy which is at cross purposes for developing countries such as Pakistan. In most cases, the thesis research conducted by trainees in foreign universities had no relevance to Pakistani conditions. Although the majority of universities in Pakistan offer Ph.D. programmes in a number of subjects, the out-put is far from satisfactory both in terms of quality as well as quantity. Therefore, strengthening of local capacity for Post-Graduate Education is justified. The time has also come for the government to farm out critical subjects / topics for research to the universities through the UGC, and the federal and provincial Ministries of Education.

The development of in-country capacity for Postgraduate Education has several direct benefits. It could provide opportunities for postgraduates to work on problems of national priority, by involving industry. It is essential that overseas scholarships are provided only in cases where a specific research in some discipline cannot be

accommodated due to lack of competent supervisors or facilities. Such overseas' sources could be targeted for Post-Doctoral work / research.

FELLOWSHIPS for TEACHERS

Some institutions of higher education are short of trained staff in some vital and new / emerging disciplines. There is a need for providing immediate training facilities for their staff to ensure quality teaching of modern curricula, particularly at the post-graduate level. Business Administration, Information Technology and Engineering disciplines in the universities are in direct competition with the market and are finding it difficult to retain highly qualified teachers. Special market related pay packages may be offered to teachers in such subjects.

Study tours for senior administrators/academics such as Vice-Chancellors, Deans, etc., will also be very essential, to up-date knowledge of regional/global higher education, introduce new concepts and to build linkages with other institutions.

GREATER USE of COMPUTER

Information Technology has developed into an essential tool for all branches of learning. There was a time when great demand for information technology experts in the developed world appeared as a big source of earning foreign exchange by countries with

the required manpower. India was prepared for this eventuality and earned a lot of foreign exchange.

Currently, there is a slow down in the demand for information technology professionals in the developed world. However, information technology remains an essential tool for all branches of learning. Pakistan must spread the knowledge of information technology and provide the necessary infrastructure to make this technology available even in the remote corners of the country.

PEER REVIEW of HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

There is a complete absence of a system of monitoring and evaluation. Those institutions which are even decades old, have never been subjected to any internal or external review. External reviews are meant to take stock of the quality, relevance and impact of educational programmes, and are up to the highest standards of performance expected of a university. Therefore, such an exercise should be given the highest priority, beginning with the well established universities in Pakistan, and extended later on to the new universities.

CREATION of EXTRA-CURRICULAR and CO-CURRICULAR FACILITIES

Residential accommodation for students is of very low quality and lacks in basic amenities. Poor hostel accommodation has been responsible for pent up anger and frustration in the students.

Medical facilities in all universities are unsatisfactory. There must be periodical check up of the students so that health problems can be diagnosed in time.

Sports activities are essential for building up a healthy body and mind. These are totally ignored. Some times even the facilities are not available. The private universities are the worst sufferer on this score. Similarly, activities like debating, literary and dramatic societies, social welfare organizations, etc. are other essential features.

THE EXAMINATION SYSTEM

Examinations are an integral part of the teaching-learning process and lend credence to the whole system of education. They determine a student's standing on the scale of achievements. They tell the teacher and the institutions about possible inadequacies that might have existed in their teaching strategies, and help them to bring appropriate changes, and above all, they tell society about the competence of those examined to take up responsibilities in various fields of human endeavour. Students, teachers, society and the nation, all stand to lose, if the information provided by examinations, especially at the university level, is incomplete, distorted and contaminated.

In the traditional Muslim Educational System, the teacher was the examiner and the sole judge of the competence of his student. There was no trace of external examinations in the Islamic Educational System.

The British System introduced in India replaced the indigenuous educational system and external examination played a pivotal role. Modern concept under the semester system has again shifted the responsibility back to the teacher.

The Annual System was criticized on the ground that it gave rise to a habit of cramming and use of unfair means. The semester system has not been a total success in Pakistan because of the lack of integrity amongst the teachers in many cases and also the great pressures brought by the students on the teachers to show undue favours. These pressures have been known to culminate in the killing of some teachers.

It appears that neither the pure semester system nor the pure annual system would provide the answer to the examination problems in Pakistan. A judicious combination of the two with reasonable powers to the teachers to judge the over all suitability of the student appears to be the only course at the moment.

ADMISSION CRITERIA:

The demand for Higher Education particularly in the scientific and technical fields is far higher than the places available in the public universities. This pressure has led to inflexible entry requirements based only on the examination performance of the students. This has given rise to further distortions in the achievement level of the students admitted in any particular class.

Pakistan is a Federal State and its Constitution enjoins upon the government to provide opportunities to students of backward areas and classes to enable them to take a meaningful part in the socio-economic development of the country. This has led to the quota system. This system has given rise to a high failure rate at the graduation and post-graduation level resulting in a colossal wastage of scarce national resources.

Another factor which has been ignored in the process of admission is the aptitude of the students. There is no test or criteria to judge the aptitude of students in such sensitive disciplines as medicine and engineering.

Universities have come to realize that the results of Intermediate and Secondary Boards at F.A./F.Sc. level are not a very reliable criterion for judging merit. Consequently, they have started admission tests. Institutions like The Aga Khan

University, the Lahore University of Management Sciences, the Institute of Business Administration Karachi, the Army Medical College Rawalpindi, etc. have been administering admission tests for a number of years with considerable success.

The Government of NWFP has introduced Entry Test for admission to Provincial Colleges and Universities since 1996. The National Education Policy 1992 gives the following background of the National Testing Service: (3)

"Evaluation makes an important link in the teaching-learning process. Apart from a weak delivery system, the examination system is excessively flawed on account of a variety of malpractices. Neither the semester system nor the annual system have been able to stand up to the widespread corruption in examinations. Under a variety of circumstances, the examiners, the paper setters, the invigilators, and the examination departments appear to be equal partners in maintaining the vicious circle of corruption around public examinations. Even the Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) have vied with one another in the award of unjustifiably inflated grades to their students. Also, in their anxiety to bring their wards to professional colleges, the parents have joined the rat race of nefarious practices. This state of affairs has caused two types of damages: (a) lack of confidence in the results of public examinations, and (b) distortion in admissions to professional colleges."

Conclusion:

Quotas of different types for admission to the educational institutions need to be phased out at the earliest. Admission must be on merit.

The merit must not be based solely on the marks obtained in F.A. / F.Sc.. Institutions should devise suitable admission tests which will test the knowledge and aptitude of the student.

Tests must be prepared carefully to ensure that they do not become instruments of discrimination against particular socio-economic or geographic groups.

DISCIPLINE on the CAMPUS

Since the late nineteen sixties, politics has become an integral part of university education. In a country with a low level of literacy and government monopoly on jobs, the student section of society is the only independent sector where political parties can make inroads. Student federations have become powerful enough to virtually take over academic administration. Almost every political party has its student wing at the campuses, which uses students for its designs and motives. Along with that, there are academic staff associations and unions of non-teaching employees. As a result, there is a complete breakdown of discipline in the universities. The purpose of the unionization of the campus population is not the development of professional advancement, but to work for accelerated promotion, better perks and degrees without work.

The National Education Policy, 1992, gives the following background on campus violence: (5)

"Much of the erosion of our educational standards in recent years has been attributed to excessive use of violence on the campuses. Free traffic of arms and ammunition on the campuses and their indiscriminate use by rival groups of students, have created difficulties; the solution to this problem has gone beyond the scope of lawful authorities in colleges and universities. Anti-authority attitude, little respect for teachers, politicization of students, off-campus abetment of students by the vested interests, non-recognition of the effective role which the silent majority of students can play on the campus, inadequacy of law enforcing mechanisms, ineffectiveness of discipline committees, apathy and aloofness of teachers, cheating in examinations, soft and even benign attitude of the authorities towards politically aligned, violent groups of students, overcrowding of class-rooms, lack of seriousness in imparting instruction, lack of diversification in channelizing the energies of students, for example, in sports and co-curricular activities, are some of the factors which are adversely affecting the higher education system. These trends need to be reversed with the clear objective of promoting a campus culture sympathetic to easy academic growth in an environment of peace, devotion, hard work, creativity and common nationhood. The policy having recognized these trends, proposes a new strategy to eradicate the evil."

It is in the national interest that we must restore sanity on the campus if we wish to produce scholars of international quality. The following steps are suggested:

- a) A consensus to be built up in the political parties that they will not use the students for party politics.
- b) Restoring the prestige and moral ascendancy of merit.
- c) Academic, moral and disciplinary role modeling by the administration and academia.
- d) Encouraging healthy extra-curricular and co-curricular activities amongst the students.
- e) Removing the genuine grievances/ problems of all the stakeholders on the university campus.

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