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QLANTIC
 JOURNAL OF
 SOCIAL SCIENCES

Internationalization of Higher Education and Its Influence on the Educational Development in Pakistan

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Abstract: Pakistan is passing through the initial stages of internationalization of higher education. The basic challenges in the internationalization of higher education are the brain drain and economic development. For this very purpose, Pakistan sends its talented and qualified scholars to advanced countries to improve their qualifications and share their experiences in their homeland. HEC sends scholars abroad to meet the challenges and compete in the international market. Most of the universities in Pakistan are in coordination with those of the developed countries, and even some of the foreign universities have opened their campuses in Pakistan, which results in more opportunities in technology, teaching, research, and academic linkages. HEC is trying to make the admission process and arrival easy for outside students so as to attract them to its education because internationalization of higher education is not only to send its scholars abroad but also to attract international students.

Key Words: Internationalization, Higher Education, Education Development, Pakistan

Introduction

Internationalization has changed over the past 25 years from being a minor element to a major strategic factor in higher education (De Wit & Altbach, 2021). The importance of international students' mobility within the context of higher education is steadily increasing. Due to internationalization, the global higher education landscape has experienced a significant transformation as more students continue to pursue their higher education overseas (Mok & Marginson, 2021). In this regard, both opportunities and challenges have increased because of internationalization. Because only the countries with the necessary knowledge and abilities can take advantage of the potential. The new environment's emphasis on relevant, high-quality education and training encourages the development of informed, productive citizens and provides chances for the socially and economically disadvantaged groups in society (MUHIBBULLAH et al., 2021). Every person's ability to pursue and shape the future with a global view is becoming progressively central and significant. People who study abroad can reach their full potential and contribute to their communities and countries. International students are a significant source of supplementary funding for educational institutions (Kayani et al., 2015). Internationalization has grown in Pakistan over the past 40 years. Despite the numerous academic and professional options accessible to them, students still prefer to pursue their further education and establish themselves overseas, which results in a brain drain in the nation (Ploner & Nada, 2020). International student mobility has dramatically increased during the past few years in conjunction with the globalization of higher education (Collins et al., 2017). The higher education landscape has undergone enormous changes in such a short period of time due to global shifts and infrastructure advances in higher education (Aljohani et al., 2022). According to a report by the British Council titled Postgraduate Student Mobility Trends to 2024, six markets, namely, Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, United States, Japan, and Germany, will be the main destinations for postgraduate mobility during the next ten years (Say & Bophan, 2019). In order to pursue higher education, an increasing number of students choose to study abroad. This is due to factors such as the high quality of the educational system,

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▪ **To Cite:** Alam, J., Karim, T., & Khan, J. (2023). Internationalization of Higher Education and Its Influence on the Educational Development in Pakistan. *Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(3), 69–77.

<https://doi.org/10.55737/qjss.959381191>



opportunities for growth and development, better-paying careers, and future job security, as well as value-added reward systems, a wide variety of diverse academic opportunities, immigration, a higher standard of living, and many other dynamics (Najibullah et al., 2022). Due to a lack of academic and professional resources as well as political, economic, and social instability in developing countries, students from middle-class families are interested in continuing their education in developed countries for personal growth and development (Abad-Segura & González-Zamar, 2021). Students' mobility may be viewed as lost talent in their home countries, resulting in a knowledge vacuum. This causes brain drain, or the movement of highly skilled workers seeking employment or study (Zainab et al., 2019). In general, the majority of skilled migrants leave underdeveloped countries like Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka for developed ones. Benefits for home countries include remittances, an experienced foreign workforce, and a set of skills that are competitive globally. However, if these students decide to remain in the host nation, the problem gets more complicated (Jushi et al., 2021). The migration of gifted people from their home country to the host country benefits the host nation by decreasing a priceless and limited human capital, but leaves the home country with a knowledge gap and an intellectual capital deficiency (Montenegro de Wit, 2022). One of the main problems that led the researchers to investigate this phenomenon in the context of higher education in Pakistan is brain drain, which is followed by international student movement (Khwaja et al., 2022).

According to HEC, as mentioned by Zainab et al. (2019), in 2011, some 4986 academics received funding from various programs to pursue MS, PhD, and post-doctoral degrees abroad. Only 2375 students returned to Pakistan after completing their studies satisfactorily. According to this data, more than 50% of students returned home, while the remaining students remained in the host nations. These empirical findings provide significant support for Pakistan's brain drain phenomenon. The GDP will decline significantly if such talent and intellectual capital loss continues without proper replacement since skill outflow negatively affects the economy (Sajjad, 2018). At the turn of the 20th century, there were almost two million students studying abroad; by the year 2016, that number had risen to five million. This rise is unmistakably evidence of the rising popularity of getting an overseas education. International students' benefits to both the home and host nations are one of the factors contributing to this rise (Bashir et al., 2019). According to Bashir et al. (2021), there are 47164 Pakistani international students worldwide, which, according to Bashir and Khalid (2022), are more than 50,000 in the Western world. International students currently make up 5.6% of the total number of students enrolled in higher education institutions in OCED (The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) nations, namely Australia, Canada, and Norway. With the support of the Pakistani Higher Education Commission, the trend of scholars leaving Pakistan for higher education in other nations has become more significant (Bashir et al., 2021). The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan offered funds to deserving Pakistani academics to pursue studies abroad in line with the growing trend of internationalization in higher education (Bashir & Khalid, 2022). In Pakistan, teaching, research, and academic connections now have a larger range of opportunities due to internationalization. Since the introduction of information technology and the process of globalization, learning chances have significantly enhanced. Enrollment has increased, and indigenous knowledge has received more attention (Anka, 2019). Higher education and knowledge dissemination are significantly facilitated by internationalization and student exchange programs between Pakistan and prominent universities. Most institutions recruit eminent academics and subject matter specialists to train their teaching staff in professional and pedagogical techniques (Murtaza & Hui, 2021).

Brain Drain at the Higher Education Level

Brain drain is used for the immigration of highly skilled and qualified people to other countries (Ngoma & Ismail, 2013). Internationalization of higher education and its institutions in the context of the globalization learning process is equally enjoyed throughout the world, which promotes immigration (Gaillard et al., 2015). In recent years, the ratio of immigration from less developed to highly developed countries has been highly concerned with the reduction of human resources in the home countries (Kingma, 2001). This migration affects socio-economic conditions in the context of the global economy. International scenario, recent developments influenced the world political conditions with the flow of information and communication technology (De Haas, 2011). This increased incidence of brain drains in

the fields of medicine, engineering, science, and technology. Most of the theorists call it 'Brain gain' instead of 'Brain drains' for the migrated countries. This deprives under-developing countries of their little bit talented and professional youths (Radwan & Sakr, 2018). This notion emphasized the importance of science and technology for the production and dissemination of knowledge in the national curricula at various stages of education to compete with the world and pace with globalization and internationalization of education (Codina et al., 2013). This trend is only at the higher education level while the schools remained untouched by this, where they prevail in traditions and resist change in their values (Norris & Inglehart, 2012). Only at the university level education is internationalized and globalized to compete and pace with the changing world (Nawab et al., 2006). University-level education is the stage for cosmopolitans and liberal thinkers. In this sense, the internationalization of education at the university level can be seen as a globalization process (Islam et al., 2013).

The internationalization of higher education impacted old traditions of knowledge dissemination and promoted new methods of teaching and learning (Sassen, 1996). It changed the idea and role of knowledge-producing to knowledge-producing workers (Yemini, 2017). Knowledge gaining crossed the limits of conventional channels to internationalization with a mass higher education system competition in the global market for the migrant population, which is mostly students and faculties (Marginson, 2004). Internationalization of higher education influenced social perceptions in relation to higher education (Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2017). There are two types of internationalization of education. One is career students' mobility to other countries for higher education (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005). The second is gaining higher education via distance and e-learning procedures or in the campuses opened in the learners' countries, for example, US Ivy League Colleges in UAE (Annabi & Wilkins, 2016). This cross-border student sending may cause the risk of brain drain. Most Pakistani students go for higher education in Western countries, the USA, and Canada, but most of them do not return to their home countries and continue living and gaining jobs in foreign countries (Salmon, 2005). Entering Pakistani higher education institutions into partnership with European universities is an example of the internationalization of education (Zubair Haider & Dilshad, 2015). For example, COMSATS partnership with Lancaster University, the University of Education Lahore with a number of UK and USA universities, NUML with the University of Bradford, and NUST with Chinese and US universities (Zubair Haider & Dilshad, 2015). The developed countries' partnerships and scholarships for the developing countries are to have their influence and attract the talent to their countries. To have the stamp of an international and developed country on their degree, the developing countries pay a lot (Marsh & Oyelere, 2018). Being a colony of powerful countries, Pakistan is always under the influence of others in terms of languages, forces trainings and judiciary. This parallel system always reminds about being a colony (Mahmud, 2010). In this regard English is taught from the preschool to higher education level which can guarantee employability with social and economic rewards. The same is in practice as used to be in the British rule that the elites were sending their children for a foreign degree (Haleman, 2004).

Pakistan is a growing nation that struggles with the significant loss of highly trained workers to better-paying jobs abroad. As compensation, the government provides generous incentives to attract and keep a vital number of engineers, scientists, and other professionals in Pakistan (Farooq & Ahmad, 2017). According to Waseem and Talpur (2021), uncontrolled brain drain in a country with a high population density like Pakistan needs to be redirected into targeted brain export. In this regard, according to Naz (2016), both skilled and semi-skilled employees are urged to seek employment overseas to overcome unemployment, economic troubles, etc. Although it succeeded for a brief time, if we take a closer look, we find that we are lacking experts, particularly in the health and education fields. In 2008, the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency released a report on the importance and problems of migration. It was said that while brain drain is beneficial in terms of remittances and raising the standard of life in society, it is countered by the claim that it deprives the nation of precious human capital that may advance the nation (Altaf et al., 2015). Up to 70% to 80% of the so-called brain drain has been caused by the migration of Pakistani professional graduates to countries with greater employment opportunities, which has sparked charges against Pakistan and other developing nations. After completing their higher education, the majority of students struggle to find employment in their country, and the government is unable to provide them with many opportunities. Most engineers, technological professionals, and medical



professionals have no choice but to relocate to a developed nation due to the absence of unequal growth of prospects (Murtaza & Hui, [2021](#)). The dearth of specialists in the fields of education and health has been linked to brain drain in Pakistan (Sehar et al., [2021](#)).

Internationalization of Higher Education and Economic Factors

Internationalization is a key factor in many of the world's thriving economies today (Hassan et al., [2019](#)). Internationalization of education is an increase in the economy of a country to cross-cultural and social borders. Some of the theorists consider it as a benign struggle to modernity and prosperity. It unfetters capitalism, which leads to nationhood and monopolization (Stein, [2017](#)). Internationalization of education creates connections between economies and societies while transcending the barriers and distinctions. With an increase in information and communication technology (ICT), there is an abrupt change and increase in cross-border business and services that lead to an increase in the economy of most of the countries that only depend upon cross-border income (Vasilescu et al., [2010](#)). Border businesses and services produce a transfer of knowledge and an increase in the economy. These economic needs fulfillment stimulate the internationalization of higher education for the knowledge and economic needs of the students. In the formulation and development of human society, the economic factors are vibrant and paramount (Robertson, [2009](#)).

Along with the economic, socio-political factors are also playing a role in the internationalization of higher education (Kazmi & Quran, [2005](#)). After the 1973 constitution, the Ahmadis in Pakistan migrated to Europe, Canada, and the USA, where they enjoyed the same standard of education in those countries as the natives (Malik, [2002](#)). Due to the worse political conditions, the deplorable status of education and security is happening. There is an extreme need for reforms in the development of higher education in Pakistan (Jalal, [1991](#)). The poor status of foreign trading and poor health services also promote the trends of foreign higher education and health facilities for the elite classes (Nishtar et al., [2013](#)). For the development of higher education in Pakistan, there is an extreme need to free universities from the political and bureaucratic influences that lead to financial autonomy (Azhar & Steen, [2022](#)). In this respect, the Higher Education Commission paved the way to equal the standard and structure of higher education with the developed countries to meet the challenges and find jobs in the international market for its graduated persons (Khan & Jabeen, [2019](#)).

Pakistan is striving to focus on the internationalization of higher education in the sense of finding a market for its degree holders (Abbas et al., [2021](#)). In this regard, they have brought changes in their curriculum to compete in the international market with their standard of education as a source of economic and financial support and guidance for the rest of developing countries. Pakistan has also sent its scholars for Master's, Ph.D., and other professional education abroad for the purpose of getting the experiences of those countries and implementing that in their homeland (Singh & Jamil, [2021](#)). It has increased economic life's competition and demands, emphasizing the importance of human expertise development. Only a workforce that has received an education and is skilled in current technologies can compete and take advantage of the opportunities brought forth by the internationalization of education (Anka, [2019](#)). As a result of internationalization and globalization, there have been many technological advancements, including the ability to connect individuals globally and the development of the contemporary economy (Rehman et al., [2021](#)).

Pakistan Initiatives for the Internationalization of Higher Education

Pakistan is working on a policy to attract international students for their higher education. In this regard, the local universities must meet the required standard for the international degree to solve the problems (Jibeen & Khan, [2015](#)). Since the 1990s, there has been a growing interest in higher education for designing policies. There is a dire need to ensure higher education degrees are internationally recognized. To meet the challenges in the international market, HEC avails collaboration with 13 US universities, 6 UK universities, and 5 German universities (Zakaria et al., [2016](#)). The purpose is to attract international and national scholars to its universities for MBBS, BDS, Engineering, Pharm D, and BSc. In 2010, the number of international students in Pakistani universities was 106 in MBBS, 70 in Pharm D, 67 in Engineering, and

five students in BDS (Zakaria et al., 2016). In addition, 1225 students applied for NOC in the year 2010-11 from Afghanistan, Somalia, China, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Sudan. The main objective of the HEC is to make Pakistan a hub for international higher education. Pakistan is also trying to avail of different scholarship programs for its students and has signed different MoUs with different countries (Zafar et al., 2021). These include DAAD with Germany, SFERE with France, NUFFIC with the Netherlands, KTH with Sweden, and Massey and Auckland universities in New Zealand. There is also an agreement with Cambridge Commonwealth and Overseas Trust for student exchange. HEC is also striving for funds from different countries, including Sweden, the UK, the Netherlands, China, Korea, Germany, etc. (Zakaria et al., 2016).

For the internationalization of higher education, Pakistan is working on the Malaysian model with the policy for higher education to enroll a maximum number of students in its universities. They have formulated the six points that are,

1. Mobility of students
2. Mobility of staff
3. Program for academic
4. Research innovation
5. Autonomy and governance
6. Community engagement and social integration (Zakaria et al., 2016).

For international students, there are the following advantages to studying in Pakistan. These are,

1. The geographical and historical status of Pakistan makes it a gateway between the developed and developing countries.
2. Cultural diversity and enlightened moderation in Pakistan make it attractive to the world.
3. The privatized sector of education is highly attractive.
4. Many universities provide international standard degrees with the minimum cost as compared to developed countries.
5. In all universities, English is the medium of instruction, which is significant for the international community.
6. As Pakistan is in the initial stages of Internationalization of higher education, there are a lot of opportunities for the international community to come and take admission (Zakaria et al., 2016).

Conclusion

The topic of internationalization in higher education has grown in importance and received more attention from researchers and policymakers in the last decades of the 20th century. Higher education institutions and specifically renowned national universities focused on research now face a new challenge as activities are increasingly carried out in a cooperative and competitive manner on a worldwide scale (Qureshi et al., 2014). Going with the world through education has so many causes and effects in all dimensions of higher education in Pakistan. In this respect, there are developments seen in the leadership and strategic planning in universities. Internationalization of education is institutionalized where different institutions have signed their Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with the world-ranking universities for the development of higher education in their models and having scholarships and research facilities for its students. The universities are striving, with the support of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), to develop a curriculum according to international standards to make its students capable of competing in the international market and be a source of economic and education development for the country. A common skill set is required to address these issues because of the idea of internationalization. For the country's professionals to strengthen their skills, higher education institutions are important. The present study concentrates on the necessity for higher education in Pakistan to internationalize to obtain a universal set of capabilities to face problems posed by globalization.



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