

PAKISTAN

Country Summary of Higher Education

Background:

Tertiary Education System: In Pakistan, higher education refers to education above grade 12, which generally corresponds to the age bracket of 17 to 23 years. *The higher education system in Pakistan is made up of two main sectors: the university/Degree Awarding Institutes (DAI) sector and the affiliated Colleges sector.* The Higher Education Commission (HEC - a reincarnation of the erstwhile University Grants Commission), is an autonomous apex body responsible for allocating public funds from the federal government to universities and DAIs and accrediting their degree programs. Colleges are funded and regulated by provincial governments, but follow the curriculum of the HEC funded universities/DAIs with which they are affiliated. While the HEC primarily funds public universities, it has recently opened a limited number of avenues for making funds available to private sector universities for research and infrastructure development.

The Pakistan higher education sector is predominantly public in nature, with public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) dominating both the university/DAI and College sectors (table 1). The HE sector enrolls less than 4% (including colleges) of the age cohort, and compares unfavorably with countries such as India at 11% and Malaysia at 32%. There is also a large distance learning program. Public HEIs generally offer a wide range of courses and programs, while private HEIs predominantly offer a narrow range of vocationally oriented courses and programs such as business and IT. The bulk of research in the HE sector is conducted in public universities. However, the private sector does play an important role. In 2006/07, the private sector represented some 23% of HEI enrolments and 9% of Degree College enrolments (table 1).

Government Strategy and Ongoing Policy Reforms: After two decades of serious neglect, the higher education sector in Pakistan has, in recent years, undergone a rebirth. The situation began to reverse itself in the early 2000s, with the government showing a clear commitment to improving higher education, as evidenced by significant increases in spending on higher education (Table 2), the creation of the HEC in 2002 and the establishment of an ongoing major policy reform program outlined in the Medium-Term Development Framework (MTDF) 2005-2010 prepared by the HEC.

Recent developments in the areas of quality, access, and governance and management include:

Quality: (i) establishment of Quality Assurance Agency at the HEC and Quality Enhancement Cell at HEIs; (ii) a program launched to equip both new and existing faculty with the advanced qualifications; (iii) introduction of a new compensation system (Tenure Track System); (iv) provision for laboratories, equipment and scientific material; (v) alignment of academic degrees with international norms; and (vi) curriculum revision.

Access - measures have been taken both to expand supply and to boost demand: (i) expansion of existing infrastructure; (ii) exploitation of the potential of distance learning; and (iii) provision of undergraduate and post-graduate scholarships to students in both the public and private sectors.

Governance: (i) implementation of measures to introduce a culture of accountability in Universities/DAI, to clarify administrative procedures, and to institute transparent quality assurance mechanisms; and (ii) strengthening capacity of HEC through streamlining of financial management and procurement procedures, and stakeholder consultations.

As a result of the reforms introduced since 2002, the higher education sector has made some progress toward addressing the significant issues and challenges that faced the sector at the turn of the 21st Century. The impact of these initial measures has been substantial, and the results can be seen at both the University/DAI and HEC levels. For example, total enrollments grew at an

average annual rate of 21% between 2002/03 and 2004/05, recruitment procedures for HEI leadership and academic staff are now explicitly based on merit, and HEC is able to process a huge volume of transactions with reasonable turnaround time. Despite considerable progress in addressing the issues and challenges facing the Pakistan higher education sector, much remains to be accomplished.

Summary Data Table:

Table 1: Number of Institutions and Enrollments in the Higher Education Sector (2005/06)

	<i>Number of Institutions</i>	<i>Enrollments</i>
Universities/DAIs		
Public (2006/07)	64	242,879
Private (2006/07)	56	78,934
Total	120	321,813
Degree Colleges (Year 11-14)		
Public (2005/06)	777	296,832
Private (2005/06)	358	29,161
Total	1,135	325,993
Distance Education		
AIOU (2006/07)	1	190,447
Virtual University (2006/07)	1	9,213
Total	2	199,660

Source: HEC Pakistan

Table 2: Education Sector Spending in Pakistan (2005/06)

	GDP (US\$, bn.)	Education Expend. as a Share of GDP	Tertiary Edu. Expend as a Share of GDP	Edu. as a Share of Total Public Expenditure	Tertiary Edu. as a Share of Total Ed. Expenditure
2001-02	71.5	1.51	0.09	8.1	5.9
2002-03	82.3	1.63	0.17	8.8	10.6
2003-04	98.1	1.73	0.18	10.3	10.6
2004-05	111.5	1.78	0.24	10.5	13.6
2005-06	128.8	1.84	0.29	10.1	15.7

Issues:

Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acute shortage of qualified faculty Low quality of education with poor quality teaching and learning Very little had been done on quality assurance/internal evaluations of programs, faculties and departments at HEIs until QECs established recently at some HEIs.
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to higher education is low with around 3.8% of the 17-23 age cohort receiving higher education (of this one third are in affiliated colleges). Girls only make up one-third of total enrolment
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Composition of new intakes has accentuated the weight of general studies, which have shown their student population increase by an average 25%. This may not respond to the needs of labor market.
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient accountability of HEIs. Internal governance of Universities/DAI is highly inefficient, administrative staff are under-qualified and excessive power remains in the hands of the vice-chancellor and the registrar. Skill gaps within HEC and the concentration of power within a very thin leadership layer mean that a lot of work still remains to be done to institutionalize reforms.