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An Evolutionary Perspective on Educational Reform: A Study of Upgradation of Colleges to Universities in Pakistan

Abstract

In recent years there have been a variety of changes in the form of administrative reforms that affected the governance system of countries around the world, including Pakistan. The basic objective of these reforms is to modernize administrative systems. The present study focuses on the five selected institutions, i.e. Government College University, Lahore College for Women University, Government College for Women University Sialkot, Government College for Women University Faisalabad, which were upgraded to universities. The scope of the paper concerns the evolution of these educational reform and deregulation patterns that relate to administration, finance, and academics of the institutions. The evolution has been explained through a model given by Aldrich & Ruef (2006). Qualitative research is conducted on five of the selected institutions and external authorities, including HED, HEC and PHEC. The results show that the involvement of external regulatory authorities influences the patterns of autonomy through HR policies and practices. Dependence of funds is also a major reason to encourage interference of external authorities and politics, which ultimately affects the performance of the universities. The evolution of all of the selected cases helps to understand the context of these institutions. The study also helps to draw the difference of governance systems under public and private administration.

Keywords: Evolution, Educational Reform, Deregulation, Agencification

Introduction

Good governance is taking care of an interconnected system in the context of the development of countries, and it emphasizes the betterment of all stakeholders. Public institutions at all levels have started giving greater attention to the whole process of governance for improving the systems in different areas.

In this regard, various reforms were globally introduced to make governance systems more effective and efficient. From 1980's, new approaches were introduced to improving the whole process of governance. New Public Management (NPM) during 1980s is one of the results of these efforts. The most significant trend, in this regard, was the shift from a centralized structure to an autonomized and decentralized one. The Annual World Bank Conference on Development Economics (ABCDE) was held in 1988, wherein it was concluded that governance improvement is based on institutional and structural reforms (Pleskovic, B., & Stiglitz, 1999). These reforms helped in bringing uniformity in the system, but at the same time, they were also imposed in a way that ignored the context of the specific countries. This can be observed from the mechanism by which they were introduced, i.e., donor agencies pushed for their introduction in developing countries, and because the recipient countries were in need of funds, they were forced to accept the reforms that were part of the aid package. The World Bank, IMF, UNDP played an important role in this respect, and in their agenda, the main rationale was to improve the organizational performance and efficiency. There is a dearth in research to understand whether the reforms really improved the performance of the institutions or not.

This study has focused mainly on two of the reforms introduced in the last 1980s i.e., deregulation and agencification. Hood (1995) explained that NPM characteristics included managerial autonomy, structural disaggregation, and

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performance contracting. In Pakistan, these reforms were introduced in different sectors, including education and health. The present study focuses on the public sector reforms in education with an emphasis on Higher Education. Autonomy is seen as a necessity for universities to properly achieve their mission. It is often defined as the university's power to govern its own affairs without external interference. Such a definition, however, ignores the complicated nature of autonomy.

An alternative way to understand the practice of university autonomy is to identify the decision-making powers, which universities have over their affairs. By focusing on five selected universities, the research provides detailed information relating to the actual view of autonomy. It considered all related factors within these specific contexts, and furthermore tried to develop an understanding of the role of external authorities. Thus, the study analyzed the patterns of autonomy and control right from the initial establishment to understand the evolution holistically in the domains of administration, finance, and academics.

The choice for this research topic has not been taken arbitrarily. The previous literature shows that there is a dearth of research on the issue of autonomy and control in HEIs of Pakistan. Jabeen & Jadoon (2008) explained that contextual differences intensify the conceptual and operational issues of good governance. Pakistani context is quite different from those of the developed countries, and this is why the implementation of developed countries' reforms sometimes prove to be a mismatch in reality. The research study helped in making elaborating and clarifying this concept in the specific context of Pakistan.

Research Questions and Objectives

Broad problem area addressed in this paper is to analyze the criteria of decision making in a university regarding academic, financial, policymaking, and administrative matters.

The following questions provide the focus and direction for the research.

1. How did the patterns of deregulation evolve regarding administration, finance, and academics of the colleges upgraded to universities?
2. How did the role of external authorities evolve before and after deregulation?
3. How did the role of internal authorities evolve before and after deregulation?

Eras

Eras are identified based on the delegation of autonomy. As the purpose of the research is to identify the patterns of autonomy and control, it would be relevant to make eras on similar factors.

• Era 1

In this era, the institutions were affiliated colleges. The main controlling body was Government of the Punjab at that time. In the transition phase, some of the colleges were given autonomy in some factors. Boards of Governors were established in the colleges, and some of them got new affiliating universities. One of the colleges got nationalized.

• Era 2

In this era, the colleges were awarded university status as presented in table 1. below:

Table.1. History of Colleges within different Eras

HEIs	Era 1		Era 2
	Transition Period		
Government College University (GCU)	1864-1989	1989-2002	2002-onward
Lahore College for Women University (LCWU)	1922-1990	1990-2002	2002-onward

Forman Christian College (A Chartered University) (FCCU)	1864-1972	1972-2004	2004-onward
Government College Women University Sialkot (GCWUS)	1951-2010	2010-2012	2012-onward
Government College Women University Faisalabad (GCWUF)	1934-2010	2010-2013	2013-onward

Source: Higher Education Department Archives

Literature Review

Several researchers have worked on the subject of reforms and privatization in the education sector. Pollitt (2004) and Hardy (1996) worked on political economy of higher education and its impact on university autonomy. The present study also focuses on this aspect and it shows how the external authorities are distributing the roles of regulating and funding using the label of efficiency, autonomy, performance, and reform.

Ordorika (2003) described that level of autonomy of National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) varied according to different historical conditions. Political relations and conflicts affected the degree of autonomy of universities. He also mentioned that the role of evolution is significant in managing the universities. The recent study attempts to focus on the evolution of deregulation reform in the colleges upgraded to universities in Pakistan.

Mai (2006) explained that autonomy is one of the most important reasons for excellence but it is not alone sufficient. Universities need good leadership to excel, and accountability is critical for good governance. Observation shows that the patterns of autonomy have changed in the last few decades. In the 1960s, there was greater control on higher education institutions. Hence, more power was exerted in Austria. In 1990s, Austria focused on a new concept "institutional autonomy". New reforms were introduced in this perspective (Pechar, 2005). The paper highlights significant factors that affected the process of implementation of the deregulation of educational reforms in the specific context of Pakistan.

Kaiser (1999) described that it is evident from the history of Pakistani Education and governance systems that Pakistan has not been successful in achieving goals as outlined by the reform in various arena effectively (Kaiser, 1999). Privatization was introduced in late 70s in Pakistan. Many autonomous bodies were created in Pakistan through this reform, which could not improve efficiency significantly because there was a huge difference between formal autonomy and actual autonomy (Rahman, 2004). The paper helps to understand the difference of formal and actual autonomy through featuring the history right from the establishment of the selected colleges to put the issue in proper perspective.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study aims to explain a complete evolutionary process, which is discussed pertaining to the factors of change in the level of autonomy. These evolutionary processes are discussed by Aldrich & Ruef (2006) in detail as variation, selection, and retention.

- Variation

Change from current routines, traditions, and competencies or any change in organizational forms is called variation. Some variations are planned changes, and some are not planned. Planned changes are called Intentional variations, and the opposite one is called blind variations (Aldrich & Ruef, 2006).

- Selection

Differential elimination of certain types of variations is called selection. Variations, which help organizations in acquiring resources and legitimacy, are usually selected. The systems, adopted by imitation or internal diffusion, which enhance fitness are then selected. Scholars argue that managers establish the strategic direction of an organization and then adopt those factors which favor logic, scope and competitive edge (Saloner et al., 2001).

- Retention

Selected variations are preserved, duplicated, or otherwise reproduced. The maintenance of positively selected variations is called retention (Aldrich & Ruef, 2006). When selected activities and structures are repeated, again and again, retention occurs. If the environment changes slowly, chances of retention increase. A traditional organizational system focused on stability in the activities and structure of organizations (Campbell, 1969).

Methodology

Based on the discussed theoretical model and different relevant researches, possible predictions are made. The cases are analyzed in the light of relevant literature and theoretical framework. This pattern follows the deductive approach, which applies a general rule to a particular case. The Case Study Method is chosen for the research study. As this study is conducted for evaluating the real implementation of reforms, it is very important to access all facets of each example. Hence, the case study method is appropriate.

On the basis of Purposive sampling, five universities- Government College University (GCU), Lahore College for Women University (LCWU), Government College for Women University Sialkot (GCWUS), Government College for Women University Faisalabad (GCWUF) were selected.

The initial criteria for the selection of the cases were those old institutions having general specialization would be analyzed. Pakistan has four provinces in which only Punjab has the maximum number of cases and this is the only province where public and private universities both options are available, so on the basis of purposive sampling Punjab province is selected which provides sufficient data for the analysis. However, the other provinces are at the infancy stage and they have only one case in each province.

The institutions in the Punjab province are distributed into two phases so it would be easier to compare the cases considering the evolution and the change of Acts. In the first phase, there are four universities that were upgraded in the early years of the first decade. The second phase includes three universities that were upgraded in the second decade. Creswell (2009) elaborates to select fewer cases to make the comparison easier and valid and also to avoid saturation. In the first phase, three universities are selected and in the second phase, two universities are selected. Forman Christian College is the only private institution, which comes under this category.

The population of the study includes Vice Chancellors, Principals, Deans, Registrars and Deputy Registrars, Treasurers and Deputy Treasurers, Heads of Departments (HODs), Head of Academic Staff Association, Higher Education Department (Government of Punjab) officials, Punjab Higher Education Commission officials, and Higher Education Commission officials.

Qualitative research is relevant to this study as it would be easier to explore the patterns in multiple variables, for which an interview guide is used. Snowball sampling is utilized because it is very difficult to approach the high authorities. Fifty-four semi-structured interviews have been conducted. The researcher tried to strictly maintain the code of ethics during the interviews, whilst the data has been explored through NVivo 12 software.

Results and Findings

The research study revealed the patterns of autonomy and control in different eras using five selected universities mentioned above. It analyzed factors affecting these patterns and ultimately related performance with control as well as autonomy.

The Evolution of Deregulation

These patterns were analyzed with respect to four dimensions, i.e., Administration and policy, Finance, and Academics. In Era 1, these universities were run like any other college. All of these colleges were public except Forman Christian College as this college was owned by Presbyterian Church, USA and it was following the American curriculum. Before partition, an elected minister was controlling all the activities and was following the major policies of British system given by the viceroy based on the "populist legitimacy." Funds were given by the government and University of the Punjab was concerned with academics. Rules and regulations were made by the Education Department, Government of the Punjab. Hiring and dismissal of employees were also done by the government. The government managed everything with strict control discouraging any intervention by the college. After partition the same system was followed. However, GC's principals have had contacts with bureaucracy and politicians because of the alumni, so its demands were always preferred in the Secretariat. The public colleges were handling all administrative issues except HR. On the other hand, FC was a private

college but in 1972, this college was nationalized and the government started managing all of its activities.

The big donor agencies introduced some reforms regarding governance in the late 1980s. These reforms included deregulation and task-specific regulatory agencies. The government also introduced these reforms in different sectors of Pakistan. Higher Education sector was also selected in this connection. The findings show that the autonomy given was imaginary, as it was not executed in a real sense. GC and LC got degree-awarding status in 1997 and 1999 respectively and finally it got separated from University of the Punjab. It was autonomous in making its syllabus and arranging examinations, however autonomy was very minimal in this era and it was not transferred to the departments except academics. During this period, the alumni of FC, who were part of the government, facilitated the case and helped in giving the institution back to its owners.

In Era 2, these colleges were granted university status. GC and LC were upgraded in 2002 and became public universities, whereas FC obtained autonomy in 2004, and it became a private university that was returned back to its previous administrators in USA. GCWS and GCWF got autonomy in 2012 and 2013 respectively. Before that, they both had also a BOG which was not effective. All of the major decisions were taken in the Punjab government secretariat. In 2002, the HEC was established and this body started controlling the activities of the university. All of the major projects and internal restructuring were facilitated by HEC whereas the Punjab government was only concerned with the salary structure of different grades. The office of the Registrar was handling administrative matters without having the involvement of HEC and Punjab Government when it came to disciplinary cases and those of the examination system. However, there was the involvement of the government regarding the recruitments of senior posts of administration. The role of the Chief Minister got significant especially after the 18th Constitutional Amendment. Recruitment and selection of faculty members were conducted by the selection board in which VC exercised autonomy the most. HEC is playing a significant role in policymaking, whereas statutes are more in the domain of the Government of the Punjab. The research shows that rules and regulations affect the matters at an operational level so this implies that the HEC controls the activities at this level. These universities are new and they need a lot of funds to improve their infrastructure, so they try to fulfill each condition given by HEC because they wish to receive additional funds in the future from the HEC. FCCU is a private university, and it is not dependent on the government financially so they enjoy a lot of liberty as compared to other universities. This university usually makes policies as its Act has given this right, while other universities are run by following the statutes, due to which they have to take approval from the chancellor before major decisions. These universities are autonomous in generating funds but all of these universities are not able to do so effectively, except FCCU. This university is working rigorously on collecting donations from the alumni. After analyzing the patterns of autonomy and control, it is inferred that "finance" is considered to be a significant factor, which becomes an obstacle in exercising autonomy with its real meaning. The cases of GCWUS and GCWUF are different from others as the head of the Syndicate is Minister of Higher Education whereas in other cases the head of the Syndicate is Vice Chancellor/Rector of the institution. Punjab Government is also a controlling body but apparently, it has minimized its role. However, the involvement of the chief minister and the chancellor opens the room for political interference, especially in case of recruitments. On the other hand, the Vice-Chancellors try to resist this interference by not advertising the main posts of administration.

As far as internal factors are concerned, Student union as an internal factor had a strong influence on the patterns of autonomy during the transition period in Era 1. After that, it was very much minimized because of the strict control of the administration, especially in GC. FC had to face this problem even in the early years after deregulation. Women colleges also had to face this issue, but it was not that serious. All of the universities' administrations adopted an authoritative style and did not prefer to transfer autonomy to the departments. Academic Staff Association is only present in GCU in all of the cases and it is a platform to communicate teachers' views for better decision making. It can be instrumental in changing the patterns of autonomy at the department level in the future.

Discussion

The difference in Eras considering Evolutionary Approach

How the system of GC evolved with respect to the academic, financial and administrative systems? Aldrich & Ruef (2006) gave an approach for understanding these eras.

Administrative system & Policy Making

- Delegation of autonomy changed the governance system of these colleges. GCU and LCWU were changed similarly on the other hand GCWUF and GCWUS were upgraded on the same pattern. The case of FCC is different as it started as a private college then it got nationalized and ultimately it was given back to its owners and upgraded to a private university. In case of GCU and LCWU, this change at variation level was initiated in 1989 and 1990 respectively (Era 1). Respondents say that it was not effective and very minimal. Stakeholders of these universities were confused about that change as they were not communicated properly. In 1997 GC was given degree-awarding status and this variation was selected. On the same pattern, LC was given this status in 1999. It became effective as Campbell (1969) explained that pressure towards homogeneity and stability contributes to the loose coupling of environmental fitness and internal selection. In 2002 (Era 2) these both institutions were upgraded to university status. Finally, GC and LC acquired retention in case of formal autonomy. This permanent change also started making the minds of their employees to be a part of an autonomous body. FCC was established in 1864 and it got nationalized in 1972 (Era 1). This change was selected, but it did not get retention as in 2004 (Era 2) it was given back to its actual owner in USA. The university is owned and administered by the Presbyterian Church. GCWUS was established in 1951 and it was administered by the government till 2012 (Era 2) when it was upgraded to a university.

- Board of Governors was established in the GCU and LCWU in the years of 1989 and 1990 respectively (Era 1). It was also a variation as it was a transition phase of upgradation introduced by the government and people were not used to it so it was not selected properly. Simonton (2011) also noted that most variations are blind. These are not planned properly, which result in less acceptance and ultimately rejection. Powers were not defined properly because things were evolving gradually. Government of the Punjab remained involved till 2002. It did not let the Board take decisions all alone because it was considered immature. Consequently, it was changed to Syndicate on upgradation. Somehow failures become fruitful for the system because they try to stimulate more variations (Aldrich & Ruef, 2006).

- The eighteenth amendment in the constitution changed the powers of the chancellor and chief minister. The administrators are still confused about defining the powers. After experiencing different cases in the courts, the Supreme Court made it clear that the chancellor has to take advice from the chief minister in each matter. CM would talk to the chancellor under the constitution article 105, and it is binding for the chancellor to act upon CM's advice. As a result of 18th amendment powers of the CM are increased. The law explains that the chancellor has to answer within 15 days otherwise the CM would again advise and then chancellor will have to take decisions with mutual understanding. No delays will be accepted after that. Thus it shows that this change in the amendment is going from variation to the selection level.

- Each of the universities has established Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC), and now this is at a selection level. HEC introduced this change, the purpose of this initiative is to improve academic programs and ensure high academic standards by providing feedback for faculty and administration to initiate an action plan for improvement. In first phase 26 universities established QECs. GCU, LCWU established QEC in the first phase rather QECs in GCWUS and GCWUF were established in the 10th phase.

- In the case of GCU and LCWU, during the transition phase in the early 1990s (Era 1) administrative control started increasing and this change was selected in 2002 (Era 2) but it could not be retained. The new VCs of the universities believe in decentralized administrative style. Still this style has not been adopted, especially in case of GCWUS and GCWUF. FCCU is the only case where decentralization can be seen in some matters but this is also at variation level. The acts of these universities are also a major reason of centralization and the role of the top management is demanded in this respect.

Financial System

- GCU is getting 54% of the budget from HEC, PHEC and Punjab Government where as LCWU, GCWUS and GCWUF are getting almost 60% of the budget. FCCU is getting only 2% from the government. The percentage is decreasing gradually. At college time, only Punjab Government was giving funds. Era 2 is different because of the involvement of HEC and PHEC. Besides this, international agencies' funds were utilized in higher education sector significantly in the start of this era. It was at variation level. It could not be selected because of many factors e.g. recession, political will, lack of stability regarding international contacts etc.

- In 2002 (Era 2) HEC started projects regarding the internal restructuring of the university. This body gave a lot of funds to the university and many people were given HEC scholarships and research awards. That was a very positive change with respect to the betterment of the university system. In recent years HEC has started cutting down the funds. Even some projects were stopped. Recession in the world trickled down to HEC and ultimately these universities. This funding could not be retained at the same

level. Besides this HEC's agenda elaborates that this body will not give funds for a longer period. Its ultimate purpose is to make a body stronger enough that it should generate funds on its own in the future. Now the university is focusing on generating funds on its own. HEC is trying to make this change a permanent change but university management explains that it is not an earning organization like other old universities, and cannot bear all expenses on its own. The administration of FCCU is the most active body in working on the generation of funds and they are following the American Model, which is to get higher fees from rich and give good scholarships to the poor. HEC is trying to create self-reliance in the universities. Like Levitt and March (1988) explained that the self-reinforcing process leads to organizational stability and also contributes to the discovery of potentially adaptive alternatives. The university has to have found out the alternatives for generating funds. The American model can be applied in private universities but the public universities of a developing country cannot adopt it if they really want to make higher education accessible for the masses.

Academic System

- GC was affiliated with Kolkata University for 8 years and then University of the Punjab became its affiliating body (Era 1). Similarly FCC was also affiliated with Kolkata University till 1947 and then it got affiliated with University of the Punjab. All other selected cases were affiliated with University of the Punjab. All of the cases got the level of retention until their attainment of degree-awarding status.
- In 1959 (Era 1), Commission on National Education was given to evolve the system in a better direction which is also known as Sharif Commission. One of the recommendations was that Degree of Honors should be of three years. That was a change that students and teachers did not accept. It was selected in 1970s (Era 1). Students of these colleges were not satisfied because they thought that there was no transparency in the system. Teachers were biased and there was improper control. In 2002 (Era 2), it was implemented properly and got retention level. Gimeno et al. (1997) explained that sometimes leaders show willingness to accept a change even after consideration of low-performance threshold. HEC controlled this system however, initiative was taken by the Government of Punjab. These new universities implemented this system as they were dependent on the government financially and they fulfilled their conditions without strategic planning. The universities still need to conduct proper training to run this system effectively. The results show that the education sector of Pakistan is taking recipes from developed education systems without refining them according to their own context. The unimaginative entrepreneurs usually copy the systems after experiencing the success of others (Simonton, 2011).
- These days HEC (Era 2) is imposing the universities to open research offices. The office is named as Office of Research Innovation and Commercialization. Based on the department of ORIC, board of advance studies and research are being integrated. Research is given more importance in this era, which is at the variation level.

These have been the major changes regarding administrative, financial, and academic systems. The degree of change was described on the basis of time duration and acceptability of people which helped out in understanding the significant differences in these eras. The evolutionary approach elaborated the story of each change how they occurred, which helped in finding out the answers of the research questions with precision.

Conclusion

In summary, the selected universities have always been in control by different factors, first by the British Government before partition, then Government of the Punjab and ultimately by HEC after deregulation. Dependency on external funds has been the main reason for accepting this control. Besides this, the Act of the universities also play a role in discouraging the exercise of autonomy, and because of this difference. FCCU exercise the maximum autonomy among the selected institution, due to its relative funding independence. In effect of the extra controlling behavior, the administration of the universities employed an authoritative style on university's employees. Autonomy was given within a framework decided by the HEC and Punjab Government. "Academics" is considered to be a significant section in the university where it actually exercises the autonomy to a certain extent. International reforms have always been an inspiration for Pakistani administrators due to the expectation of more funds in the future. They implemented the reforms without analyzing the context of the institutions. Most of the changes are blind variations, and the reason for selecting the variations is to bring homogeneity in the system. Moreover, the system is not mature enough to encourage retaining the reforms for a long time.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The evolution of the selected HEIs shows that they have a long historical path, and this element was somehow ignored while taking the decision of upgradation. Proper planning through understanding the context and history of each organization must be a salient point in future decisions. Besides this, the legislatures should review the Acts to remove the corridors for politics. The government should also be more pragmatic in explaining the changing roles of external regulatory authorities as the confusions in the external authorities can affect the performance of HEIs. The VCs should also know the difference between managing a college and a university. Either the internal members should have proper training, or an experienced university VC should be hired for this significant post as overcentralized management cannot render fruitful results even after getting university status. There is a need to strengthen up the Syndicate, which is an apex decision making body in universities, and politicians should not be a part of the Syndicate. Appointments of deans, treasurer, registrar and controller of examination should be approved in the Syndicate and external regulatory agencies should keep an eye to avoid biases, irregularities, and illegitimacy at any level. The statutory bodies should be decentralized and for this the whole administration should be trained to improve performance and the internal regulatory system should be fair enough to have a just and equitable system of governance in educational institutions.

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