

Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions in Pakistan: A Case Study of University of Education, Lahore

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Abstract

The study encompasses the concept of university autonomy in the context of higher education reforms of Pakistan in 2002. It uses case study research methodology and explores two core dimensions of university autonomy namely administrative autonomy and financial autonomy. The study aims to describe the nature and extent of administrative and financial autonomy at University of Education, Lahore. The data collected is of qualitative in nature and is collected mainly through observations, in-depth semi-structured interviews and analyses of the available documents. The research employs amalgamation of judgment and snowball sampling techniques. The respondents included members of administrative staff and the senior faculty of the university. The conclusions drawn from analysis of data tell that university enjoys sufficient amount of administrative autonomy as it can set its future direction, appoint faculty and staff to meet its present and future needs of human resources and can award or revoke affiliations to various educational institutions for the purpose of awarding degrees, but has low levels of financial autonomy as it is heavily dependent on government funding for its recurring/non-developmental and developmental expenditures.

Key Words: administrative autonomy, financial autonomy, nature of autonomy, extent of autonomy, higher education reforms.

Introduction

The world is rapidly moving towards knowledge-based economy and due to fast developments in the field of information technology the world is shrinking and thus the idea of a globalized world has emerged. Knowledge is the guiding force in this rapidly changing globalized economy. The quality of human resources plays critical role in the global market. As the process of globalization is knowledge-based the success of every economic reform strategy essentially depends upon the capability of human resources. Therefore, education is fundamental to every nation and the quality of higher education decides its progress in this globalized age (Rani, 2004). As a result in recent times it has become imperative for the governments to engage in higher education reforms more rigorously than ever before. The past two decades have seen that the governments all over the world have been involved in strategic planning in the higher education sector (The Boston Group, 2001).

In this globalized age it is essential for higher education institutions to become more flexible so they can adapt to the extremely turbulent and ever changing external environment. For this purpose they need certain degree of autonomy and it is absolutely essential for the governments to provide these institutions with certain degree of autonomy to achieve their objectives (Felt and Glanz, 2002). In recent times there has been a world wide trend to increase the autonomy of public-sector institutions of higher education and learning to make them independent and self-governing bodies for their better governance and management (Fielden, 2008).

Influenced by these changes abroad and based on the ideas presented in 2000 by World Bank-UNESCO Task Force on Higher Education in Developing Countries the Government of Pakistan constituted a Task Force (commonly known as Pakistan Task Force) for revamping the higher education sector in Pakistan (The Boston Group, 2001). On recommendations of Pakistan Task Force in March 2002 the Government of Pakistan decided to award autonomy to its higher education institutions and introduced 'Model University Ordinance' in all public-sector institutions of higher education in the country (Jahangir, 2008). The basic aim was to have a uniform governance and management structure in all public-sector institutions of higher education in the country so they can become more efficient and economical to cope-up with modern day demands of knowledge-based economy and globalization.

University Autonomy

University autonomy is defined as “the freedom of an institution to run its own affairs without direction or influence from any level of government” (Anderson and Johnson, 1998, p. 8). Löscher (2004) tells that university autonomy was introduced as a strategy so that universities become more efficient and effective and it allowed universities to appoint faculty and staff without external influences, enabled them to decide about admission criteria and number of students to admit, allowed them to decide about the contents of the curriculum and teaching methods, and enabled them to establish their own priorities for universities’ future growth and development.

According to De Boer, Jongbloed, Enders and File (2010) institutional autonomy is a much debated concept and carries different meanings in different contexts and thus may hold different dimensions. Mostly it denotes the managerial ability of an institution to set its own goals and priorities, and determining its own means and set of standards to achieve these goals without external influences. They have given following dimensions of institutional autonomy:

- **Organizational Autonomy:** if the public-sector universities are free to decide their internal administrative structures.
- **Policy Autonomy:** if the universities are autonomous to take decisions regarding appointment of staff and have the ability to lay-down their pay scales. If the universities can decide about their academic programs and areas of research without external influences.
- **Interventional Autonomy:** if universities have the autonomy to do strategic planning and are autonomous to evaluate their teaching and research.
- **Financial Autonomy:** if the public-sector universities have the authority for distribution of funds (public and private) with their own discretion. If they are authorized to borrow from the ‘Capital Market’. If they have autonomy to carry unused funds from one fiscal year to another fiscal year and they are autonomous to decide how to spend these funds.

According to Estermann and Nokkala (2009) autonomy is a concept that is understood differently in different parts of the world but there seems to be some similarities that educational institutions need to be more autonomous while recruiting staff, deciding on which programs to offer and which not, choosing areas of research, being able to raise their own funds without support from the government and being able to establish structures to achieve their objectives. They have operationalized university autonomy into following dimensions:

- **Organizational Autonomy:** includes the ability to create governing bodies, establish administrative structures, and the chain of command.
- **Financial Autonomy:** includes raising and spending of funds, authority to charge tuition fees, authority to invest and borrow ‘Capital’ from the market and to raise funds from different sources other than the government, and to have its own assets and to be able to utilize its assets e.g. buildings and land.
- **Staffing Autonomy:** includes the ability to recruit and appoint academic and administrative staff, and the capacity to define employment conditions such as pay and allowances.
- **Academic Autonomy:** includes the ability to start and terminate academic programs, the authority to take decisions regarding structure and content of degree programs, to be able to take decisions regarding admission of students, to be able to set admission criteria for the students and the ability to ensure quality assurance and accreditation of various degree programs.

Objectives of the Study

1. To describe the nature of administrative and financial autonomy at University of Education, Lahore.
2. To measure the extent of administrative and financial autonomy at University of Education, Lahore.

Literature Review

The recent trend in the world has been to increase the autonomy of higher education institutions through reforms so that they have an increased capacity to respond to the ever changing external environment (Felt and Glanz, 2002). The basic rationale behind this is that the institutions should become more innovative and flexible to cope with demands of changing environment. According to Löscher (2004) the demand that the institutions of higher education should adopt market-like approaches for governance and management was recognized in the

mid-1980s and initially this transformation was started by reducing the budgets of the universities so that they should be forced to find new sources of funding. The aim was to make these institutions more independent in financial matters.

However, the scholars throughout the world have argued that even though in recent times universities are run like private organizations but this only means that they should become more efficient and effective so that they can help in reducing the financial burden of the State and when remodeling these institutions it is not the aim of the State to make them profit-making or money-making organizations like in the corporate sector because these institutions have certain social and ethical obligations towards the societies (Nybom, 2008).

Global Experience of Higher Education Reforms

Majority of the education reforms introduced throughout the world have given institutions of higher education increased autonomy so that they can better achieve their objectives. There has been a trend to shift the government control of these institutions from Ministry of Education (MOE) to an independent or buffer body (Fielden, 2008). Paradeise, Reale, Bleiklie and Ferlie (2009) tell that U.K. has strong traditions of university autonomy when compared to the other countries of the world. The universities in U.K. are not under direct control of MOE and are only facilitated by it and after the early 1980s there has been a marked shift in U.K.'s higher education sector from strong bureaucracies to New Public Management (NPM) style of management.

Many other European countries have also gone through major education reforms in recent years. In Sweden there has been devolution of power from the central government to the individual institutions. The Danish government has decreased the total time taken for graduation by decreasing the length of courses. German government has amended the law and provided more autonomy to its institutions of higher education and learning. It has also remodeled the decision making structures of its universities who now enjoy more freedom in decision making (Anderson and Johnson, 1998). The situation is a little different in the Asian countries. In Malaysia the government has changed the structure of its higher education institutions and made them less hierarchical. In china there has been delegation of powers from federal to provincial governments. In other countries like Pakistan and India there have been delegation of powers to buffer bodies and this trend is now being followed in other parts of the world as well (Fielden, 2008).

Pakistan's Higher Education Reforms Experience

Pakistan has a prolonged history of failed reforms (Barber, 2010). The successive governments of Pakistan introduced several reforms in the education sector and Education Commission of 1959 was one such move when 'Sharif Report' introduced very large-scale education reforms in the country. The Commission put-forward quite a number of valuable and practical recommendations but it did not achieve its objectives. Lack of political will and inadequate allocation of funds were the two major reasons for its failure (Jahangir, 2008). Then there were Education Policies of 1970, 1972, 1979, 1992 and 1998 and there were also Eight Five-year Plans all of which failed to achieve their objectives. The governments of Pakistan, whether military or democratic, never gave priority to the education (Bengali, 1999).

In 2001 the Government of Pakistan realized the importance of higher education in the economic and social development of the country and established a 'Task Force' to look into the matters pertaining to higher education in Pakistan. Its agenda included to investigate the previous policies and plans and to establish reasons for failures and to come up with concrete and workable solutions to revitalize the higher education sector in Pakistan. 'Task Force' presented its 'Report' in March 2002 and recommended that University Grants Commission of Pakistan (UGC) was an ineffectual body and should be replaced by a more effective body which they named as Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC). It also identified several structural and functional anomalies in the higher education sector of Pakistan and gave a detailed plan to resolve these issues (Jahangir, 2008). Under the recommendations of 'Task Force' HEC was established in 2002 by a Presidential Ordinance. Its primary aim was to improve the overall quantity and quality of higher education in Pakistan (The State of Education in Pakistan, 2005).

HEC was established as an autonomous body to supervise the higher education sector of Pakistan. It is a federal body working under the jurisdiction of Federal Government of Pakistan. The main contribution of HEC is that it has increased the budget of the public-sector universities of Pakistan manifold. In comparison with the UGC the HEC is fully empowered to ensure compliance from the institutions of higher education in matters where UGC previously had no say whatsoever. Noncompliance with HEC directives can lead to budget cuts. It is fully empowered to formulate policies for the institutions of higher education, evaluate their performance, and give them directions in matters regarding academics, administration and management of financial resources. It also provides guidelines to the institutions regarding recruitment, selection, performance and compensation management of the faculty and staff (Jahangir, 2008).

A little over a decade since its inception the performance of HEC has been a topic of great concern among scholars of Pakistan. Notable among them is distinguished Pakistani physicist Hoodbhoy (2009) who has raised many questions about the credibility of HEC. According to him after the creation of HEC there has been little work done in reforming the higher education sector of Pakistan. He opines that the quality of teaching in Pakistani universities has not improved and there has been no concrete mechanism developed to judge the performance of the institutions as well. Jahangir (2008) takes this discussion further and informs that HEC so far has also failed to address matters regarding university autonomy. Before the establishment of HEC the universities of Pakistan were functioning under various provincial governments and enjoyed considerable financial and administrative authority which in the presence of strong UGC was not possible. The universities did not allow UGC to dictate them in the policy matters. The universities in Pakistan have traditionally enjoyed considerable autonomy and do think that HEC as a facilitative body should not invade their autonomy by giving them orders in areas of faculty hiring, appointment of PhD supervisors, awarding scholarships and telling them what to do and what not to do in areas of university governance and management. So there is great resentment among the individual universities that majority of the decisions are imposed on them by HEC without their consultation.

Research Methodology

The researchers opted for case study research methodology because they wanted to do an in-depth study of a single organization and wanted to study the governance and management processes of University of Education, Lahore (UE). Yin (2003) informs that “the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events such as individual lifecycles, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, international relations and the maturation of industries” (p. 2). Furthermore, he states that the case studies are done when researcher wants to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions and he has very little control over the social events (Yin, 2003).

Population and Unit of Analysis

This is a case study done on a single organization and for this purpose the researchers selected the University of Education, Lahore, which is unit of analysis. The population of the study included the members of the administrative staff and the senior faculty of the university.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The researchers conducted twelve detailed semi-structured interviews of various administrators and senior faculty members of the university. The nature of study required that sampling should be done from all the administrators and senior faculty members who are involved in the administrative and financial affairs of the university. The researchers started with the judgment sampling because data had to be gathered from all those who are involved in governance and management of the university. Sekaran (2003) states that judgment/purposive sampling is done when information is gathered from all those people who are in the best position to provide the required information. Eventually during the course of data collection the researchers used snowball sampling because every interview seemed to provide some sort of lead for further probe and investigation and this combination of techniques proved very effective for data collection. Researchers (Brown, 2005; Tran and Perry, 2003) inform that “sometimes snowball sampling, which is asking an informant to suggest another informant, follows purposive sampling” (as cited in Tongco, 2007, p. 152). The researchers kept on interviewing the respondents until they found out that all the necessary information has been gathered and the interviewees had nothing new to offer.

Instrument for Data Collection

The researchers opted for in-depth semi-structured interviews for data collection because it allowed them with the litnessness to cover all the areas of the study. For this purpose the researchers after extensive study of the topic formulated an interview-guide for their assistance during the interviews. Semi-structured interviews are beneficial when one is doing research on policy matters and for this purpose a guide is used by the interviewer. In these types of interviews the questions are in some order to ensure that researcher covers the relevant aspects of research and are mostly used when researcher wants to do an in-depth study of a topic Harrell and Bradley (2009).

Data Collection

The researchers started data collection with the Office of Registrar which provided them with useful information about the governance and management structure of the university, information regarding various divisions and campuses of the university, and the composition of different ‘Authorities’ of the university. The Office of Registrar also gave them access to various documents regarding the role and functions of various Authorities, which helped researchers a great deal in understanding the governance and management structure of

the university. Marvasti (2004) points out that the analyses of documents in social research give the researchers leverage to capture details of happenings in its real context.

Considering that the respondents of researchers mainly included senior faculty members and members of the administrative staff, the researchers followed the strategy of making an appointment with every respondent one day prior to the interview. This strategy paid dividends because it helped the researchers to make an early contact with the respondent before the interview and they were also able to brief him/her about his work. During the course of interviews the researchers allowed the respondents to fully express their views without any interruptions and remained very flexible with their approach. Zikmund (2003) informs that in case study method the researcher should be very flexible with his/her approach to obtain the required information. Although the researchers allowed the interviewees to express their views freely and at times they drifted away from the topic, but the researchers redirected the respondents towards the topic, and made sure that all the dimensions of their study are fully covered.

Considering the context and nature of study the researchers decided not to audio-record the interviews because in Pakistani context most of the people hesitate as they think that it might be used against them at some other point of time. Even if someone allows audio-recording subconsciously he/she becomes very cautious and does not express his/her views freely. Saeed (2012) confirms this approach by saying that in order to build an environment of trust and to fully capture the views of the respondents in Pakistani context it is better not to audio-record the interviews and it is better for the researchers to opt for some other appropriate method i.e. hand written notes. So the researchers opted for hand written notes.

The data collected during the interviews was of qualitative in nature and it is now well documented that the data thus collected have the same amount of validity and reliability as the data collected through quantitative means. The individuals interviewed were professionals, having the relevant designations and qualifications and had vast professional experiences so their annotations expand and compensate large number of respondents. Saeed (2012) advocates that qualitative data collected by interviews is as reliable as data collected by quantitative means, experienced and technically sound people know more than the others, and are in a better position to provide the most relevant information.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Data Analysis and Discussion consist of following steps:

Data Preparation

The data gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews was in shape of hand written notes. Later in day the researchers expanded these notes to the full interviews to completely capture the views of the respondents. For this purpose the researchers followed the strategy of conducting only one interview in a day and this strategy allowed them to transcribe the interview on the same day and there was only minimal loss of data.

Data Reduction and Coding

During the exploration phase of the data analysis the transcribed data was read again by the researchers to highlight important areas and significant points, which were noted down in the form of memos. The important narratives were also identified and highlighted. Data reduction entails coding of data and it is also done in the exploration phase of data analysis. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) data reduction is a strategy employed in data analysis that helps to identify different themes, categories and patterns that exist in the data. The technique used for data analysis was generating categories and developing themes. Similar patterns and themes were identified in the transcribed interviewees and similar views were placed under these categories. Contrasts/comparisons were also identified and noted. The most important narratives were also identified and noted to be used as evidence. This practice made it quite easy for the researchers to summarize and interpret data. The key areas identified were placed under the major themes. The data was analyzed and interpreted using these themes and categories and conclusions were drawn based on these findings. The narratives supporting themes were also quoted in data analysis.

Discussion

The study explores two core dimensions of university autonomy i.e. administrative autonomy and financial autonomy and aims to describe the nature and extent of autonomy at University of Education, Lahore. For interpretation of data the researchers have chosen the framework developed by Chawla, Govindaraj, Needleman and Berman (1996) which is known as Methodological Guidelines for Evaluating Autonomy. The guidelines developed by Chawla et al. provide a logical and practicable framework to be used for this study.

Administrative Autonomy

The dimension of administrative autonomy was further divided in the following areas:

1. Ability to do strategic planning

After conducting the detailed interviews of various administrators and senior faculty members of the university the researchers came to the conclusion that the university has the ability to do strategic planning. The Syndicate is the apex body of university governance and management and is responsible for setting the strategic direction of the institution. It is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor of the university. The Vice-Chancellor is the 'Chief Executive Officer' of the university and enjoys vast administrative authority. These views were quite evident from the following excerpts,

The strategic planning is done at UE and the Syndicate is the competent authority for strategic planning of the institution. It is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor of the university. There are representatives of the general public in the Syndicate. Then there are people from the university administration and member of the faculty as well. It is a comprehensive body and looks into all the matters pertaining to the administration, human resource management, finance, admissions, examinations and academics of the university. It is the competent authority to plan for the future of the university and also gives approval of the annual budget of the university.

2. Ability to create new entities

After talking to the various members of faculty and administrative staff the researchers inferred that although University of Education, Lahore is autonomous to establish new Divisions/Colleges, but considering the fact that it is a newly raised institution and is heavily dependent on government funding, its autonomy in this regard is very contained. Therefore, before planning of establishment of any new entity the university has to consider its financial position. These findings were corroborated from the following excerpts,

Although it was possible for UE to establish new divisions and colleges but it mainly depends on the financial position of the university and the university administration requires substantial help from the government in this respect.

3. Staffing autonomy

After going through the responses of different interviewees the researchers concluded that the institution enjoys considerable autonomy in matters regarding appointment of faculty and staff. It can create and fill teaching and nonteaching posts to meet its present and future requirements of human resources. For positions of grade 17 and above there is 'Selection Board' and for positions lower than grade 17 there are 'Selection Committees'. According to its Ordinance,

It can create posts for research, publication, extension, administration and other related purposes and to appoint persons (UE Ordinance 2002, clause I, paragraph 4).

This was also established by these excerpts,

The university can create teaching and nonteaching posts according to its needs. In case of a new post Terms of Reference (TOR) have to be approved by the Syndicate. It is fully authorized to fill these posts as well. The university has to follow government rules e.g. it has to advertise positions and follow the government pay-scales etc., but is fully authorized to create and fill these positions.

The Vice-Chancellor of the university enjoys immense authority in staffing matters and is fully authorized to fill teaching and nonteaching posts as required. He has to get approval from the Syndicate but considering the fact that he chairs the Syndicate his decisions are mostly upheld by the Syndicate. Furthermore, the law provides him with the discretionary powers to fill a post for six months and for this he does not need approval from the Syndicate. The Ordinance states that Vice-Chancellor,

Can create and fill temporary posts for a period not exceeding six months (UE Ordinance 2002, clause a, subparagraph 4).

This was also evident from the views of different respondents during the course of data collection. A deputy director of administration comprehensively elaborated the situation by stating,

Vice-Chancellor has a lot of staffing powers. He can create and fill a post for six months. He is fully authorized by the government in this respect. Beyond this period he has to take it to the Syndicate, but normally his decisions are vetted by the members of the Syndicate as well. Of course, he has to regularize the process and it goes to the Finance Committee for remunerations. If it is an existing

vacancy then there are no problems. In case of a new post the Terms of Reference (TOR) have to be approved by the Syndicate.

4. Authority to award or revoke affiliations

After analysis of data the researchers came to the conclusion that the University has ample autonomy in matters related to awarding affiliations to both public and private sector institutions for the purposes of awarding degrees. It is also autonomous to revoke or suspend such affiliations if it is not satisfied with the performance of these institutions. A member of the Affiliation Committee confirmed these observations by stating:

Yes, we can award affiliations to both public and private institutions for awarding degrees. Government gives us instructions for the purpose. Assistant Director Administration (Establishment) is the Secretary of Affiliation Committee headed by the Chairman. Administration of that institution is their responsibility. There is certain criterion to be fulfilled before we give affiliation to an institution. In infrastructure there should be adequate classroom capacity, laboratories, number of books in the libraries and then there are requirements of human resources. There should be PhD faculty or minimum MPhil faculty available to the students.

5. Ability to develop infrastructure and improve research facilities

On university's ability to develop its infrastructure and improve its research facilities the researchers inferred that the university being a public-sector institution is hugely dependent on the government for development of its infrastructure and research facilities. The newly raised status of UE also contributes to the fact that it needs a lot of financial support from both the federal and provincial governments to develop its infrastructure and research facilities. So its autonomy in these matters is very limited. The situation was also clear from following excerpts,

For development of infrastructure and research facilities the UE is dependent on HEC and the Government of Punjab. But the Funds given by HEC and the Government of Punjab are very less. Another thing is that UE is a newly established university and it had to start from the scratch. It will take time and more allocation of resources from the government to improve the infrastructure and research facilities of the university.

Financial Autonomy

The dimension of financial autonomy was further categorized in the following areas:

1. Sources of funds to the university

After the analysis of data the researchers inferred that university has three sources of funds which are:

- HEC
- Government of Punjab
- Own sources

The HEC and the Government of Punjab allot funds to the public-sector universities based on their size and number of employees and UE being in early days of its life gets small share when compared to other institutions because it still has relatively small structure as compared to other higher education institutions of the country, therefore, it has very limited financial autonomy. It is also facing financial constraints due to change in government policy regarding allocation of funds to the public-sector universities. The university was established as a result of reforms of 2002 and at that time the federal government under General Musharaf increased the budget of public-sector universities many times. But with the change of regime in 2008 the then government reduced its funding to the universities and as a newly raised institution UE suffered more than the other old institutions of the country who have more financial resources at their disposal.

2. Ability to raise and utilize funds

After analysis of the data the researchers inferred that the university is fully authorized to raise and utilize funds. The bulk of revenue generated by UE is through different evening programs and a big chunk of it is used for salaries of faculty and staff. Other than that it has very meager resources at its disposal and that also contributes to its limited financial autonomy. Junaid (2011) while talking about the issue of financial autonomy in public-sector universities of Pakistan says,

There is a positive relation between the source of income of the university and the chances of autonomy enjoyed by it i.e., greater proportion of money generated independently will imply high chances of

autonomy at disposal of university. If the university is unable to generate any amount of income itself, and its survival depends upon a big budget, the superior body giving grants is likely to control the university to a large extent. (p. 137)

Apart from income of evening programs the management of the university up-till now has failed to tap sources other than the government to improve its financial health. Almost a decade since its inception the university has yet to come-up with a proper plan to improve upon its Endowment Fund. The point was emphasized by Boston Group (2001) as well, it stated:

Universities' effort towards mobilizing external resources could include tapping into short-term sources such as International donor agencies and public philanthropy, which tend to be particularly useful in terms of raising endowments, expanding on buildings, and creating scholarships. (p. 13)

3. Ability to re-appropriate funds

On university's ability to sanction re-appropriation of funds the researchers concluded that the university has substantial autonomy in matters regarding re-appropriation of funds. Vice-Chancellor can sanction re-appropriation of funds but the major head should remain the same. In case of transfer of expenditures from one major head to another major head the Syndicate is appropriate sanctioning authority. A senior financial officer substantiated the analysis by saying,

As far as matters of re-appropriation are concerned, in universities over-expenditures are always expected. Vice-Chancellor has the authority which is delegated to him by the government to sanction re-appropriation from one head to another head, but the major head should remain the same. In fact you can re-appropriate it to another major head, but in that case the matter goes to the Syndicate and they give approval for it. But overall the university has the authority to sanction re-appropriation of funds as required.

4. Authority to revise fee structure

After talking to the respondents the researchers concluded that the university's autonomy in terms of revision of fee structure is close to zero. Although by law it is fully empowered to determine its fee structure and the Ordinance of the university states that the university,

Can charge and receive such fees and other charges as it may determine (UE Ordinance 2002, clause r, paragraph 4).

But the university being a public-sector institution has to fulfill certain obligations towards the society and hence it cannot revise its fee structure like private-sector institutions of higher education. It was also clear from the following excerpts,

The university can revise its fee structure. The summary has to go through the Vice-Chancellor's Office to the Finance and Planning Committee and then finally to the Syndicate, which gives the final approval, but UE is a public-sector university and it has to provide education to general public of Pakistan, which is poor. It cannot increase its fees according to the market conditions and there are also Members of Provincial Assembly (MPAs) in the Syndicate who are political people and they do not allow the university administration to make major increase in its fee structure.

5. Ability to conduct audit systems

After analysis of data the researchers inferred that incompatible with its limited financial autonomy the university has to maintain strict financial discipline in shape of internal and external audit systems. As pointed out by Orberg and Wright (2008) that government's legal duty to carry-out audit is basically a key strategy employed by the governments to exhibit their control over institutions of higher education and learning. In fact governments are not just ensuring financial discipline of the institutions in this way but are also probing that whether the institutions are fulfilling their conditions of its funding. Nybom (2008) further supports this by saying that if the general policy is set by the government and financial resources are allocated according to these objectives this is probably the most powerful means to exert influence and authority on the decision making process of higher education institutions without taking much of the responsibility. It was also quite evident from following excerpts of the interview of a respondent:

There are 2 types of audits at UE 1) Pre-audit/Internal Audit 2) Post-audit/External Audit. The pre-audit is done by our Resident Auditor. He is appointed by the Government of Punjab. Each and every voucher goes through him. He audits that voucher and then payments are made after his clearance. He comes on deputation from Finance Department of Government of Punjab. Post-audit or External Audit

is conducted by Director General Audit Punjab. Their team comes once in a financial year and performs this task for that particular year.

Conclusions

The higher education reforms of 2002 are the biggest effort by any Pakistani government in the 66-year-old history of the country. What also makes these reforms different from other efforts of the past is that these reforms were followed by an effective implementation strategy. As a result the existing apex body of higher education in Pakistan the UGC was replaced by a more powerful body the HEC. The HEC was given the powers and mandate to initiate the whole reform process. The reforms of 2002 included that all public-sector universities should be given autonomy in areas of administration and finance to improve the overall performance of higher education institutions of the public-sector. University of Education, Lahore was also established as a result of reforms of 2002 and was granted autonomy by its Ordinance.

After analysis of the data the researchers conclude that traditionally the higher education institutions of Pakistan have enjoyed considerable autonomy in the presence of a relatively weak UGC but after the reforms of 2002 the HEC has emerged as more powerful and authoritative body than UGC. It uses top-down strategy for implementation of its policies and since its establishment has curtailed the autonomy of higher education institutions in the country. Noncompliance with HEC directives can lead to server penalties to the institutions of higher education and learning. Therefore, in broad-spectrum after the reforms of 2002 the higher education system of Pakistan has moved away from more autonomy towards more control.

On aspect of administrative autonomy the researchers came to the conclusion that UE enjoys sufficient autonomy in this respect. It is empowered to do strategic planning and the Syndicate is the appropriate authority for setting the future direction of the university. The Syndicate is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor who enjoys vast administrative powers. The university is autonomous to create and fill teaching and nonteaching posts to meets its present and future requirements of human resources. It can also award affiliations to various educational institutions for awarding degrees. However, the university's authority to establish new division/colleges and to improve upon its infrastructure and research facilities largely depends upon the financial support from the government.

In financial matters the researchers came to the conclusion that UE has very limited financial authority. It is heavily dependent on the government for its recurring/non-developmental and developmental expenditures. Its own source of income is revenue generated through various evening programs, which is mostly spent on its non-developmental expenditures. Its authority to revise its fee structure is also close to zero because being a public-sector university it has to provide education on subsidized and affordable rates to the common people of Pakistan who are underprivileged. However, the university is quite autonomous to spend the allotted funds and has the authority to sanction re-appropriation of funds. In contrast to its limited financial authority the university has to maintain strict financial discipline in shape of internal and external audit systems.

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