Unveiling the Path to Excellence: Analyzing Pakistan and Malaysian Higher Education Policies

Shah Zaib[1*], Dr. Niamatullah[2], and Dr. Abdul Rab[3]

[1*]PhD Scholar, Department of Education, Iqra University Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan. Email: shahzaib_khalil786@yaho.com

[2]Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, Lasbela University of Agriculture Water & Marine Sciences (LUAWMS), Uthal, Balochistan, Pakistan. E-mail: niamat.edu@luawms.edu.pk

[3]Assistant Professor, Faculty of Social & Management Sciences, Lasbela University of Agriculture Water & Marine Sciences (LUAWMS), Uthal, Balochistan, Pakistan. E-mail: abdulrab@luawms.edu.pk

Abstract

The importance of higher education in driving national development and fostering enlightenment cannot be minimalized. The main purpose of the study was to analyze higher education (HE) policies and their role in shaping the HE landscape of Pakistan and Malaysia and to identify the gaps and discrepancies between both countries' HE policies. Content analysis was employed for analyzing HE policies covering from the 1990s to 2020 and used relational content analysis in developing concept to draw relationship and understanding from various written documents. The findings of the study demonstrated that Pakistan has made noteworthy efforts to transform its HE system through the implementation of various HE policies. However, the HE policies have undergone inconsistencies and lacked sustainability, primarily attributed to political transitions, poor execution, weak governance, and a persistent challenge of only a small, allocated budget for higher education. Whereas, Malaysia has effectively transformed its HE system and established itself as an international hub through the successful implementation of well-designed HE blueprints. These policies sustained, framed properly, and executed effectively, with revisions based on lessons learned from previous policies. Both countries have significantly experienced in policymaking; however, Malaysia has displayed a more effective approach to policy implementation and revision, led to a greater degree of success in achieving its objectives. The study recommends the policy makers in transforming the higher education benefiting the lessons from Malaysia's higher education framework. This brings consistency in addressing the governance, accessibility and quality gaps in higher education system. The global trends with a modified national higher education framework enable the international higher education collaborations in the context to Pakistan. The future research may explore a secondary quantitative data in terms to governance, global trends, student mobility and research culture for higher education system in Pakistan and Malaysia.

Key Words: Higher Education Policies; Pakistan; Malaysia; Content Analysis

Introduction

Pakistan has implemented various education policies over the years, with some policies based on the nation's social philosophy and ideology (Kamboh & Parveen, 2015). Despite having five-year policies since independence, the country has not achieved the objectives set by national education policies due to budget disparities, improper utilization of minimum budget, the inappropriate framework of implementation, and a lack of political commitment (Dildar et al., 2016). In contrast, Malaysia has made significant contributions to higher education and proposed policies from time to time, such as the Barnes Report, the Fenn Wu Report, the Education Ordinance, the Razak Report, and the Education Acts 1961 and 1996 (Zain et al., 2017). In formulating the Malaysian "Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015-2025", higher education was expanded with the benchmark of globalization to meet international standards (White, 2016). Moreover, efforts were made

by MOHE in formulating the "National Higher Education Action Plan 2007-2010" to bring Malaysia among the international hubs for tertiary education (MOHE, 2007). In addition, the current study aims to analyze and compare the higher education policies of Pakistan and Malaysia, with a specific focus on quality, accessibility, budget, globalization, governance, and research work of higher education. In clearly indicating the both higher education polices, the research has been executed in addressing these questions:

- ➢ What are the key higher education policies of Pakistan and Malaysia?
- ➢ What are the different factors that make Malaysia's Higher Education policies a success?
- ➢ What lessons can bring Pakistani policy makers to unveil the path to excellence in higher education?

The study used a relational content analysis approach in developing concepts to analyze six policy reports from 1990 to 2020. The researchers developed concepts in the shape of codes from the contents of two higher education policies of Pakistan and Malaysia. These concepts/codes were further analyzed in discussion to compare and relate (i.e. relational content analysis) both countries' higher education policies for quality, globalization, research, governance, accessibility, and budget of higher education. The researchers used the qualitative content analysis method and the relational analysis technique to visualize the contents and get an understanding of texts and their relationships. The study proposes a conceptual framework for comparative research of higher education policies based on the social reconstruction of philosophical theory. Social Reconstruction theory emerged in the education system to have education as a tool for changing society (White, 2016). The Social Reconstruction of Theodore Brameld can be connected for suggesting reforms to seek change in the system in the shape of revolution in Pakistan. A conceptual framework is proposed to view this philosophical theory. The framework emphasizes the importance of quality, accessibility, budget, globalization, governance, and research work of higher education in achieving social reconstruction through education.
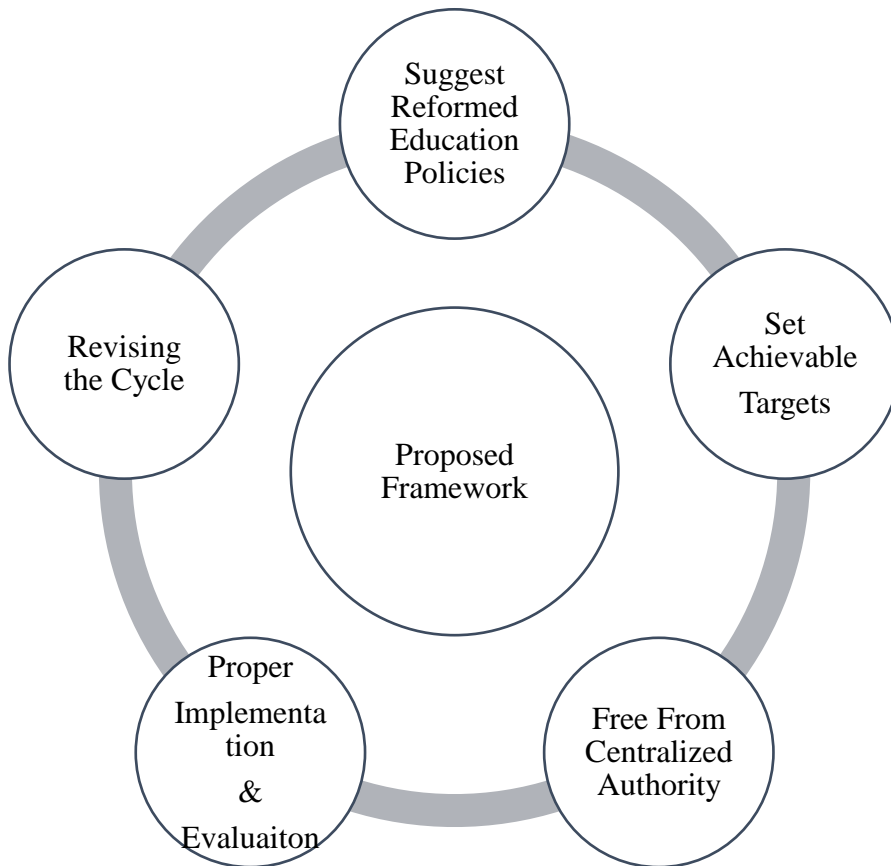
Figure 1: Framework for Recommendations

Literature Review

Education policy plays a crucial role in shaping the strategic development of a country because it contributes to the knowledge and economy of a nation and addresses the challenges of the present and the future (Khushik & Diemer, 2018). Education fosters progress, eradicates poverty, and nurtures a knowledge-based society and economy (Shaikh & Khoja, 2011). It is recognized that education holds significant importance in both developed and developing countries, which focuses comprehensive vision for development and contributes to a country's development (Rana, 2010). In addition, with its focus on human development, economic growth, and social advancement, higher education catalyzes fostering the necessary knowledge, skills, and innovations that contribute to economic development and overall societal well-being (Bjorke, 2017).

Higher Education and HE Policies in Pakistani Context

HE system of Pakistan requires significant transformation because of various factors such as so-called colonial rule, political disturbance and imbalances, and other nations' borrowed education systems. As a result, it deteriorated the intellectual abilities of people in the country (Butz, 2015). Despite the establishment of several universities since Pakistan's independence, the country's tertiary education has faced challenges, including education budget insufficiency, a lack of quality education, the absence of proper execution of tertiary education, and HEIs politicization (Ibad, 2017).

Since independence, the University of Punjab, Lahore, was the only university in Pakistani HE system. Karachi University was established in 1950, and the first private university, Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), was established in 1984. The Aga Khan University (AKU) was established in 1985, and more public universities were established during the government tenure of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto from 1971 to 1977 (Hoodbhoy, 2009). However, despite all education policies, plans, and reforms in Pakistan, the country's tertiary education has faced challenges that have prevented the achievement of desired objectives set by each education policy, such as the 1947 education conference, the 1959 education commission, and the 1970 education policy (Ahmad et al., 2014).

Pakistan's tertiary education is crucial for the country's economic and social development, and there is a need for emergency reforms to equip higher education based on quality and standards (Taysum & Iqbal, 2012). The higher education system in Pakistan functions at three levels, including degree colleges, institutes with degree-awarding status, and universities comprising the private and public sectors (Ibad, 2017). Quality education is essential for the development of a nation socially, economically, and culturally, but in Pakistan, quality education is based on the private sector, which only the elite class can access due to high fees (Ravitch, 2006).

Since Pakistan's independence, policymakers, government, educationists, and the general public have been concerned about tertiary education. The University Grant Commission was established in 1974 to cope with tertiary education economically, socially, and culturally, but it could not manage the tertiary education system in the country effectively (Parveen et al., 2011). As a result, the standard of tertiary education declined in the country (Government of Pakistan, 1976). In 2002, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) was established to better deal with and manage tertiary education, and it functioned well as an autonomous and federal body (Parveen et al., 2011).

Despite several loopholes in the implementation of education policies, Pakistan has made progress in higher education. In 1947, there were only two universities, but now there are 153 universities for almost 200 million populations (Mehmood, 2016). However, higher education in Pakistan has faced challenges such as creating visionary graduates, research, innovation, leadership, unclear targets, good governance, and implementation

(Khushik & Diemer, 2018). The new education policies are often the continuation of the last or old policies, while in some cases, the new policies are an extension of previous policies. Nevertheless, for Pakistan, the case is different due to political instability (Hoodboy, 2014). Several issues of higher education from time to time were quality of higher education, academic freedom, the democratization of universities, hiring teaching faculty as questionable, research works a misery, and low standard of syllabi for higher learning programs (Memon, Joubish and Khurram, 2010). The Education Sector Reform 2001-04 came with the vision of making higher education based on technology to meet the present era to develop the country's socio-economic status (Parveen et al., 2011). The 2009 education policy was initiated with the vision of bringing higher education to international standards and with a good governance structure and implementation framework, which all previous policies failed due to the privation of the implementation framework (Majoka & Khan, 2017)

Higher Education and HE Policies in the Malaysian Context

The education system in Malaysia has been a crucial tool to achieve Vision 2020, which aims to make Malaysia a developed and fully industrialized nation (Lee, 1999). Malaysians have worked hard to formulate education policies and establish a separate Ministry of Higher Education to achieve this goal (Grapragasem, Krishnan, & Mansor, 2014). After many years, Malaysia has made significant progress in the HE system, with an improvement in the enrolment rate year by year (Asmawi & Jaladin, 2018). There was only one university with 650 students in the past, but now 70,000 international students seek higher-level studies in Malaysia (Ahmed, 2015). Nonetheless, several HE policies were formulated, including the Amendments to the "Universities and University Colleges Act" of 1971 and 1995 and the "National Council on Higher Education Act of 1996" (Ahmad, 2017). It was observed to frame the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act of 1996 and the National Accreditation Board Act of 1996 (Lee, 2004). In higher education, Malaysia focuses mainly on science, engineering, and technology, along with improving the university curriculum. Research and Development were emphasized at higher learning institutions (Balakrishnan et al., 2021).

These policies and initiatives have led to a significant transformation of the Malaysian higher education system (Grapragasm, Krishnan and Mansor, 2014). The Ministry of Higher Education was established in 2004 to develop the structure of higher education for both public and private sector institutions (Lee, 2004). The Malaysian Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015-2025 was formulated to enhance higher education in a global arena to reach a target of international standards (Omar et al., 2022). The tertiary education system in Malaysia has been rapidly transformed towards the economy's growth with a significant creation of qualified human resources to increase the knowledge-based society (Arokiasamy, 2011).

The Malaysian higher education system has undergone significant changes over the years. In the 1990s, five public universities were corporatized, and the Private Higher Education Institution Act was formulated in 1996 to recognize private universities and colleges (Economic Planning Unit, 1966). The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) was established in 2004 to further reform the higher education system, and the National Accreditation Board was established to handle the quality mechanism of the courses at HEIs in the country (Samuel, Tee and Symaco, 2017).

In 2007, MOHE established the vision of making Malaysia a hub of excellence in higher education by 2020, with ten objectives to produce productive graduates that meet the standards of national and international employers (Zain et al., 2017; Wan & Morshidi, 2018). In the third phase, two Blueprints were formulated including the National Higher Education Action Plan (NHEAP) 2007-2010 and the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP) beyond 2020 (Grapragasem, Krishna, & Mansor, 2014; Sirat & Wan, 2022).

Furthermore, the government expanded the role of the provision of HE in the country, and the National Council on Higher Education Act was passed in 1996 to plan and formulate national policies and strategies to develop higher education in Malaysia (Laws of Malaysia, 1996a). Amendments were imposed to the "Universities and University Colleges Act 1971" in 1995 to corporatize all public universities, making them free from government and bureaucratic hold and management to run under business corporations (Malaysia, 1995). The Acts that discuss the private higher education sector were passed in 1996, including the Private Higher Educational Institution Acts and the National Accreditation Board Act (Laws of Malaysia, 1996b). To further develop the HE system, the Malaysian Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015-2015 was formulated with a review of previous policies and blueprints. It was initiated in 2015 by the Malaysian Prime Minister to develop standards for the HE system in the country and achieve international recognition (Wan & Morshidi, 2018; Da Wan, Sirat and Razak, 2018). The Malaysian government has made significant efforts to make Malaysia HE hub in the South Asian region and compete in the global education market (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007). These initiatives have led to a transformation of the Malaysian HE system towards a knowledge-based society and economy.

The Vision of 2020 surfaced considerable challenges for Malaysia to become a competent nation, and the term "education hub of excellence" became the main path of Malaysians toward a national plan of education (Aziz & Abdullah, 2013). The Ministry of Higher Education was established in 2004 to direct the higher education system separately, and the National Higher Education Action Plan 2007-2010 was formulated to lead higher education towards excellence (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007).

A comprehensive blueprint, the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015-2025, was formulated to enhance higher education in a global arena and reach international standards (Sirat & Wan, 2022). These initiatives have made Malaysia a

leading exporter of education globally, with Malaysia being called a worldwide education hub for students (Knight & Morshidi, 2011). Thus, Malaysia's efforts significantly transformed higher education into a knowledge-based society and economy.

Analysis and Results

Figure 2: Themes Developed from Policy Contents

Themes from Content	Pakistan's Context	Malaysia's Context
1. **Quality**	The education system in Pakistan has been facing significant challenges such as poor teaching and learning quality, inadequate research focus, inadequate library facilities, limited budget provisions, and insufficient infrastructure (Ministry of Education, 1998; Bengali, 1999). Efforts have been made to address the challenges and improve the accessibility, quality, and equity of education, with a specific focus on developing a knowledge-based society	In comparison to Pakistan, Malaysia has recognized the need for urgent reform in its higher education system and transformed its country into a knowledge-based society and a fully industrialized nation. The Ministry of Higher Education was established in 2004 to lead higher education towards excellence and make Malaysia a regional hub of higher education (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011; Tham, 2013). Malaysia's higher education system has gained good student

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and promoting ICT-enabled learning (Ministry of Education, 2009; Ahmad & Hussain, 2014). However, despite these efforts, overall, HE quality in Pakistan falls short of international standards, only a small percentage 27% of faculty members hold doctoral degrees and research output is generally weak, resulting in a low ranking on the global QS university ranking, where Pakistan struggles to secure a position among the top 500 universities (Government of Pakistan, 2017; Khushik & Diemer, 2018).

enrollment, global recognition, and enhancement in research publications and quality-based institutions, making Malaysia a choice of career for international students (Ministry of Education, 2015; Zain et al., 2017). To learn from China, Singapore, and South Korea, Malaysians made efforts to compete with these powerful education systems by developing a knowledge-based economy through higher education, with a focus on innovation and technological progress (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007). The Malaysian government's initiatives have led to a significant transformation of the higher education system towards a knowledge-based society and a fully industrialized nation (Tham & Kam, 2008.

2. Globalization

The expansion of the digital revolution and communication has opened new patterns and standards for connecting Pakistan's Higher Education Institutions to the worldwide education

Malaysia has focused on more academic research and teaching to become an international hub in higher education, with the Ministry of Higher Education making a vision to benchmark the public

system (Ministry of Education, 1998; Kazmi & Quran, 2005). However, aspects of globalization in the education system have been ignored in Pakistan, with the country far behind in several indicators, including infrastructure, higher education, and technology, in comparison to other countries like India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, China, and Bangladesh (Ministry of Education, 2009; Saeed et al., 2020). Efforts are being made to bring Pakistan's higher education to international standards, with SDG 4 focusing on quality education. However, Pakistan's universities still fall far behind in the QS world ranking, with hardly any among the top 500 (Government of Pakistan, 2017).

HEIs with world-leading institutions (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007; Arokiasami, 2010). Efforts are being made to make Malaysia's Higher Education Institutions on international standards of world repute, with the internationalization of academic programs to exchange students and academic and teaching staff to develop creativity and innovation in the country (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011; Arokiasamy, 2011).

Malaysia is on top of recruiting international students among ASEAN countries, with international students' enrolment reaching from 450,000 in 2007 to 100,000 in 2014. The number of international academic staff also increased from 2,300 in 2007 to 9,000 in 2014. Malaysia has five international university branch campuses in the country, and five Malaysian universities are among the top 100 worldwide. In 2014, the University of Sains Malaysia ranked 28th according to QS World University Rankings in the Environmental Sciences

Department (Ministry of Education, 2015).

3. Research

Pakistan's research and development organization requires financial assistance, and the quality of research is questionable due to the absence of Ph.D. degree holders of faculty members and postgraduate students in universities (Ministry of Education, 1998; Bengali, 1999). The focus areas of research work are limited to social sciences, and efforts are being made to link research work with other disciplines such as agriculture, commerce, and industry to develop intellectual human resources (Ministry of Education, 2009; Andrabi, Das & Khwaja, 2010). However, Pakistan's research culture is ignored, and the percentage of international research publications is equal to none (Government of Pakistan, 2017).

Malaysia has made significant progress in research and development, with a focus on innovation and creativity. Malaysia was ranked 60th in number for innovation capabilities by UNCTAD World Investment Report 2005, and 1.5% of GDP funding is allocated to research and innovation culture as given in the 9th Malaysia Plan (9MP) (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007; Grapagasem, Krishnan & Mansor, 2014). Malaysia is focusing on high-impact journal publications, and many Malaysian scholars have successfully published research papers in high-impact journals. Efforts are being made to increase R&D activities, discover new knowledge, and produce skilled human capital and excellent researchers in Malaysia (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011; Tham, 2013). The promotion of research scholars to conduct innovative research on major issues such as global warming, water and energy, food security, ICT, value-added

manufacturing, infectious diseases, and topical medicine is being encouraged at HEIs. Good progress in research work has been observed in Malaysia Research Universities (MRUs) during the 10th Malaysia Plan (2011-2015), and the scientific research publications have surpassed that of Thailand and Singapore (Ministry of Education, 2015).

4. Governance

The poor performance of the education system in Pakistan is mainly due to governance problems, including weak planning and management, less participation of stakeholders, imbalance in the education system, no policy sustainability, and poor implementation of policies (Ministry of Education, 2009; Ahmad & Hussain, 2014). The lack of good governance, political unity, and political commitment in the country is the major reason for the poor education system (Government of Pakistan, 2017; Ali, 2017).

Malaysian universities are more centralized than other Asian countries, with the government selecting key leaders running the HEIs. All financial matters are dealt with by the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry's Academic Division is responsible for academic programs and curriculum. The overall education system is managed by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education. Efforts are being made to give autonomy to the system to make the institutions decentralized, which can effectively govern the system with a good governance structure

| | The Ministry of Higher Education has strong control over several public and private HEIs in Pakistan, with governance concerning the Ministry directly related to public universities and public HEIs. However, private HEIs operate independently, and the Ministry of Higher Education has less role to supervise them (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007). Efforts are being made to strengthen the governance structure of public HEIs in Pakistan, with a focus on institution governance, finance and income generation, academic administration, and human resources. The university Board of Directors is being made a governing body to improve the governance structure (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011). | (Ministry of Education, 2015; Da Wan, Sirat and Razak, 2020). |
| **5. Accessibility and Budget** | Access to higher education is a big challenge in Pakistan, with less than 3% of the age group 17-23 having access to higher education (Ministry of Education, 1998). there has been | Malaysia has made significant progress in increasing access to higher education, with a participation rate of 48% in 2012, which aspires to be increased to 70% and to reach higher education up |

good progress in rising access to higher education, with a participation rate of 4.7% in 2008, the participation rate remains low compared to Malaysia, where the participation rate is 12% (Ministry of Education, 2009). The lack of resources like infrastructure, including libraries, teaching aids, internet facilities, and laboratories, is one of the reasons behind the absence of access to higher education in Pakistan (Nasr, 2010).

The participation rate of higher education in Pakistan is poorly low, with a Gross Enrolment Ratio of 10%, and just 0.8% of the age group 17-23 years enrolled in tertiary education (Government of Pakistan, 2017). Pakistan is spending only 0.28% of its budget on higher education, which is behind other countries like India, Japan, Malaysia, and the USA. It is recommended to spend 1.40% of GDP on higher education to achieve the target of higher education in Vision

to 1.2 million students (both in the public and private sector) (Ministry of Education, 2015). Malaysia's 452 private institutions are effectively offering programs of various certificates, diplomas, bachelor's, Master, and PhDs, which has expanded access to higher education in Malaysia (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011). The National Higher Education Fund Corporation and Fund Corporation Higher Education 1977 provide loans and financial assistance for students to help them continue their higher studies.

Efforts are being made to increase adult learners in Malaysia so that by 2020, 23% of the adult population will have tertiary-level education (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007). Malaysia's annual expenditure for higher education is up to 7.7% annually, and good progress has been observed in bachelor's degree enrolment, as well as master's and Ph.D. programs, making Malaysia third in ranking among ASEAN countries

2025 (Majoka & Khan, 2017). for master's and Ph.D. enrolment in comparison to Singapore and Thailand (Bush et al, 2023).

Discussion and Policy Implications

The importance of higher education in driving national development and fostering enlightenment cannot be minimalized. The main purpose of the study was to analyze higher education (HE) policies and their role in shaping the HE landscape of Pakistan and Malaysia and to identify the gaps and discrepancies between both countries' HE policies. The findings of the study demonstrated that Pakistan has made noteworthy efforts to improve its HE system through the implementation of various policies, including the National Education Policy 1998-2010 and the National Education Policy 2009. However, the HE policies have undergone inconsistencies and lacked sustainability, primarily attributed to political transitions and poor execution and weak governance and a persistent challenge of only a small, allocated budget for higher education. It connects with the previous study findings such as, Khushik & Diemer (2018) where it states that inconsistent education policies have emerged governance issues and lack of policy implementation in Pakistan. Nonetheless, the study of Grapragsem, Krishnan & Mansor (2014) claimed that despite having a centralized governance of policy framework and execution, the Malaysia's higher education institutions cooperate and work for the sustainability and consistency in implementing the proposed policies. But a decentralized system is more favored for leading higher education institutions in a country (Lee, 2004).

Pakistan has also been facing a shortage of Ph.D. holders and research scholars, hindering the development of a robust research culture. Furthermore, the accessibility of higher education for the public is also a concern, in terms of equitable access for individuals of all genders, in particular. It is crucial to address these issues to promote a conducive research environment and ensure that higher education is accessible to the broader public, fostering inclusive development and opportunities for all.

In comparison to Pakistan, Malaysia has effectively transformed its HE system and established itself as an international hub through the successful implementation of well-designed HE blueprints. These policies sustained sustainably, framed properly, and executed effectively, with revisions made based on lessons learned from previous policies. Both countries have significantly experienced policymaking; however, Malaysia has

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displayed a more effective approach to policy implementation and revision, led to a greater degree of success in attaining its objectives. Malaysia spends more than 4% of its GDP on education, and progress can be seen in Bachelor programs, as well as master's and Ph.D. programs, where Malaysia is ranked 3rd among ASEAN countries. Research and innovation are also emphasized, with scholars publishing research papers in high-impact factor journals. The governance structure is centralized, with policies being framed and executed by the Ministry of Higher Education, and private sector universities are not ignored.

The scholarly studies such as Taysum & Iqbal (2012) addressed the issue of inadequate budget allocation for the higher education system in Pakistan, affecting the policy implementation, providing more accessible higher education for all, and maintaining the sustainability or global trends such as study mobility, gender equity and culture of high impact research studies and projects. The reason behind the Malaysia's sustainable higher education policies with a global approach to enhance the cultural exchange programs are proper policy framework with the sound budgeting mechanism meeting international standards (Tham & Kam, 2008). There exists a budgetary and accessibility gap for higher education in Pakistan, which has far better approach in the Malaysia's higher education system (Ahmad, 2017).

Globally, Malaysia has made efforts to make higher education an international hub, therefore, five foreign university campuses were started. In the context of the allocation of budget, Malaysia is spending more than 4% of its GDP on education. It is more than UNESCO's standard. In terms of accessibility to higher education, progress can be seen in Bachelor programs. Malaysia is ranked 3rd in enrolment of master's and Ph.D. programs among ASEAN countries. Research and innovation are an important sector for higher education in Malaysia. More work is done in Science and Technology. Scholars have successfully published a lot of research papers in high-impact factors journals. The governance structure is managed by the Ministry of Higher Education with the responsibility of balancing public sector universities and HEIs. In the reforms agenda, private sector universities were not ignored. The governance structure is centralized in nature to frame policies and execute them. In addition, the higher education policies of Malaysia are consistent and executed in an allocated time framework. Sustainability in the achievement of policy targets can be experienced in Malaysia more than in Pakistan. In reviewing a previous policy, adding some recommendations needed, to present a better policy is a practice by policymakers in Malaysia. To improve higher education in Pakistan, stakeholders need to revisit higher education policy planning, management, and execution of proposed recommendations.

Pakistan has accepted international education frameworks to meet global and international standards of higher education. MDGs and SDGs are the signs to come in a line of international competition. However, the accessibility of higher education in Pakistan for the public is a worrying element. There exists a gap in equitable access to higher

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education. Equal opportunities for both genders are an issue. But scholarships were granted to the graduates and faculty members which was good progress. Looking back, a good number of reforms and policies have been developed to bring improvement in higher education in Pakistan. Some major issues that slow down the achievement of higher education policies are a deficit of allocated budget, weak governance structure, absence of execution of policy recommendations, and unclear targets proposed in the education policies. The study of Arokiasamy (2011) highlighted the challenges in the way to higher education, especial focus on the research development, where Malaysia has made policy framework in connecting the scholars worldwide to write and publish high impact researches. Similarly, Zain et al, (2017) explored that a positive approach by Malaysian higher education is to invest in research and development, connecting to international higher education policies, student mobility or cultural exchange programs and attracting international students from the Southeastern and ASEAN countries.

In comparison to Pakistan, Malaysian education policies are more sustainable, because of proper implementation and governance structure. To provide quality tertiary education, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) has tried its best to compete internationally with Singapore, China and South Korea, and ASEAN countries. In reviewing previous policies and adding recommendations as needed, Malaysia has been able to achieve sustainability in the achievement of policy targets. Compared to Malaysia, Pakistan's higher education policies have lacked consistency and sustainability, hindering progress in the development of a quality higher education system. To improve higher education in Pakistan, stakeholders need to revisit higher education policy planning, management, and execution of proposed recommendations. In brief, the study of Hoodbhoy (2014) can be an effective to be used for recommending policy emergencies for higher education with reformed agenda, reducing unclear targets, and promising recommendations to have achievable frameworks connecting the higher education of Pakistan with the international community for consistent models.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

Pakistan has a long history of framing policies on education, including several HE policies. Unfortunately, these policies have been marred by unfulfilled promises, inadequate implementation, poor governance, and ambiguous objectives. Consequently, they have been proven to be unsustainable and failed to accomplish their intended outcomes. Whereas, Malaysia has effectively transformed its HE system and established itself as an international hub through the successful implementation of well-designed HE blueprints. These policies sustained sustainably, framed properly, and executed effectively, with revisions made based on lessons learned from previous policies. Both countries have significantly experienced policymaking; however, Malaysia has displayed a more effective approach to policy implementation and revision, led to a greater degree of success in attaining its objectives. To revitalize the Pakistani HE system, policymakers should

undertake a comprehensive review of previous HE policies and incorporate necessary additions instead of introducing entirely new policies. It is recommended that the implementation of these policies should be shielded from political influences and interference, ensuring an environment conducive to effective execution. To promote sustainability, it is crucial to establish a robust governance structure that ensures the timely implementation of policies and their achievement.

Policymakers and political leaders in Pakistan should introduce a reformed agenda for the HE system, with a focus on achieving a knowledge economy, international standards for research work and innovation, ICT, allocation of budget, governance structure, accessibility of higher education for all, producing qualified graduates, and increasing enrollment in masters and Ph.D. programs. A fully decentralized higher education system should be introduced without any authoritative influences in policymaking, decision-making, and policy implementation processes. Pakistan should also follow Malaysia's example and demand the opening of international university campuses in the country to expand overseas graduates and boost the economy. Additionally, reforms should be made to provide the Higher Education Commission with the authority to frame separate HE policies for Pakistan.

Hence, the study frames for future researchers to work on the secondary quantitative data on budgeting or funding, accessibility, enrolment, research output and student mobility or cultural exchange programs. Empirical study on global higher education trends, such as digital learning and international student mobility in both countries, and studying the gender equity gaps in higher education system of Pakistan in comparison with Malaysia's model of addressing issues related to gender equity in higher education.

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