

Poor selection criteria for university vice chancellors in Pakistan

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Pakistan is a home of more than 200 million people and 183 chartered universities.¹ Pakistan's education spending has multiplied since the year 2000. In the current federal budget of year 2016-2017, the government has allocated Rs 84.19 billion for higher education affairs, the highest ever in Pakistan's history.² Still, Pakistan's higher education system has continued to deteriorate and education crisis does not come down to how much the country spends. The standard of universities in Pakistan have worsened and the universities do not focus on research and invention based learning. As per Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) 2016 report, not a single university from Pakistan ranked in the top 500 global universities.³ The quality of education dropped significantly and the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan, stopped 31 PhD and 26 M.Phil programmes in various universities across the country as these universities failed to meet the minimum required quality criteria.⁴

According to the World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report 2015-16, Pakistan is ranked at 124th out of 140 countries. This position has not improved since 2013. In the UN Human Development Index, Pakistan went down from 147th to 148th.⁵ This is the failure of the higher authorities who are responsible for higher education road map and the universities' executives who are running the higher educational system especially the Vice Chancellors.

Certainly, Vice Chancellors play a significant role in the development of a university both academically and administratively, faculty development, research grants and funding, promoting higher education, international collaboration and providing research and innovation culture. This can be achieved when the appointments for the

Vice Chancellors should be on merit based rather than on personal and political interests, cast and colour.

More recently, the most populated province of Pakistan, Punjab announced the positions for the Vice Chancellors in three different universities in the capital city of the Punjab province, King Edward Medical University, University for Health Sciences and Fatima Jinnah Medical University, Lahore. The criteria for appointments were bachelor degree in medicine with an additional postgraduate degree and only 8 research articles published in journals indexed or not indexed in Institute of Scientific Information.⁶ It is quite surprising that in the Western Universities with this required selection criterion no one can get even a junior faculty position of lectureship in the universities.

A person without holding a Ph.D and enriched list of research articles in leading science journals, and without an invention background, would not be able to lead the medical university. The government of Pakistan should realize that universities are the basic birth place of higher education, research and invention. If university VCs do not have a vision about research and invention, how can their graduates compete with the world and lead the state towards knowledge based economy. The vice chancellor should be a distinguished academician with strong academic track record and professional competency, enriched list of research articles in leading science journals, high Hirsch (h-Index) and should have an invention and visionary administrative experience.

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