Comparative Analysis of the Scholars Perception about Research in Public and Private Universities in Pakistan

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Abstract  The base of a successful university in providing quality education and practical knowledge for improving the lives of the youths in terms of social, economical and intellectual development are only possible through promoting research culture. Research conduct and writing is the most important tool for identifying remedial recommendations for education and related problems. This research presents comparative analysis of the research in Public and Private Universities in Pakistan. The research identifies current research practices, their strengths and weaknesses and provides recommendations for improvement. Research supervision and writing are two different parts but in reality these are parts of a single activity which is called thesis writing process. In Pakistan, research culture is considered very difficult and complicated activity because scholars do not accept challenges and the supervisors do not take the required interest. The study highlights the areas where scholars and supervisors need improvement, more struggle, and scientific as well as academic zest.

Introduction

Higher Education is an effective source for gaining higher intellectual status and provides opportunities that facilitate life. Higher level of education is a powerful source for socio-economic development and prosperity of a society. Those countries that had the opportunities of modern and research based education; they are enjoying more luxuries, facilities, technologies and life comforts than less research oriented & less educated nations. Research or thesis writing is supposed to be very complex and difficult activity for most of the research scholars’. It is also fact that such perception of scholars’ about research might be wrong but it is also a reality that in developing countries like Pakistan research work is given

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very less or no importance, time and credit till post graduate or even at MPhil/doctorate levels.

It is also a common complaint of the research scholars about supervisors that they did not give them proper time in research matter and guidance about the practical elements of the research activity. The supervisors rather discourage them not to do research/theses and encourage to opt for course work because it would be an easy task for them as compared to research. It is only possible to promote research culture in our education institutions when the scholars and research supervisors both take interest in research work. They are to take it as a subject of choice and challenge for their personal and general public success. Supervisors need to be more active and vigilant because they cannot only promote research activities but they can also encourage the existing research scholars for further work. It is also fact that there are many personals and agencies working on promoting research activity in Pakistan which included many universities in both public and private sectors in all subjects.

Naqvi (2013) claims that the conduct of research and its promotion is not only the job of the developed nations but is also benefitting them more because he thought that the research of a particular area and nation would be more related and beneficial for its bonafied inhabitants. The people of other community can only get help from it in fragments’ due to their different cultural and geographical conditions. It is the responsibility of the local universities to assume their part and give an appropriate projection and propose legitimate answers for the cutting edge issues which are constantly untouched and unsolved by the administrations. In such manner HEC presented a program for the arrangement of required opportunities to researchers in the form of cash incentives and study scholarships, access to libraries', technologies and research workshops etc. to help them in this task.

Zaman (2008) expressed that research work is a fundamental piece of successful instructing and learning process at university level. It is additionally specifically connected to the standard of training. It is also connected with the standard of all levels education. Bangladesh, HEIs demonstrated an incredibly unacceptable research record. It was an immediate consequence of the less experienced and less experienced instructors, educationists, plan-makers, IT experts, professionals and administrators and so on. In worldwide and national points of view, universities that were poor in research did not get place in the present educational promoting societies. Research in universities is very severely affected by different reasons which including low aid and budget, poor deciding priority places of research, poor corporate support and lack of facilities in research work. Most of scholars are not interested in research work because of poor financial status and appraisals for researchers and publication of articles and the participation of teachers’ in general election duties time and again. The study further stated that private sector HEIs also suffer from some serious issues like:
financiers’/sponsors’ issue, Leadership issue and no or very limited scholarship for needy scholars and of course due to inexperienced and non-academic Vice Chancellors in many universities.

**Objectives of the Research**

1. To know about research scholars perception about research activities in public and private universities.
2. To identify the strengths and shortcomings in research activities in both sectors universities.
3. To give recommendations for bringing improvements in research activities in both sectors universities.

**Research Questions**

1. What are scholar’s perceptions about research activities in public and private universities?
2. What are the strengths and shortcomings in research activities in both sectors universities?
3. What recommendations the study can provide for bringing improvements in research activities in both sectors universities?

**Literature Review**

According to Altbach (2012). “The research promoting and research creating universities are the organizations which involve in the promotion, creation and dissemination of education in many areas like information, social, cultural and economical and other modern educational trends and issues. These universities always have well established laboratories, furnished libraries, and other required facilities that facilitate effective teaching and research at the advance level. All over the world, research promoting institutions play a very complicated part in the educational line consists of the major aim of research and training of the learners in the field of research.”

The base of a modern and successful university in today era need to have all the technological tools and access to technologies with expert professionals and to provide all the basic needed facilities and opportunities to the learners. They are to work hard day and night to make a comparatively best image and place in the mind of other professionals. It is also to foster the socioeconomic development of a country through practical research. Therefore, research increasingly sits at the top of all regional, global and national policy agendas which ultimately making the role of modern universities more prominent and comprehensive. (Shin & Lee, 2015).
Husain (2007) stated in his research study that the promotion of research and research activity is a vital job of the educational institutions and also of its teaching faculty to promote, develop and produced the best professionals, teachers, researchers and research. According to Kehm (2006) the research scholar anywhere in the world is enjoying more freedom than that one who is doing research in Germany where a researcher is facing many problems while doing his/her research because in Germany a PhD research scholar’s is bound to work as an assistant with his/her research supervisor professor. The research scholar then will work as assistant in the professor research programme which is more difficult than working as a free researcher.

Blasi (2005) said that the universities and other degree awarding institutes where research work is exercised are the centers of modern and practical education expansion, research activities and bringing needed changes and innovation in the fields of research, education and up gradation in all related areas. University is also bound to strive and work hard in the provision of remedies and logical solutions to the existing cultural, social and economic problems faced by the modern world human. Aaviksoo (2005) recorded that it is the need to buckle down in the field of research on the grounds “that there is a critical requirement for the high number of research managers and specialists, as the quantity of scientist is expanding step by step in all teach. These specialists ought to get appropriate direction and aptitudes in inquire about composing and research conduction and therefore there ought to be a legitimate direction instrument, neighborhood, national and worldwide joint effort and relationship to impart their perspectives and encounters to the researchers of the globe.” The expert in the field of research might be ready in new computational and era which would be more investigation oriented and more academic achievement oriented. “The management must guide the existing universities and give all conceivable help, human resource and mechanical help to make the specialist of the day very much furnished with all the required abilities.” it is fact that the government should promote the culture of inquiry and research because all the existing issues faced by the public in general and the educational organizations in particular would be easily resolved if its solution be given in the light of practical research. Therefore the universities should be given more incentive to conduct research about all the possible problems faced by the mass today.

According to Memon (2007), critical study and research work promote the sense of continuous efforts, search, struggle, curiosity in researchers’ and they want to get the best possible solutions to the problem faced by them by saving money, time and labor. Many manuscripts have been written about poor or lack of research culture and researchers in Pakistan. The reasons of this weak research culture are lack of financial assistance and help from the government and private sector, lack of the needed facilities and resources, lack of modern technologies and accessories required for the present day researchers, lack of international
participations and lack of standardized curricula and education system in Pakistan. In spite of all its importance and advantages there are many reasons for its poor base and negligence which all lead to the overall weak base of research culture.

According to Lauder et al., (2006) getting professional and smart workers for any academic organization are not an easy task. The existing teaching staffs at many universities are supposed to be not that much professional and loyal to their services. It is therefore; pivotal for the standard maintaining agencies to select and hire those faculty members who will have not only the needed qualification but they are to be the real professionals with their utmost sincerity and dedication towards their job. In this regard research activity at university level is not only the very basic but also useful process. Through research and exploration a university can get complete information about its strengths and weaknesses. Research can also minimize the flaws by suggesting practical and viable recommendations’ for it. He further pointed out that both sectors university should make a balanced rubric for accelerating the inquiry process.

Zamorski (2002) expressed that the existing knowledge of the research scholars who are getting admission in research programme, lack the basic knowledge about research and inquiry. Therefore, it is not easy for the supervisors for both sectors universities but more particularly private universities research supervisors to teach and produced quality researchers and research out of them. According to Broers et al., (2005) identified in their study that as compared to the developing countries that the postgraduate students of the United Kingdom have more skilled and knowledge about the research conditions and publication because they are bound to publish a research paper or more in the reputed and recognized research journals before getting admission in higher research oriented degrees. They also stated that they are more aware about the scope and importance of research publication as compared to the developing countries scholars. Research publication and articles are the basic source of getting job in academic as well other organizations; furthermore publication is one of the major tools of getting promotion at university level. Therefore, research oriented professors are always busy in doing research and increasing their number of publications for not only their personal promotion and rewards but also getting more and more information and knowledge about different related subjects. While in case of Pakistan the staff and research scholars both are not taking the needed interest in publication and research because their main interest is in getting degrees or sometime only personal promotion or rise in salary.

Swaan (2001) stated that dissertation writing by most of the research scholars in very lengthy time and they supposed it to be much time consuming, lethargic and difficult task. Therefore, majority of the scholars refused from thesis writing to avoid extra pain taking and struggle. It is also fact that the busy activities of
life especially in youth ages made it difficult for the scholars to complete their thesis work.

Kehm (2006) conducted a comparative study in German and Dutch universities about PhD degree theses writing. He identified that the PhD scholars at Dutch universities are enjoying more freedom in thesis writing as compared to the scholars enrolled in German universities because in Germany PhD research scholar are bound to work as an assistant to the professor/supervisor while in Dutch, the researcher will be free to work as an independent researcher. Butt and Shams (2013) expressed in their research that majority of the prospective teachers were found less interested in research activity and they were more interested in courses because they thought that research work would spoil their time. In their study they also identified that those scholar who got their morning session on merit bases were found more negative toward research work but those scholars who got enrolled in evening session or self-finance bases were found more research oriented.

Zan & Martino (2007) identified in their research that the role of the scholars/ students at post graduate and graduate level were found different from each other. This stated that the performance of the graduate were far behind than post graduate students. According to their findings the differences between these two were: research information, practical work practices and lack of exposure. They were also found more skillful than graduate and under graduates.

Williams & Coles (2003) conducted a comparative study about male and female students at master and post graduate students. In their study they identified that female students are less interested in research work as compare to male students. They found in their study that the cause of less interest of the girls would be their high interest in social activities gathering, family matter all the time. Therefore girls’ students consider research work as less important for them.

Sabzwari, Kauser & Khuwaja (2009) stated that male doctors were more interested in research studies as compare to female doctors. They concluded that female doctors were giving more time to their personal, social and family activities with the addition of it they found that female doctors were also busy with their kids and other family members. They also highlighted that those female who got PhD qualification were more research oriented than male PhD qualified persons.

Phillips & Pugh (2005) identified that those scholars who got PhD degree and working as teachers in some educational organization/ universities were liked by the majority of the students and general public as compared to a non- PhD teacher because, it is always awarded after very intensive and laborious task and very hard mental work. They also said that Albert Einstein and Karl Marx were both doctors and PhD degree holder but Einstein thesis were not about relativity nor was Karl’s was about capitalism. They concluded that intensive research work can bring changes in the skills of inquiry. According to Green & Powell
(2005) research supervisor should work hard with dedication so that the scholars get proper guidance, time and research writing skills within the specified time. It is one of the major complaints of the scholars that the supervisors did not take the required interest which ultimately prolonged research conduction process. They also identified that the main cause of failure of research work was due to illogical/irrelevant topic selection by both the scholars and research supervisors. They recommended that the selection of the research topic should be realistic and manageable for the scholars to avoid their wastage of time.

Sepoy (2005) expressed that the existing situation of the research in Pakistan were not meeting the international standard particularly in the field of social sciences and natural sciences. According to him, the quality of current research in Pakistan is not only unsatisfactory weak and unrealistic because most of the researchers are doing research for the sake of getting degree. While in developed countries the scholars always explore new knowledge and information in their research. Boote & Beile (2005) identified that the reviewers most of the reviewed research dissertation with the view to pass the scholars. And most of the research literatures were found very poor and short. The literature review and most of the thesis were ambiguous. It is a common view of the supervisor that if the literature review of the research is inadequate than other elements of it would be inappropriate. PhD research scholars are striving for writing balanced and comprehensive research thesis but due to the lack of skills about synthesis/analysis and data interpretation they always not successful in doing it.

Le Compte et al (2003) said that the work of literature review in thesis writing is one of the major structural elements and the backbone of research study for the scholars. The scholars can get major objectives, research questions, framework, theoretical guidelines and secondary data from the literature. It also provides basic knowledge and data about the study including: use of proper language, selection and elaboration of theories, major variables and phenomenon, its history and methodology. It also provides information to the researcher about the influences of other researchers or research in the related field.

Research activity is not only a difficult and complex activity but the time and age of the scholars also influence it because research writing need full time attention, concentration and dedication from the researcher which are not visible in case of private or public universities majority of scholars because of their jobs, family tasks, social and economical activities and lack of expertise.

**Methodology of the Research**

This is a descriptive research. The aim of it is to get data from researchers of the sampled universities at post-graduate level. The population of this study was all the recognized universities in the province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The sample of 8 universities was selected through simple random sampling
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...technique. The study was further delimited to education departments of the targeted universities for the study.

Population and Sample of the Study

Population of the study was all recognized universities in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, province, by Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. The number of students enrolled at post graduate level in education departments of those universities in session 2016-17 was 723 including 320 from private and 403 from public sectors universities in different post graduate programmes i.e. MS & MPhil/PhD education. The study Sample was 8 universities including 4 from public and 4 from private sectors universities. 200 post graduate students were selected as sample i.e. 100 from public and 100 scholars from private sectors universities.

Research Tools and Procedure

A questionnaire was used for data collection. It consists of 36 items about research activities. The tool was distributed in the sampled scholars and collected back by the researcher in specified time. The collected data of both sectors were comparatively analyzed by applying simple percentile method and also interpreted for the readers.

Table: 1. Responses of the Students about Research Activities

| S. No | Statement                      | Public Universities |                      | Public Universities |                      |
|-------|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|       |                                | Agree   | Disagree | Undecided | Agree   | Disagree | Undecided |
| 1.    | Research is interesting subject| 82      | 18       | -         | 79      | 21       | -         |
| 2.    | Research is difficult          | 60      | 40       | -         | 67      | 33       | -         |
| 3.    | Research is time consuming     | 86      | 14       | -         | 87      | 13       | -         |
| 4.    | Research is expensive task     | 55      | 45       | -         | 80      | 20       | -         |
| 5.    | Thesis writing is encouraged   | 44      | 55       | 01        | 46      | 52       | 02        |
| 6.    | Thesis makes you anxious       | 70      | 28       | 2         | 76      | 24       | -         |
| 7.    | Thesis makes you skillful      | 76      | 20       | 4         | 74      | 22       | 03        |
Table data indicated the responses replied by both sectors universities research scholars. The responses of public sector universities about research as an
interesting activity were 82 agreed and 18 were disagreed while private universities responses were 79 agreed and 21 disagreed. Item 2 was that research is difficult and responses were 60 agreed and 40 disagreed from public sector and 67 agreed and 33 disagreed from private universities research scholars. Researchers were asked about research work as time consuming and 86 and 87 out of 100 in each sectors were agreed that it is time consuming process. The question about research as an expensive task was replied with 55 respondents agreed from public and 80 from private universities. Item 5 was about research writing encouragement by the universities which got 44 and 46 agreed responses but majority of both sectors universities were disagreed that universities did not encourage them in research writing.

The question was asked as thesis makes you anxious and responses were 70 agreed from public and 76 from private universities scholars. Scholars’ replied about the question that thesis makes you skillful were 76 agreed and 20 disagreed from public and 74 agreed and 22 disagreed from private sector universities. The scholars responses about thesis writing teaching were 64 agreed, 36 disagreed from public universities and 77 agreed and 23 disagreed from private sector universities. Item no 9 was about research as an academic part or not were replied by 73 respondents agreed from public and 88 from private universities. The next questions asked was that the needed number of supervisors are available and 89 respondents of public sector agreed with the statement and in private sector its ratio were low and only 49 was agreed. Supervisors are helpful in research work and the responses from both public and private universities were 54 and 53 as agreed out of 100 respectively.

In item 12 the results indicated that 56 respondents from public and 55 from private universities respondents were agreed with the statement that Supervisors’ were motivating while 44 and 45 respectively, from both sectors were disagreed. A question about Supervisors gave proper time was asked from both public and private universities research students and the responses were received that 43 from public and 45 from private were agreed which means that majority of the respondents were not agreed that supervisors not giving them proper time. In response to a question about supervisors biasness were replied with the ratio of 54 agreed in public universities and 50 were agreed in private universities that the supervisors were biased towards some scholars than others.

The scholars of both sectors universities were asked about research supervisors’ expertise and the responses were 75 agreed and 25 disagreed from public universities students and 73 agreed and 23 disagreed from private universities scholars. Supervisors’ availability was satisfactory, the public sector responses was 43 agreed and 54 disagreed and private sector respondents were 52 agreed with the statement and 43 was disagreed. In public sector 83 agreed and 17 disagreed and in private universities 62 agreed and 38 disagreed with the statement that Library is satisfactory.
The scholars were asked about Internet access to scholars for researchers in both public and private universities and they responded by 77 agreed and 20 disagreed in public universities and in private universities 62 were agreed and 35 were disagreed about net access to scholars. The public and private sectors universities students were responded about the online books/journals availability were as 69 agreed and 30 were disagreed in public universities and 48 were agreed and 47 respondents were disagreed from private universities.

The questions was asked about research topic selection and all research scholars of public and private universities were replied with 34 respondents agreed and 62 were disagreed from public universities and 30 agreed and 66 were disagreed from private universities. An item was asked about research topics selection by the research scholars was replied as 40 agreed and 60 were disagreed from public universities and 75 were agreed and 23 were disagreed from private universities. The question was asked by the researcher about topics selection by the supervisor were responded from public and private universities as 67 and 62 agreed and 30 and 26 were disagreed respectively from public and private universities. Item 23 responses were 44 agreed and 54 were disagreed from public universities and 45 agreed and 55 were disagreed from private sector universities. Hence very few scholars were agreed with the statement that Advance studies meetings were held satisfactory. Management is supporting in research activities question by the researchers were replied by the respondents from public universities scholars were 33 agreed and 67 were disagreed and from private universities 60 were agreed and 40 respondents were disagreed.

In response to item no 25; 40 from public and 45 from private universities scholars’ were agreed that the related literature for their research activities were easily available while 55 researchers in each sector universities were disagreed and they considered that related research is very difficult for them. In next item scholars were asked about research finding as a difficult or easy step in research for them. It was replied by the researcher with 77 agreed in government universities and 72 were agreed in private universities while 12 were disagreed in public and 28 were disagreed in private universities. In item 27 about Data analysis process the respondents responses were 48 agreed from public and 40 from private universities with the statement that data analysis was easy for them. The remaining i-e 46 from public and 60 from private universities scholars were disagreed and they thought data analysis a difficult step in research writing. In response to item 28, the scholars from public sector universities were 40 agreed and 60 respondents were disagreed about statistical data analysis. The replies from private universities sampled scholars were 36 agreed and 64 disagreed with the statement about statistical data analysis. In item 29 which was about Statistical formulas teaching properly to scholars were responded with 43 agreed from public and 48 were agreed from private universities and 57 were disagreed from public and 50 were disagreed from private universities scholars. In item 33
about theses evaluation was responded as only 45 agreed from public and 40 agreed from private scholars that theses evaluation was ok. On the other hand, 55 scholars in public universities and 51 from private were disagreed and they stated that theses evaluation was unsatisfactory.

Thesis reports makes me stressful’ was also an item asked from scholars and its response from scholars were; 77 agreed from public and 71 from private were agreed while 20 was disagreed and 29 disagreed from private universities which indicate that majority scholars were in stressful condition during evaluation process. Only 20 respondents were agreed from public and 21 from private were agreed with the statement that publication was easy but majority of the scholars from both sectors i.e. 80 scholars from public and 78 from private universities were disagreed with the statement that publication was easy which mean that publication was a difficult task to majority of the researchers. The item about whether universities motivate researchers was responded with 60 respondents agreed from public and 53 researchers were agreed from private universities. 40 from public and 42 from private universities were disagreed and they stated that university did not motivate researchers. 60 respondents from public and only 12 respondents from private universities were agreed with the statement that government finance researchers while 40 respondents from public and 87 scholars from private universities was disagreed that government finance researchers. Print facility is available free of cost to scholars and the respondents from public universities 4 was agreed and from private 00 was agreed while 96 from public and 100 from private universities scholars were disagreed about print/photocopy free of cost facility to scholars. The response to the statement that research is timely sent for evaluation was replied by the research scholars of both sectors universities as 44 was agreed from public and 43 from private universities while 55 research scholars were disagreed from public and 54 scholars from private universities were disagreed with the statement that research is timely sent for evaluation. It shows that majority scholars of both sectors universities were not satisfied with the existing theses evaluation process and procedures.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

Research activities in both private and public universities were observed and the research concluded that research activity was an interesting learning task for both sectors universities research scholars. It is found that research activity and theses writing are difficult, complex, time consuming, expensive and a lengthy activity for the research scholars. Research is also found by the scholars as a motivating, skills developing, innovative, problem solving and inquiry oriented techniques of learning. It is also concluded that the research facilities were not satisfactory, updated and easily accessible to the researchers. The supervisors were skilled,
experienced, qualified and expert in the field of research guidance and supervision but majority of them in both sectors universities were observed as not sincere, interested, unbiased, regular, punctual and available to the scholars for timely guidance and supervisions. They were also found encouraging, motivating and systematic towards research scholars. There were no proper time frame for researchers and supervisors; research activity is mainly supervisors centered. In public universities the number of supervisors, libraries, online access, facilities were more satisfactory than private sector universities on the other hand, research activities were found more regular, fast and scholars centered in private sector universities. It is also observed that both sectors universities were lacking in research journals facilities and scholars and supervisors were observed weak in research publications. Public universities were observed richer by providing incentives and other financial assistance by Higher Education Commission and other government agencies as compared to private universities. Therefore, universities in both sectors should provide all the required facilities to the research scholars and supervisors for promoting healthy research culture at higher education level. The writers of this study suggest the following steps:

1. Private universities research scholars should be provided Higher Education Commission/Government scholarships.
2. The existing number of the research supervisors might be increased in private universities to make the research scholars’ supervision process speedier.
3. Net access to all the scholars and online libraries access and reach to all research oriented search engines/sites may be provided to the researchers and supervisors’ at both private and public universities in campus/libraries.
4. Universities may provide cash rewards and other incentives to the dedicated and hardworking supervisors.
5. Workshops about research activities and seminars may be conducted on regular basis for both types of universities to improve research work and promote research scholars’ competencies and skills in the scholars’.
6. Scholars may be provided more facilities and opportunities by giving them a pre-planned time frame and guidelines about all the process of a research degree i.e. course works, comprehensive exam, research meetings, allocation of the supervisor, and submission of research proposals.
7. The Government might ensure the availability of all necessary facilities to the researchers’ including: comfortable classrooms, suitable learning climate, updated labs, internet facility, satisfactory furniture, drinking water, staff rooms, electricity, play grounds, well equipped libraries, cafeteria, hostels, computers and a number of other instructional aids on urgent basis.
8. The findings and results of the research should be published by the government and distributed it in scholars, supervisors, policy makers, academicians and other stakeholders with the purpose of knowledge sharing and future guidelines.

9. The research of the research scholars should be published by the government free of cost.

10. PhD degree holders should be adjusted and appointed in both private and public universities with the aim to motivate them and promote research culture in the country.
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