



RESEARCH PAPER

Postgraduate Students' Perception toward University Teachers' Research Attitude

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyze the research attitude, interests, and capabilities of university teachers in Pakistan that assist to enhance the quality of higher education at university level. A sample consisting of 250 postgraduate students from six public sector universities was selected randomly from Pakistan. A questionnaire consisting of 20 items focusing on research attitude and professional development of university teachers was developed. The data were analyzed by using SPSS version XX to compute the university teachers' research attitude. The mean scores of male and female respondents on demographic basis were compared through t-values. It was concluded, based on the findings, that the university teachers lagging behind in publications. Some recommendations were made for university teachers to improve their research attitude at university level

Introduction

The main objectives of the higher education are effective learning and research aiming to prepare a generation by inculcating the capabilities of critical thinking and analyzing for the purpose to get awareness of their rights and duties towards nation building. The issue of higher education is gaining importance in modern era constantly (Palmer, Zajonc, & Scribner, 2010). The accelerated economic growth leading to demand for skilled manpower and to enhance competitiveness in a globalized economy has made the higher education sector a priority sector today. However, the sector is facing great challenges in terms of quality of education delivery, funding, research & development, employability of graduates and equitable access to the benefits of international cooperation (Barnett, 2011; Light, Calkins, & Cox, 2009). Therefore, universities need not only to produce graduates for earning but also to

support sophisticated research in a number of scientific and scholarly fields by producing sufficient manpower needed to meet the expanding economy and to compete successfully in the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century. The crucial issues such as equity and excellence are to be addressed emphatically (Smith, 2010). Various stakeholders or elements such as policy makers, educational reforms, educational policies, and teaching staff matter a lot to uplift the standard of education. The qualified teaching staff, with the high profile capabilities of teaching and research, is the cornerstone to improve the educational performance (Sharma, & Jyoti, 2009). The researchers, education leaders and policy makers agree that the quality research is a vital factor that assists to enhance the quality of learning at university level. Therefore, the present study intends to find out the research attitude of university teachers in Pakistan, which boosts up the standard of education eventually. In Pakistan, university education is at initial stage of major improvements. The funding for research in the departments of science, technology, engineering and health care for knowledge-based learning is getting restructured for emerging technologies in all sectors of education. The role of governments, managements, society and most important that of university teachers is considered vital for improving this system.

World-class universities require excellent faculty and students along with suitable culture to sustain and motivate them. Sufficient monetary benefits need to be enhanced sufficient to attract excellent scientists and scholars. Merit fellowships and grants, awarded to students; help to make advancements in research (Seidman, 2012). Teaching and research are equally significant to teach at university level and they are identical to a coin with two sides (Ramsden & Moses, 1992), whereas the Robbin's Report (1963) (as cited in Ramsden & Moses, 1992) stated that no difference is existing between teaching and research as they are overlapping activities. According to Tang and Chamberlain (1997), the academic staff must involve themselves in research activities to enhance the quality of education at university level. The previous researches (Feldman, 1987; Galbraith, & Merrill, 2012; Visser-Wijnveen, Van Driel, Van der Rijst, Verloop & Visser, 2009) reveal that there is a close relationship between teaching and research. According Ramsden and Moses (1992), both the promotion and salary of the university teaching staff are determined by the number of publications.

Advancement in science and technology underline the importance of the need for higher education. The attitude of individuals in these educational ages changed globally. It is required that teachers and students of higher education tend to do more in their respective areas as the awareness of technology brought modification of attitudes (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Tapscott & Williams, 2010). A study revealed that attitudes contain affective, cognitive, and behavioral components, so individuals realize the change happening in terms of research methodologies and the challenges for researchers (Hollins, Luna, & Lopez, 2013).

Teaching, research and social services are integral part of higher education and universities are premises to fulfill these aspects (Smart, & Paulsen, 2011). Research and development activities are known as the backbone to develop the economy of a nation. It is an admitted fact the commercialization and innovations are the output of the

research and development that help to accelerate the economic engine of a nation. Research activities and innovations are accomplished at the institutions of higher learning (Government of Pakistan, 2011). Unfortunately, as reported by United Nations Development Programme (2007), the number of researchers per million in Pakistani (75), during the period of 1990 to 2005, is significantly low as compared to other countries such as Egypt (493), India (119), Iran (1279), South Africa (307), Sri Lanka (128), Thailand (287) Turkey (341), and Malaysia (299).

The major objectives of higher education are to develop competency and potential in public to carry out their work at personnel and society level, progress understanding and thoughtful innovation in the learning and education, and furnish a cost-effectively successful and ethnically varied nation (Astin, 2012; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2011).

The degree of liking and disliking of a person is called attitude. These attitudes reflect constructive and unconstructive analysis about a person based on vision of that individual about any personality, thing or any event happened to place an impact in mind. Community can also be divergent or unsure toward the meaning of an entity when they analyze both positive and negative attitudes toward the query about anything. Various attempts have been made for defining attitude. According to Bohner and Dickel, 'it is quickness or promptness of the mind or individual to proceed or respond in a definite way' (Bohner & Dickel, 2011).

The community has very passionate attitudes towards higher education in terms of its importance and necessity to gain it. People are comfortable with the idea that higher education is becoming even more essential. It is likely to be a situation where higher education is perceived as more essential yet less accessible (Paul, 2012). It is also documented that activities and policies for amplification of the university faculty towards research and higher education are consistent with schemes at level of disciplines and departments. The academics and departments are stimulated and facilitated to develop ways to strengthen their interests towards research based teaching that are consistent with aim of the organization (Elsen, Visser-Wijnveen, Van der Rijst, & Van Driel, 2009)

Another study conducted by Borg (2007) revealed that the majority of the teachers do research due to the drives such as professional and pedagogical perfection, with less emphasis on external motives like promotion and employer pressure. On the other hand, over 40% of the teachers involve themselves in research activities because it was the part of the course requirements. Therefore, a formal course requirement can motivate teachers positively to engage themselves in research activities.

The universities selected for the sample possess considerable facilities and infrastructure to enhance the students' knowledge. The most of the departments consisted of highly qualified teaching staff with doctoral degrees from foreign universities and research experiences who are actively engaged in research activities. Recently, the rankings 2013 to 2017 of all public and private Pakistani universities have

been announced that was based on the quality and research to create an environment of competition among institutions. The average scores of the universities ranged between 61 and 68 out of 100. A few universities such as Quad-i-Azam University, Islamabad (General Medium Category), Pakistan Institute of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Islamabad (PIEAS) (Engineering and Technology Category), Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) Lahore (Business Education Category), Agha Khan University Karachi (Medical Category), and University of Agriculture Faisalabad (Agriculture/Veterinary Category) got 100 scores each out of 100 whereas Al-Khair University, Bhimber, Azad Jammu & Kashmir (General Small Category) earned lowest rank with 18.437 scores (Government of Pakistan, 2013). However, it is also worth mentioning that Time Higher Education internationally ranked five Pakistani Universities among top 500 universities of the world (Higher Education Commission, 2013).

Material and Methods

Participants

In 2018, there were 198 public and private universities and degree awarding institutions in Pakistan. There are 21 in Islamabad, 8 in Balochistan, 39 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 66 in Punjab, 55 in Sindh, 7 in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and 2 in Gilgit-Baltistan (Higher Education Commission, 2018). The majority (85%) students enrolled in public sector universities (Government of Pakistan, 2002). Therefore, the current study focused on public sector universities. Six public sector universities namely; University of the Punjab Lahore, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, University of Sindh Jamshoro Hyderabad, Gomal University Dera Ismail Khan, and University of Balochistan Quetta were selected through convenient method. Two hundred and fifty (250) postgraduate students were randomly selected from five departments such as Applied Psychology, Education, English, Pharmacy, and Physics, for the study from these universities. Out of 250 sample, two hundred (80%) of the respondents were males whereas fifty (20%) respondents were females. The proportion of academic staff such as BS, MA/MSc, M.Phil/MS, and PhD students was 120 (48%), 70 (28%), 35 (14%), 25 (10%) respectively in this sample. As regards the credentials of the participants; 50 (20%), 100 (40%), 80 (32%), and 20 (8%) belonged to 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th semester of their respective classes. The age of the participants ranged between 18 and 47 years with a mean of 24.7 years, whereas the average age of BS, MA/MSc, M.Phil/MS, and PhD students was 19.7, 22.1, 26.4, and 31.5 years respectively.

Research Tool

Keeping in mind the objectives of the study, a questionnaire consisting of 20 items was developed. Different types of items focusing on research publication, perceptions, research attitude, and supervision of research scholars were included in the questionnaire with possible answer options. The Cronbach Alpha value was calculated by using SPSS version XX. The calculated Cronbach Alpha value (0.831) indicated high reliability of the research tool.

Procedure

The questionnaire developed for the study was used to gather data. The participants were requested to respond to each item. Different possible options for each item were provided on the questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed by using electronic mail. Some of the respondents were found reluctant in providing information whereas some of them were found busy being unable to spare time for filling up the questionnaire. In this situation, the constant reminders were sent by the respondents for pursuance. By using this strategy, the respondents filled and returned questionnaires. Therefore, the researchers succeed to obtain 83 % return rate.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Respondents' views regarding university teachers' research activities

Sr. #	Item	Agreed %	Disagreed %	Total frequency
1	University teachers' role as teacher	95.76	4.24	250
2	University teachers' role as supervisor of research students	76.87	23.13	250
3	University teachers' capability of administration.	63.35	36.65	250
4	University teachers' command over curriculum	42.57	57.43	250
5	University teachers' training to conduct research activities	27.88	72.12	247
6	Teachers' expertise to analyze data quantitative data	41.73	58.27	249
7	University teachers' abilities to analyze qualitative data	39.9	60.1	250
8	Teachers' command over searching material	86.83	13.17	248
9	Teachers' access to instruments and equipments provided by the university for research work	65.76	34.24	247
10	Availability of books and materials for teachers	79.9	20.1	249
11	Access to the services of information technology provided by the university	78.86	21.14	249
12	Availability of funding for research activities	77.57	22.43	248
13	University teachers' collaboration with national and international universities for research purpose	45.54	54.46	247

14	University teachers' publication in national and international journals	49.51	50.49	249
15	Teachers' research addresses socioeconomic Issues.	55.78	44.22	250
Overall perspective paired Sample t test		Mean 61.85 Standard Deviation 20.26	Mean 38.15 Standard Deviation 20.26	t= .019

According to the data presented in Table 1, the findings of the study indicate that the majority of the respondents agreed that the university teachers' key responsibilities are to teach and supervise the students in their research activities along with an ability of administration. However, more than fifty per cent university teachers are facing problems in terms of lack of professional training, using statistical methods, and analytical abilities to enhance their research and professional skills. More than two third respondents were satisfied with the services, facilities and infrastructure such as internet, library books & materials, funding for research and services regarding information technology provided to the university teachers. Contrarily, about 50% respondents disagreed that their teachers have collaboration with national and international universities for research purpose to develop collaboration with national and multinational institutions, but they believe that the research conducted in Pakistan is addressing the local socio-economic issues. A significant difference was found between agree and disagree sets of responses in favor of the disagree side (agree mean 61.85, disagree mean 38.15, and $t = .019$).

Conclusion

Higher Education Commission (2010) has already stressed that in its report that it would not be possible to enhance the quality of higher education and research without the highly qualified teaching staff having pedagogical and professional skills. Furthermore, according to postgraduates, the majority of teachers published their articles in national journals and lack of international publication exposure. Furthermore, the university teachers are getting fewer opportunities to supervise M. Phil and PhD students. These opportunities are known as useful vehicles to boost up the exposure in teaching and research publications as well (Krauss, & Ismail, 2010). It is an admitted fact that the key roles of the university teachers is to teach, guide and supervise the research students but, as the results of the present study indicates that the university teachers lack of professional, pedagogical training and skills, using statistical methods to analyze data, and analytical capabilities to enhance their abilities. On the other hand, a considerable number of respondents are satisfied with the services, facilities and infrastructure, and funding for research purposes. In 2002, funding for research was Rs 0.04 billion (\$ 670,000) with the average of Rs 0.98 million (\$ 16,260) for each institution (Government of Pakistan. 2002). University teachers have also dearth of opportunity for collaboration with national and international universities for research purpose. The meager opportunities for research collaboration

create hurdles in carrying out the research activities for better research output. University should also take initiatives to develop collaboration with national and international universities of high ranking for research purpose. They should also construct mutual collaboration with national and multinational institutions to enhance the students' knowledge and skills at university level.

Implications

The university teachers are required to get involved in research activities to increase their research publications because not only teaching but also the research publications are the main responsibilities of university teachers. National Curriculum Revision Committee headed by the higher education commission needs to take step to revise curricula as majority of the respondents dissatisfied with the old curricula taught at university level. Furthermore, the university teachers need to get expertise in using statistical methods for analysis of data and critical abilities that are the basic needs for research publications.

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