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## **Education Policy of Higher Education Commission Pakistan in the Context of Islamic Education and Legal Global Policy Management**

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**Abstract:** *This research article investigates the education policy implemented by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, particularly emphasizing its congruence with sustainable development goals. In light of various global challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation, and social inequality, it is imperative for educational institutions to assume a central role in advancing sustainable development. The present research examines the existing policies and practices implemented by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in*

*Pakistan, with a focus on assessing their effectiveness in promoting sustainability within the higher education domain. Furthermore, the research provides a comprehensive analysis of the recommendations aimed at further improving the incorporation of sustainable development principles into the policies of the HEC, with the ultimate objective of effectively contributing to the nation's long-term socio-economic and environmental objectives.*

**Keywords:** *Higher Education Commission; HEC; Pakistan; Sustainable development; educational policies*

### **Introduction**

The concept of sustainable development has become of paramount importance on a global scale, as nations across the world endeavor to attain a harmonious equilibrium between economic advancement, social justice, and environmental preservation. Within this particular framework, education emerges as a pivotal catalyst for sustainable development, given its inherent capacity to cultivate individuals who possess the requisite knowledge, competencies, and ethical principles necessary for the establishment of a sustainable trajectory (Khushik & Diemer, 2018). This research article examines the alignment between the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan and sustainable development principles, as well as the potential for enhancing its policies to foster a more sustainable higher education system.

### **Sustainable Development and Education in Pakistan**

The interconnection between sustainable development and education is evident in Pakistan, as the imperative to achieve socio-economic advancement and environmental preservation grows in significance. Pakistan recognizes the crucial significance of education in attaining the global objectives outlined in the United Nations' Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs), as a signatory to these goals (Hinduja, Mohammad, Siddiqui, Noor, & Hussain, 2023). The nation confronts a range of complex issues, encompassing poverty, disparities between genders, the swift growth of urban areas, the deterioration of the environment, and the consequences of climate change. Education plays a pivotal role in equipping individuals and communities with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively tackle these challenges. Through the implementation of inclusive education policies, enhancing the standard of education, and cultivating continuous learning prospects, Pakistan can effectively empower its populace with the essential knowledge and competencies required to actively contribute towards sustainable development (Raza et al., 2023). Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge the significant contribution of higher education institutions in cultivating upcoming leaders, researchers, and professionals who possess the ability to foster innovation and execute sustainable methodologies within diverse domains of society. Through the incorporation of sustainable development principles within its education policies and curriculum, Pakistan has the potential to cultivate an informed and conscientious populace dedicated to sustainable practices, social equity, and environmental stewardship. This endeavor would establish the groundwork for a future that is both sustainable and resilient (Saqib et al., 2020).

### **The role of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan in terms of Sustainable development**

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan was established in 2002 and functions as the principal regulatory authority for higher education institutions within the nation. Within the framework of sustainable development, the Higher Education

Commission (HEC) assumes a pivotal role in shaping the educational domain to harmonize with the socio-economic and environmental objectives of the nation. Curriculum development and research are prominent domains in which the Higher Education Commission (HEC) actively contributes to the promotion of sustainable development (Kalsoom, Qureshi, & Khanam, 2019). The commission possesses the ability to exert influence upon higher education institutions, compelling them to integrate sustainable development concepts, including but not limited to environmental conservation, social justice, and economic viability, within their academic curricula. The HEC promotes the incorporation of courses and research projects focused on sustainability, aiming to cultivate a cohort of graduates who possess the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively address urgent sustainability issues in Pakistan (Habib, Khalil, Khan, & Zahid, 2021).

In addition, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) actively supports and encourages research and innovation in the field of sustainable development by providing funding opportunities and establishing collaborative partnerships. The HEC promotes the active involvement of academia in sustainable development solutions by providing support for research projects that concentrate on sustainable technologies, resource management, and social development (Kalsoom, Qureshi, & Khanam, 2018). Furthermore, the commission has the potential to foster partnerships with global universities and organizations, thereby facilitating the exchange of knowledge and promoting the adoption of best practices in the realm of sustainable higher education. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) enhances the capabilities of higher education institutions to participate in research endeavors aimed at tackling the unique

sustainability challenges of the nation and making valuable contributions to the global repository of knowledge on sustainable development (S. Khan & Khan, 2018).

Notwithstanding these endeavors, the HEC encounters obstacles in effectively incorporating sustainable development principles within the higher education system. The challenges that must be addressed include constraints on available resources, administrative obstacles, and the imperative to enhance stakeholder awareness. Nevertheless, through persistent dedication and deliberate strategizing, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) possesses the capacity to guide Pakistan's higher education domain towards a future that is both sustainable and influential. This would result in the cultivation of graduates who can make substantial contributions to the nation's journey towards sustainable development (Burian et al., 2017).

### **Analysis of Current Education Policy in Pakistan**

The examination of the present education policy in Pakistan, specifically with regards to higher education, presents a varied depiction in relation to its conformity with sustainable development principles. Although the government has acknowledged the significance of sustainable development, there exists a requirement for a more extensive and tangible incorporation of these principles within the education policy framework (A. M. Khan, Jamshaid, & Ramzan, 2019). The current policies exhibit a deficiency in providing explicit guidelines to foster the inclusion of sustainability-related subjects and research within institutions of higher education. The existence of this gap becomes apparent due to the insufficient attention given to curricula, faculty training, and research funding opportunities that prioritise sustainability. In order to enhance the correlation between education and sustainable development, it is

crucial for policymakers to priorities the integration of sustainability-focused courses and projects across various academic disciplines. This would guarantee that graduates possess not only technical proficiency but also a comprehensive comprehension of sustainable practices, empowering them to act as catalysts for constructive transformation within society (Khadim, Qureshi, & Khan, 2021). Moreover, the analysis underscores the necessity of enhanced coordination and collaboration between the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and other pertinent governmental departments and agencies tasked with sustainable development endeavors. The existing education policy frequently functions independently of other sectoral policies, impeding the adoption of a synergistic approach towards sustainability. In order to address this challenge, it is imperative to establish a comprehensive and interconnected policy framework (Kalsoom, Khanam, & Quraishi, 2017). This framework should facilitate collaboration between the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and pertinent entities such as the Ministry of Climate Change, Ministry of Environment, and other relevant stakeholders. The aim is to foster a unified and coordinated approach towards achieving sustainable development objectives. Furthermore, it is imperative that the policy places emphasis on augmenting public consciousness and involvement concerning matters pertaining to sustainable development. Through the facilitation of community engagement and the cultivation of collaborations between institutions of higher education and local communities, the education policy has the potential to cultivate a sense of ownership and accountability among individuals in their pursuit of sustainability endeavours. By implementing these measures, the existing education policy in Pakistan can be effectively harmonized with the objectives

of sustainable development goals, thereby fostering a future that is more sustainable and resilient for the nation (Zahid, Ur Rahman, Ali, Habib, & Shad, 2021).

### **Sustainable Development Initiatives in Higher Education**

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the implementation of sustainable development initiatives within higher education institutions in Pakistan. This surge can be attributed to the nation's growing recognition of the necessity to tackle environmental, social, and economic challenges (Nizam et al., 2020). Academic institutions are making notable efforts to integrate sustainable practises throughout their campuses and educational programmes. A key area of emphasis has been the promotion of environmentally sustainable practises, including the adoption of renewable energy sources, the implementation of water conservation measures, and the encouragement of waste reduction and recycling initiatives (Hinduja et al., 2023).

Universities and colleges are incorporating sustainable development principles into diverse academic disciplines within their curricula, thereby cultivating a cohort of graduates who possess a heightened awareness and concern for environmental issues (Kalsoom et al., 2017). The prevalence of courses focused on sustainable agriculture, renewable energy technologies, environmental law, and climate change adaptation is on the rise. Furthermore, academic institutions are actively promoting and supporting research endeavours in disciplines related to sustainability, thereby fostering the development of novel ideas and approaches to tackle urgent environmental challenges (S. Khan & Khan, 2018).

In addition, higher education institutions are actively fostering social sustainability by implementing community engagement

programmes. It is strongly encouraged for students to engage in volunteer initiatives that aim to tackle societal issues, including but not limited to poverty alleviation, universal education, and improved healthcare accessibility in underserved regions. These initiatives have a dual impact, as they not only yield advantages for local communities but also cultivate a sense of social responsibility within students (Nousheen, Zai, Waseem, & Khan, 2020).

Collaborative efforts and alliances among academic institutions, governmental bodies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and private enterprises are increasingly being observed as means to promote sustainable development in Pakistan. By means of these collaborations, knowledge and resources are combined to cultivate initiatives that yield enduring effects on the country's objectives pertaining to sustainability (Ali et al., 2021).

In addition, universities are prioritizing green campus initiatives through the implementation of energy-efficient infrastructure, the encouragement of public transportation usage, and the establishment of green spaces that foster biodiversity. The implementation of a comprehensive approach to sustainability not only serves to mitigate the ecological impact of educational institutions, but also fosters a heightened sense of environmental responsibility among students and staff (Habib et al., 2021).

In order to promote sustainability, educational institutions are establishing committees and task forces dedicated to sustainability. These entities are responsible for developing and overseeing the execution of sustainable policies and practises. These committees regularly perform audits to assess the efficacy of ongoing initiatives and identify opportunities for enhancement (Zahid et al., 2021).

### **Challenges and Barriers**



The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan encounters various obstacles and impediments in its efforts to foster sustainable development within the nation's higher education system. One of the primary challenges is the restricted availability of financial resources and the constraints imposed by budgetary limitations, which frequently impede the execution of sustainable practises and initiatives. The achievement of sustainable development necessitates substantial allocations of resources towards research, infrastructure, and technology, which may not always be readily accessible. Furthermore, a notable deficiency exists in the level of awareness and comprehension regarding sustainable development among various stakeholders, such as universities, faculty members, and students. This lack of awareness presents significant obstacles when attempting to incorporate sustainability principles into educational curricula and institutional operations (Waqas, Rehman, & Rehman, 2019). Furthermore, the socio-economic challenges faced by the nation, including but not limited to poverty, inequality, and population growth, have the potential to shift focus and allocate resources away from endeavours aimed at promoting sustainability. Moreover, the lack of comprehensive policies and regulations that specifically target sustainable development in higher education leads to uncertainty and a dearth of explicit guidance. The successful resolution of these challenges necessitates a collective endeavour involving the Higher Education Commission (HEC), universities, governmental bodies, and civil society to accord precedence to sustainable development and cultivate a sustainable ethos within the realm of higher education. This involves the promotion of green initiatives, the integration of sustainability-focused research, and the enhancement of the comprehension of sustainable practises in order to guarantee a

more promising and ecologically aware future for Pakistan (Ahmad, Ali, Gul, & Ali, 2019).

### **Recommendations for Policy Enhancement**

In order to advance sustainable development within the realm of higher education throughout Pakistan, it is imperative for the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to prioritize the implementation of a comprehensive array of policy enhancements. The commission should give precedence to the incorporation of sustainability principles and practises into the curricula of all academic disciplines, fostering a comprehensive understanding among students of environmental, social, and economic challenges, and motivating them to address these issues (Khurshid, Noureen, & Hussain, 2020). The attainment of this objective could be facilitated by the implementation of specialised educational programmes, interactive workshops, and research initiatives that focus on the principles and practises of sustainable development. Additionally, it is recommended that the Higher Education Commission (HEC) establish collaborative alliances with various stakeholders such as industries, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and governmental entities. This strategic approach aims to cultivate research and innovation in the realm of sustainable technologies and practises. Through the facilitation of collaborative projects and the provision of funding incentives, the commission has the potential to expedite the implementation of sustainable solutions aimed at addressing the urgent environmental challenges faced by the country (Rasool & Khurshid, 2023). Furthermore, it is imperative for the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to actively promote the adoption of environmentally sustainable infrastructures and practises within universities. This can be achieved by advocating for

the utilization of renewable energy sources, implementing waste reduction strategies, and establishing sustainable campus policies. This initiative has the potential to serve as a model for the broader education sector, fostering the adoption of sustainable practises among students and staff (Rehman, Lashari, & Abbas, 2023).

### **Conclusion**

The Education Policy of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in Pakistan, contextual within the framework of sustainable development, represents a significant stride towards the advancement and enduring sustainability of the nation. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has exhibited a forward-thinking stance by emphasizing the importance of sustainable development goals in the realm of higher education. This approach aims to foster the growth of a generation characterised by both expertise and awareness. By prioritizing environmentally responsible practices, social inclusivity, and research focused on addressing urgent challenges, the policy seeks to provide students with the essential skills and knowledge to foster a more equitable and sustainable future. Through the promotion of academic collaboration, innovation, and the cultivation of a culture centred around critical thinking, the Education Policy establishes a foundation for an empowered citizenry. This citizenry is equipped with the ability to propel positive transformations and make valuable contributions to the nation's ongoing pursuit of sustainable development. Nevertheless, the achievement of the complete potential of this transformative policy heavily relies on the effective execution and persistent dedication to monitoring and adaptability.

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