

are having a wonderful effect on the economy. Most but not all, of this research lacks credibility. It has not been done by independent economists, has not been verified by independent peer review process, and has not been accepted by independent readers. Furthermore, these researchers and research bodies hit them cannot, to a large extent, provide the space that is needed for independent quality research. They have their budgets to meet, their deadlines to defend, and their ideological castles to defend. The little room for disinterested and independent work here.

One is not arguing that good work has never happened under these conditions, or can never happen. That is not the point. The point is that in a majority of cases and a majority of times it is not quality of research that is being kept in mind. The incentives are not aligned to produce quality and that is not even the aim. Hence it is no wonder that most of the time we will not have good research coming out.

Countries that produce quality research have entrenched it in a very different way. There are research institutes, both in the public and the private sector, that have enough endowment, from public resources or through philanthropy, that they can hire people to produce high quality research that need not and does not have either an immediate application or a blatant ideological slant to defend. At the same time there are universities, again both in the public and the private sector, that have endowments, research grants as well as yearly donations, that provide them the space to structure the incentives of economists (and all other types of researchers) to focus on quality. The quality is not checked by any bureaucrat, or government office, it is checked through ensuring that a strict peer review process whets research before it gets established. Quality research has to come out in books or journals or technical papers. All of these require peer review, and all published research is open to public and expert criticism.

In the above discussion one should not forget the role that the 'peers' play in ensuring the quality of work. If such a body is not present, is of low quality, or is tied only to the type of institutions that had been mentioned earlier, they will not be able to adequately perform the task of checking quality. So, apart from having the right institutions and incentive structures, there is a critical mass of 'peers' that is then going to be needed to ensure quality output. This is not going to be easy for Pakistan to achieve, even if we try for it.

Almost every week we get news from Islamabad or one of the provincial governments that the government of Pakistan is looking for experts in WTO negotiations, industrial restructuring, government budget management, devolution, poverty alleviation, and what not. The government wants experts who can help in making better policies and in ensuring implementation. At the same time, we know that there are not even 30 or 40 decent economists working in the entire country. And we have also shown that there are no incentives for them to either develop expertise in specific areas, or to do quality work in an area. At best they can either produce lame reports that support one policy or the other or show how good the government has been. Their incentives, their need for generating sufficient incomes for themselves and the needs of institutions that hire them are integrated in a way that quality of research is not even an agenda item. Yet, when it comes to lamenting, everyone laments the fact that quality research does not happen. Can the public sector, or public sector in partnership with the private