**Following or fooling HEC criteria**

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October 29, 2020

Higher Education Sector is lead by Higher Education Commission which is responsible to formulate and facilitate implementation of guidelines pertaining to programs, institutions, faculty, students, and other relevant themes. The institution are recognized by the HEC under cabinet criteria for establishment of Universities, the guidelines requires fulfillment of infrastructure, faculty and other resources required for establishment of University or Higher Education Institution. The interested individuals in public and private sector mostly fulfill documentary requirements and get No Objection Certificate (NOC) from HEC. The requirements of NOC are fulfilled for time being till the visit of team, the space is hired and shown in the name of the institution. The money in terms of endowment is shown in documents which may be verified for specific period. Most of the times, the institution once open with professional programs is expected to comply with HEC guidelines for programs as well as of professional councils. The faculty members and supporting staff are hired for a semester and if the low paid faculty is available for next semester then existing one is fired without notice.

The process of such hiring and firing continues, some of the faculty members who are habitual of such working environment will try to earn benefits from students and for that they will give tasks and assignments against which gifts and treats are accepted without any reason. The limited complaints about harassment to female students are also observed. Some of the private sector Universities will not entertain such complaints due to lack of mechanism and reputation. In such situation, either student is facilitated in terms of fee and marks or they will be given assurance for effortless way out for degree by giving favors etc. In such situation student will be most of times focus on earning degree in limited time with less effort. Some of the private institutions will enroll students in enormous number in different degree programs for earning more money through them.

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There are also students who are already employed somewhere, and they need degree to get promotion or other financial benefits based on that degree. The target of such students will be to get degree within minimum time and for that they will get ready made assignments from the market on payment. As students are not given any chance to write their reflection in form of online submissions etc such written assignment land back in shops for Pakoras and Samosas. The easy-going students will try to find friends and relatives of teachers who are teaching them in degree programs for getting good marks etc.

The HEC’s Institutional Performance Evaluation process is carried out for post-graduate programs at all public and private sector Universities and it is also based on documentary evidence. The University or HEI where it is carried out will be given forms for filling the required information and enclosing the relevant documents. The desk officers at HEC evaluate these documents and prepare working paper for members of the IPE who are mostly senior Professors and educationists. The visit is pre-planned therefore, most of things will be in order and University also have information about the members and their priorities. The reports are prepared after visit and same are shared with the institution. In most the countries like UK, Malaysia, and Turkey these are placed on website for public which resultantly cause a compel institutions to raise their quality. The recent education policy of India has made it mandatory to record video of the visit and place it on website.

It is observed that during IPE visits most of the objections are not related to the policy or standards but are of general nature. The meeting with students and teachers is not of any benefit as some employees will also be part of that interaction and members will not be able to identify them from group of students. As student know them very well, therefore, they will not speak anything against them. The system for such visits needs to be revised with inclusion of technology. The Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) is being developed through World Bank’s Higher Education Development Program (HEDP), in future it will provide lot of information about students, programs, faculty and institutional arrangements.

Some of the Universities who hire and keep brief case professors will be facing difficulty in submitting their applications for program recognition which requires details of faculty members and if faculty member is reflected in two or more institutions then it will not be possible for the institution to get approval of the program. In the same manner students who are enrolled in multiple programs will be easy to identify and there will be mechanism to monitor their progress. The HEMIS will help in decision making at HEC level as well as at Institutional level about scope of programs, number of students in the program and institutional arrangements, till the full-fledged launch of such system, some institutions will follow HEC guidelines in true letter and spirit and many will continue to fool HEC criteria and standards.

There is a need to develop voluntary compliance mechanism for HEC criteria and standards with clear objectives, capacity building of the stakeholders on regular basis. The commitment and dedication of educational leadership is expected for developing such culture. The institutional law needs to be updated for accommodating new initiatives undertaken over the time. Automation of all processes is required.

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