**Labor fallacy and higher education**

[**Enem Ali Abbas**](https://nation.com.pk/contributor/enem-ali-abbas)

August 09, 2021

Whatever a child learns at school is mostly related to his personal development, it prepares him to row the boat for his own survival. As soon as this child enters the phase of tertiary education, his development is not considered entirely personal anymore. Instead he becomes an inclusive investment for the society. That’s where numbers fail but quality does the trick. With the depreciating human resource quality, it is not entirely about the unemployment ratio in a state anymore.

Fortunately, the issue has been identified and the provincial government in Punjab is finally tapping the untapped segments of educational innovations. The Higher Education Department (HED) in Punjab has recently initiated a number of measures for the capacity building of teachers and students of public colleges. The most critical step to improve the quality of education is to enhance capacities of the teachers themselves. After a detailed assessment exercise and consultations with key stakeholders, a comprehensive strategy for professional development of college faculty has been prepared. The strategy includes induction training for newly recruited teachers, promotion linked trainings covering grade 17 to grade 20 teachers and education leadership training for the principals. The strategy also provides for a first ever subject wise continuous professional development program to be implemented at the district level. Updated promotion linked trainings and education leadership training for principals have already been initiated in partnership with the Punjab Higher Education Commission. A feedback mechanism has also been incorporated in the training program to improve the training contents regularly.

[Pakistan COVID-19 deaths exceed 24,000, passing grim milestone](https://nation.com.pk/10-Aug-2021/pakistan-covid-19-deaths-exceed-24-000-passing-grim-milestone)

Recently, special efforts were made by the HED to introduce a dedicated module on ‘Life Skills’ to be taught along with other subjects, for personality development and grooming of college students. This strategically designed module aims to equip students with 21st century skills and it includes topics such as motivation, self-esteem, stress management, active listening and critical thinking along with hands on activity exercises. Resource material has been developed to support these activities as well. Online resources have been shared with teachers. In order to sustain these capacity building efforts in the long term, a state-of-the-art Centre for College Faculty Development has been included in the ADP 2021-22.

This priority alignment has been off the priority charts for so long that it did impact the quality of higher education over the last few decades. Resultantly, the HR inventory with insufficient skill set and organisational acumen has been struggling for professional accommodation in the corporate sector. Ultimately, run-of-the-mill resource makes these organisations suffer; we have graduates but we don’t have entrepreneurs, scientists, engineers, or researchers to think outside the box or dare introducing innovations. However, with the current set of capacity building guidelines and strategy in place, quality of education is an integral part of the reforms agenda.

[N Korea condemns US-South Korean drills, pledges to develop better first strike weapons](https://nation.com.pk/10-Aug-2021/n-korea-condemns-us-south-korean-drills-pledges-to-develop-better-first-strike-weapons)

All this is done with the ideology of producing the kind of talent and well-groomed HR that wouldn’t just exhaust the available employment opportunities when given a chance but it shall create more opportunities, build the economy and back national growth. The number of jobs or opportunities in the market would never be fixed as the market is restricted only when the HR quality is restricted. Therefore, the market potential would be unleashed when there’s high quality HR available to maximise and utilise these prospects. This explains the lump of labor fallacy and the defying force–i.e. quality.

Now that the government has figured out a way for quality rejuvenation and retention, the HED has made great strides in developing new projects as well. Five universities have already been established and operationalised in Mianwali, Chakwal, Rawalpindi, Murree and Multan. Eleven additional universities have already been approved and the department shall be working on another 5 new universities in the current financial year. It is working on enhancing the access to higher education by deploying hub and spoke model to realise the dream of developing at least one state-of the-art university in each district of Punjab.

[Amid pressure, Biden welcomes new review of 9/11 documents](https://nation.com.pk/10-Aug-2021/amid-pressure-biden-welcomes-new-review-of-9-11-documents)

Provincial Minister for Higher Education, Raja Yassir Humayun Sarfraz, is leading the department with a three-pronged policy framework–i.e. quality, access and relevance. The development figures also substantiate the claim of quality reforms initiated in the department. Twenty-five universities of Punjab made it to the lists of multinational and international rankings during the last three years. There were 6 universities in QS Asia Ranking and 3 universities in QS World Ranking, previously in 2018. Now, there are 11 universities of Punjab in QS Asia Ranking and 5 universities of Punjab in QS World Ranking. Two years ago, Punjab had 3 universities in The Impact Ranking and it has 21 universities in the list now. If the government stays focused towards quality enhancement through capacity building of teachers and students, then it would actually set an example for other provinces of Pakistan.