

# Implication Of Sustainable Development Goals For Quality Education In Institutions Of Higher Education In Pakistan

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## Abstract

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) placed a strong emphasis on ensuring that everyone has access to education by reducing poverty. All nations, particularly emerging ones like Pakistan, had made important contributions to achieving these MDGs. After that, the (UN) unveiled its 2030 (SDGs) goals, the goal of the current study were to examine how education are currently carrying out their mandates to provide "excellent education to encourage in accordance with Pakistan's (HEC) rules. Crucial to guarantee supportable in order to give next generations access to high-quality education. Using a qualitative methodology, the heads of departments' perspectives were solicited for this study. Regarding the sustainability initiatives used. All of the department heads from all of the faculties of four general Universities of Karachi, Pakistan, made up the study's population. whereas the purposive sampling approach was used, and the sample was composed of the deans of the faculties of arts and social sciences. An open-ended, semi-structured interview technique including questions was devised for data gathering. To assess the viewpoints of all department heads and improve the standard of higher education, thematic analysis was used. According to the findings, most university administrators agreed to execute sustainable goals to the best of their abilities. Furthermore, the biggest barriers to achieving these objectives at their institutes were a lack of resources and competence.

## Introduction

After its introduction in early 2000, the millennium development goals had made good progress towards achievement of its goal of easy access to education for all. One of the main causes in its implementation was poverty, the response of the world including Pakistan was significant, however quality of education was a big question mark. The standard of education in developing countries was not up to par as school going children were unable to read and write their abilities in mathematics were also hopeless( Tanaka &Taguchi, 2019). To address those issues for coming generation sustainability was the need of the time.

In the context of the scenario sustainability can be defined as the continuous educational development without compromising the standard of education. Sustainable development is meant to bring durable changes in the system.( Paul and Didham 2014). To achieve the prime objectives of education for all, the SDGs were the backbone and a major factor in utilizing the foreign aid for the purpose.( Moyer & Hedden.(2020). This research was carried to measure the progress of programs under SDGs for the improvement the quality of education.

The government of Pakistan is also aware of the importance of SDGs and it also adopted

the goals as important agenda in the early 2016.( Siddiqui 2018)

in this regard commission of planning is in touch with the public and private sector for the achievement of this goal. This research was meant to find the answer to the following question.

- i. How to reinforce quality education through sustainable growth in Pakistan?

Education is the matter of life and death for a nation, so it is the prime objectives of educational institutes to provide quality education in order to produce the future leaders of the nation. Quality education plays a significant role in the overall development and progress of a country (Ali 2018). In the context of Pakistan despite investing more capital the achievement of the quality education was a big problem, although major steps have been taken like 5 year reform plans and strict supervision by HEC, some positive outcomes were encouraging like the huge increase in enrollment, but funding needs for higher education remain low as compared to the international standards. In the words of (Nhamo & Mjimbe 2020) the world leaders adopted SDGs as a part of national agenda 2030 as it is the only and most effective way in the elevation of the poverty, the knowledge based economy will not only help in poverty eradication but also provide the environment against the social injustice and the other goals of SDGs.

For the achievement of the quality education the root causes need to be addressed they are identified as follows

- i. Lack of quality and trained teachers.
- ii. Weak and outdated curriculum.
- iii. The investment on the part of public and private sector.
- iv. Gap and difference between urban and rural areas.

First of all no area can prosper without the financial input so the investment needs to be up in more finance needs to be invested specially for the conductance of workshops and different seminars for the training of the teachers to keep them updated about the new trends and

techniques. De Leo (2012) concluded after the analysis of international documents that value based approaches are the need of the time without it SDGs cannot be achieved, these approaches develop learners emotionally, physically, morally, socially and most importantly spiritually. As stated by the SDGs(2015-2030) learners attain knowledge for the promotion of sustainable development through education to be a better human being, human equality in all aspects, tolerance, acceptance of others culture and opinions.

One of the reason why teachers need continuous training rather than appointing new teachers because they have the experience of human interaction specially learners that come from different cultures and classes. (Peng, McNess, Thomas, Wu, Zhang and Tian(2014). According to Knoepfel, Logan and Keiser(2005) for sustainable development quality and up to date teaching, and a sound faculty matters is mandatory Hinduja, P., & Hussain, A. (2023).. According to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a successful educational system produces resilient people who continue to study beyond graduation, take on future responsibilities, and flourish in a changing society and environment.

The prioritization and categorization of SDGs “equitable quality in education by the government of Pakistan showed its sincerity, seriousness and willingness to keep it as its agenda ( government of Pakistan (2018) moreover the HEC keep a vigilant eye for the achievement and synchronization of SDGs with the UN policy of 2015.

This study was taken keenly by the researchers as quality sustainable education is the way for the developing nations in order to compete with the standards of education of developed countries.

### 1.1 Objectives of the Study

This study was meant to explore the SDGs fourth goal ‘ equitable quality education’ for all. The current scenario the steps taken by

different institutions were focused in this study. The main objectives of the study were

1. The progress so far in terms of curriculum and teacher training programs, their efforts and activities in achieving goal of quality education for all.
2. The hindrances in the achievement of the goal.

## 1.2 Significance of the Study

This study would proved to be a helping hand for the higher education of Pakistan, the quality of education for the achievement of SDGs 4 would be adopted by the HEC.

The higher education institutions would also be benefited as they can take measures in the improvement of existing curriculum the hindrances faced by their faculty members in the achievement of the goals and accordingly rectifying them.

Students may also be beneficiary as end users.

## 2.Literature Review

The developing nations are facing multiple global issues specially in education, challenging economic conditions social and cultural differences that prove to be a big sat back and hindrances to keep up with the developed countries (Rieckmann, 2012).

The goal of quality of education for all is the major focus after the development of SDGs under UN in 2015 to assist developing countries. Education serves as a key for the country as it enables it to compete with the world specially with the more advance countries. According to Kalsoom, Qureshi and Kanam (2018) building knowledge competencies for the sustainable development is not only essential for the progress but also for the survival in this fast-paced world. Among UN seventeen SDGs the top priority should be health, financial stability through solid economy, quality education climate and communities' control. For countries like Pakistan, it is inevitable to implement sustainable procurement to lessen the costs of health energy and environmental this should be done by using of modern technology for the

achievement of these goals sustainable quality education is a must for future generations. Zaidi, Mirza, Hou and Ashraf (2019) The most important individuals are HEIs as they can contribute to transforming societies by means of sustainable quality education, they can include environmental education in their existing curriculum level. it is the need of time to incorporate SDG as essential. Educate the educators was an initiative under which refresher courses and programs were conducted to improve the efficiency of them. The Global Education Monitoring Report 2020 by UNESCO (2020) discusses the importance of inclusive education for achieving sustainable development. It provides an overview of the current state of education, including progress made and remaining challenges, and recommends actions for achieving education for all. Ahmed, A., & Hussain, I. (2020). They argue that higher education institutions have a crucial role to play in promoting sustainable development in the country, particularly with regard to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The authors identify several key areas where higher education can make a significant contribution to sustainable development in Pakistan, including research, curriculum development, and community engagement. The paper also highlights some of the challenges facing higher education institutions in this regard, such as limited resources and inadequate infrastructure. The United Nations' Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) outlines the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030, including SDG 4, which focuses on quality education. The document presents the vision, principles, and goals for achieving sustainable development and emphasizes the importance of education as a key factor in its realization. Hassan and Shahzad, (2021) told that education institutions have a unique opportunity to contribute to sustainable development in the country, through their research, teaching, and outreach activities. They provide a detailed analysis of the ways in which higher education

institutions can support the achievement of specific SDGs, including SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), and SDG 13 (climate action). They also examine some of the challenges facing higher education institutions in Pakistan as they work to achieve the SDGs, such as limited funding and a lack of government support. Rashid, & Abbas, (2019) said that higher education institutions have a critical role to play in promoting sustainable development in the country, through their research, teaching, and outreach activities. They also highlight some of the challenges facing higher education institutions in Pakistan as they work to achieve the SDGs, such as limited funding and a lack of government support. Shah (2020). Shah explores the role of higher education in promoting sustainable development in Pakistan, with a focus on the SDGs. He detailed analysis of the ways in which higher education institutions can support the achievement of specific SDGs, including SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and SDG 15 (life on land). He argues that higher education institutions have a crucial role to play in promoting sustainable development in the country, through their research, teaching, and outreach activities. Zaman and Ali (2019) explored the current state of higher education for sustainable development in Pakistan, identifying the gaps and challenges and providing recommendations for improvement. They also highlight the need for a multidisciplinary approach, inclusive curriculum, research and collaboration among different stakeholders to promote sustainable development. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) SDG 4 brief (2017) provides an overview of the importance of quality education for sustainable development and highlights the challenges and opportunities in achieving this goal. The brief discusses the role of education in achieving other SDGs and identifies key areas for action. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) Digital Economy Report 2019 (2019) provides an overview of the

digital economy, its impact on value creation and capture, and its implications for developing countries. The report discusses the opportunities and challenges of digitalization and highlights the need for policies that promote inclusive and sustainable digital development. Kivinen and Järvelä (2020) reviewed the impact of digitalization on learning in higher education. They identified the challenges and opportunities of digitalization and emphasized the need for a pedagogical approach that supports learning in the digital age. Mazzucato (2021) discusses the concept of mission-oriented research and innovation in higher education. She argues that higher education institutions should prioritize research that addresses societal challenges and contributes to sustainable development. The paper provides examples of mission-oriented research and innovation and highlights the benefits of this approach. Yorke (2020) discusses the importance of higher education in promoting employability and achieving the SDGs. The paper emphasizes the need for a multidisciplinary approach, collaboration between higher education institutions and employers, and the integration of the SDGs into the curriculum to promote sustainable development and employability.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

A qualitative research strategy was used to fulfil the goals of the present research investigation. Triangulation design was also used to boost this study strategy. The study was done in two phases, each of which was carried out concurrently, in parallel, and with the aid of a research design (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2005; Creswell, 2007). As data were gathered from general universities in Karachi as a case, this study likewise utilized a case study design.

#### **3.2 Population**

Heads of four departments, ineligible students and 19 faculties of the general universities of

Karachi were chosen as the population for this study.

### 3.3 Sampling and Sample Design Methods

First, general guidelines for sample selection four general universities were chosen as a case study and, different departments chosen from the faculties were chosen on purpose. also, one undergraduate program's curriculum was specifically chosen from among the nineteen departments of both faculties. In order to conduct in-depth interviews, a sample of 4 Heads of Department from both faculties was ultimately chosen utilizing the purposive sampling method.

### 3.4 Instrumentation

Program coordinators of the relevant programs provided the first phase of the study with the curriculum for one undergraduate programme from different departments of faculties. Semi-structured interviews with four Heads of Department were conducted for the second phase of the project to conduct interviews in order to learn more about their perspectives on enhancing curricula and their current methods for delivering high-quality education in light of the SDGs. An interview schedule was created for this purpose in order to investigate current training program and curriculum teaching techniques. Semi-structured interviews with department heads were used to learn more about their opinions on whether or not curricula and instructional methods guarantee that all students obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to support sustainable growth. In-depth discussions and interviews.

### 3.5 Data Gathering

The first phase of the study's data gathering used the curricula for one undergraduate program from different departments from both faculties. was taken from the corresponding

program coordinators. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews with four heads of departments were performed to determine if curricula and instructional methods guarantee that all students obtain the information and skills necessary to support sustainable growth. In-depth discussions on curriculum and practices for stressing human rights.

## 4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

To ensure the reliability and validity of this study content analysis and thematic analysis were used for the exploration of one of the undergraduate programs. The focus of content analysis of SDGs while the other one was mainly focused on exploration of the themes in curriculum of the other undergraduate program that how effective was it in ensuring the imparting sustainable and quality education among its learners how it modified the thought process in bringing positive changes about lifestyles, the human rights respects for others opinions and thoughts, peace and harmony and acceptance of cultural diversity.

The interviews were analyzed thematic and content analysis techniques were applied; initial coding was done for this purpose then subthemes were also developed which were followed by main themes. Beside that a number of themes were also used to ensure the neutral analysis of content. This was done under the guidelines). Thematic analysis was done in lieu with evidence method were used in accordance with Yins(2003) for the results of the responses. For validity and reliability inter rater method was used.

The outcomes of the study have been presented in three parts.

- i. It is related to the thematic analysis
- ii. Content analysis
- iii. Results

S#	Areas of Analysis	Main Themes	Results
1	Curriculum of Undergraduate Programs	Lacking international standards; old and outdated; insufficient contents; rigid and lacking resources; insufficient use of technology	Recommendation to update the curriculum to include international standards and modern content; investment in resources and technology
2	Analysis of In-Depth Interviews	Teaching practice is not in line with modern trends; lack of incorporation of technology and provision of resources	Recommendation to review and evaluate the teaching practices; incorporation of technology and provision of resources
3	Examination of the Syllabuses in Bachelor's Degree Programs and Comprehensive Interrogations.	Lack of focus on providing and promoting quality education and sustainable development; lacking focus on sustainable lifestyles, human rights, non-violence and peace culture, gender equality, global citizenship, cultural diversity and contribution of culture to sustainable development	Recommendation to revise the curricula to include a focus on quality education and sustainable development, as well as a focus on the themes identified
4	Problems and Issues in Imparting Quality Education with Reference to Sustainable Development	Absence of infrastructure; insufficient funding; lack of trained faculty members	Recommendation to invest in infrastructure, increase funding, and provide training for faculty members to improve the quality of education with a focus on sustainable development

Thematic and content analysis of the 1<sup>st</sup> theme of curricula found it is not up to par as compared to international standards in more than 60 % of the programs. The analysis of 2<sup>nd</sup> theme suggested that the existing curriculum is outdated in more than 55% of the programs, list of references need to be revised and updated. The analysis of 3<sup>rd</sup> theme both curriculum and practice are lacking and not suitable for the sustainable development. The 4<sup>th</sup> one suggested the need to include resources, the 5<sup>th</sup> theme analysis urged the need to introduce technology in curriculum.

The analysis of interview was divided in different sections. The 1<sup>st</sup> one concluded that teachers are not up to mark in 37% departments. Only a few (20%) heads were able enough to make modifications in the curriculum while the positive aspect was that 80 % of the heads were willing to modify the existing curriculum but for them it was an impossible task with training, the trained faculty members were also needed to be increase.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> one was about the change in curriculum for sustainable development goals only 29% of head were clear in perception about how to

make changes, most of them 77% agreed with the idea to bring the change in existing curriculum for sustainable quality education.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> theme was about the lacking of focus in curriculum and practices for the assurance of acquiring knowledge and skills for the learners needed for sustainable development, the sustainable lifestyles, human rights, tolerance and respect, global citizenship peace and harmony and gender equality were also missing in focus.

The 4<sup>th</sup> theme was the result of analysis of interviews of 4 deans of the departments it revealed the lack of technology in teaching 79% of teachers were unable to incorporate ICTs the causes were unawareness and lack of resources in this regard. Majority of the respondents were of the view that HEC should be more active and responsible for the provision of resources.

The HODs were asked about the further issues and hindrances in imparting quality education according to most of them 80% lack of infrastructure was the main cause along with the absence of refresher courses however the positive aspect was their willingness in making changes in their domain.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> theme revealed that lack of provision of sufficient funds was one of the biggest obstacles in the achievement of the goal, the final theme was about the lack of qualified and trained faculty members for majority of the respondents non availability of foreign qualified faculty member is one of the major hurdles in imparting quality education. The study revealed a positive aspect of HODs that most of them were aware of the deficiencies and they were willing to bring about the changes in their domain providing the permission and assistances from the HEC.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The conclusion of this study was as follows.

Most of the heads of the institution are trying to implement the objective of the SDGs within their capacity, they have responded positively for the improvement of existing curriculum, they were also encouraging their members (teachers) for the positive changes and for the

incorporation of technology for the fulfilment of the goal. These noble professionals is an absolute key in the transformation of the society and in the achievement of the sustainable quality education. ( Lozano, Huisinigh and Ceulemans (2015)

One of the outcomes of this study pointed out the deficiencies in the existing programs and curriculum it was observed that current curriculum is rigid, limited and lacking variety, it failed to address the cultural differences between rural and urban population, the unavailability of uniformity was another setback. There was a huge difference among existing curriculum, the existing programs were also found to be ineffective as there are different models for different classes like Cambridge, private and public all working at the same time. The positive aspect of the study was that most heads of the institutions realized that and they were willing to change it.

Another important conclusion is that the heads were willful and very excited to train their subordinates to update and accommodate them with international standards if they are provided with sufficient funds and necessary resources which are currently not available. For example, online teaching is the need of the time unfortunately the system are lacking far behind.

## 6. Recommendations

The programs are mostly outdated, revisit is needed similarly curriculum are not up to mark it lacks research and needs to be coordinated in line of the going trends. Insufficient Financial aid is found to be another hindrance as pointed out by the HODS. Power failures, high cost of electricity, unavailability of resources specially ICT tools are some major setbacks in the achievement of the sustainable quality education. So, it is recommended that HEC should provide the necessary financial aid and resources so the universities can upgrade their systems. the impact of SDG4 on the overall development of Pakistan, including the economic and social benefits of investing in quality education. It may also examine the challenges and opportunities for achieving the

SDG4 targets in Pakistan, such as the need for greater investment in education and the potential for public-private partnerships to support education initiatives.

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