

Implementation of the Bachelor of Studies (BS) Program in Government Colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Prospects and Challenges

Seema Rehman, Salman Hamid Khan and Samina Akhtar

Higher Education Academy of Research & Training,
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

The present study explores the challenges and issues faced in the implementation of the BS program offered in government colleges and public sector universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The responsibilities of colleges and universities are highlighted in view of National Education Policies. The research shows how and why the BS education system was initiated in Higher Education Institutions and what measures were taken for its successful implementation. The research methodology used was exploratory in nature, employing a mixed method approach for triangulation. The target population of the study was 65 randomly selected government colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, sampled through the Convenience Sampling Technique. Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and a questionnaire from 127 faculty members of government colleges. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the qualitative data was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The findings of the study highlight the importance of academic autonomy for the government colleges to enable them to grow in knowledge and research. Recommendations such as bringing innovation to higher education, initiating research journals, strengthening of the Higher Education Academy of Research & Training (HEART) and implementing a rationalization policy in transfer rules at the directorate level, are made in light of the findings .

Keywords: BS program, Implementation, Academic Autonomy, National Education Policies, Rationalization Policy, Transfer Rules, Directorate, HEART

Since the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, it has been committed to focusing on quality education and bringing it up to international standards. According to international standards, there is no concept or weighing of a fourteen-year conventional degree program. The focus is rather on a 16-year education system (Bachelor of Studies). Efforts were initiated by all stakeholders of Higher Education to improve the quality of education in Pakistan by introducing and implementing a four-year BS degree program in colleges and universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Pakistan in general, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular, are struggling to improve literacy rates through the implementation of National Education Policies. The BS education represents a gradual transition from a two-year program to a four-year degree program, which was one of the key components of the National Education Policies. It provides an alternative option for students after intermediate, replacing the MA/MSc and BA/BSc programs.

The study Ali and Shah (2019) explored the reasons for implementing the BS program and its impact on students' enrollment for the program's effectiveness in bridging the gap between

theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The study emphasized the hands-on learning and industry-relevant training provided by the program, which equips students with necessary skills for the job market. Similarly, Mustafa (2012) paints a picture of widespread challenges like illiteracy, poor quality, and gender disparity. It prioritizes improved access, quality, and equity, recommending streamlined governance, funding boosts, teacher training, early childhood education focus, girls' education promotion, and enhanced monitoring.

The BS system along with its challenges has revolutionized the outdated system of conventional degree programs prevalent in Pakistan. Its implementation has been successful so far, as it aligns with international standards. As per the requirements of national education policies, social demands, and economic feasibility, the initiation of BS was crucial. It offers various benefits such as reducing student workload, providing a flexible learning environment, and fostering personality development (Iqbal, 2017). Most public sector universities considered it essential for their survival and initiated it in 2011. However, due to political intervention, community distrust, and misperceptions among the college fraternity, the program was unnecessarily delayed in colleges and remained buried in government files until 2010.

After several meetings with high-ranking officials, BS was initiated in government colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2010. It was started on a trial basis in 15 selected colleges, offering 23 BS disciplines, with the objective of upgrading the colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This marked a shift from the conventional annual system of education to a semester system. The program encompasses a wide range of goals and objectives, including personality development, expertise in knowledge, dynamic aspects of learning, research skills, and personal and academic growth. It has since been expanded to 93 colleges and has been introduced in almost all the leading and model colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa till 2016. This program was launched with the vision of providing quality education to people at their doorstep with limited resources and affordable finances. The list of 15 colleges is provided below.

Table 1
Implementation of BS at Initial Stage in colleges

S. No	Colleges	Department	Total Strength
01.	GPGC No. 01, Abbottabad	Botany & Political Science	69
02.	GPGC Mandian Abbottabad	Computer Science	35
03.	GPGC Haripur	Chemistry, Physics & English	23
04.	GPGC Mansehra	Physics & English	78
05.	GPGC Bannu	Zoology	26
06.	GPGC Kohat	Statistics	38
07.	GPGC karak	Physics	38
08.	GJPGC Swat	Maths & Economics	87
09.	GPGC Charsadda	Economics	40
10.	GSSC Peshawar	Pak Studies, Statistics & Maths	118
11.	GC Peshawar	Physics, Chemistry & Economics	120
12.	GPGC Mardan	Physics	37
13.	GPGC Swabi	Physics	25
14.	GPGC (Women) Mardan	Political Science	40
15.	GDC (Women) Haripur	English (later on shifted to 2011 batch)	

Source: Collected from the Directorate of Higher Education on Nov, 2021.

The course for the aforementioned program was designed to equip students with the necessary skills, knowledge, and competencies to succeed in their chosen career path or to pursue higher education at the bachelor's degree level. The program often had a more focused and practical approach compared to the conventional system. The aforementioned colleges aimed to

provide students with the foundational knowledge and hands-on experience required to enter the workforce quickly. The program held promising future prospects in terms of expanding education opportunities, enhancing employability, contributing to economic development, facilitating further education, and fostering community development.

Currently, there are a total of 317 public sector colleges, out of which 123 colleges have been upgraded to BS colleges. BS is successfully running in these colleges by providing quality education to the young generation with the facilities of an adequate number of human and infrastructural resources at a low cost. As per the decision of Higher Education Department, BS has to be implemented in all 317 government colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Recently, a letter has been issued by the Secretary of Higher Education to implement BS in 115 colleges by abolishing the Associate Degree program due to its importance. The table shows the statistics of BS colleges, collected from the Directorate and Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) of Higher Education Peshawar, respectively.

Table 2
BS Statistics

S. No	Colleges	Strength
01.	Male colleges in 2021-2023	64
02.	Female colleges in 2021-2023	59
04.	BS Departments in 2010 -2011	23
05.	BS Enrollment in 2010 – 2011	909
06.	BS Departments in 2021-2023	774 (Male 487 and female 287)
07.	BS Enrollment in 2020 – 2021	83872
08.	BS to be initiated in colleges in 2023-2024	115 (Male 65 and female 55)
09.	BS departments to be offered in 2023-2024	219

Source: Collected from the Directorate (HED) and HEMIS on October, 2023.

Since the initiation of the BS program, Higher Education Department has taken several steps to strengthen government colleges. These include:

- i. The establishment of a three-tier governance structure for government colleges: College Council, Joint Management Council, and Provincial Management Council in 2010. This structure caters to all administrative and academic issues.
- ii. Allowing faculty members to pursue higher studies such as M. Phil. and PhDs. through indigenous and foreign scholarships starting in 2010.
- iii. In April 2011, the Project Management Unit Peshawar was established to implement education reforms and restructure govt. colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Its aim is to better prepare students to meet the challenges of the global market.
- iv. The establishment of Higher Education Academy of Research & Training (HEART) in 2013 to provide mandatory and capacity-building trainings to teaching faculty, Principals, and administrative staff at colleges. These trainings aim to develop their capacity, pedagogical and ICT skills, research abilities, and professional competency.
- v. The holding of conferences, research activities, seminars, lectures, workshops, and symposia in matters related to public policy and the delivery of quality services in the fields of higher education, teachers' education, training, and research (HEART Act, 2016).
- vi. The initiation of Best Teacher Awards, Research Productivity Award, and the publication of college magazines on an annual basis for teachers' motivation in 2017 and 2018 by the Directorate of Higher Education.

- vii. The establishment of a Quality Assurance Cell in 2018 to develop a strong liaison between universities and colleges and facilitate colleges' internal Quality Enhancement Cells.

Statement of the Problem

The introduction of the BS program in government colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has not only been faced with multifarious challenges but has also heralded new opportunities and possibilities of change and transformation. These changes are expected to bring about critical innovations and improvements in the higher education system. The foremost among them are gaps in the implementation process of public education policies. The delay, deadlock, and detraction in the process of implementing public policies have hindered the process of change and transformation. These issues have also delayed progress towards delivering sustainable services at the BS level in colleges for marginalized communities in the periphery.

Due to negligence and deviations from the spirit of public policies, the BS program has developed complications and difficulties at the implementation level. These issues can be observed in areas such as affiliation with universities, problems of student migration, variations and differences in syllabi and courses of study, and the unfavorable attitude of affiliating universities towards affiliated colleges. Similarly, issues in the examination process, failure to conduct the semester system in its true spirit, discrimination in assessment methods, and above all, issues regarding fee structure are the main problems that need to be addressed urgently. The intensity of these issues has motivated the research team at the Higher Education Academy of Research and Training (HEART) to conduct a serious and systematic study in order to find solutions to these problems and explore new opportunities.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- i. To provide a comparative analysis of the BS program in Government Colleges and public sector Universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- ii. To transition intermediate classes to higher secondary schools in accordance with the requirements of National Education Policies.
- iii. To raise awareness among universities about the importance of excelling in their role of producing M. Phil/PhD researchers.
- iv. To demonstrate the necessity of granting partial academic autonomy to Government Colleges, which are key stakeholders in the BS program, in order to enhance their academic, administrative, and financial strength.

Research Questions

- i. How and why was the initiation of the BS program implemented in government colleges?
- ii. What is the rationale behind considering academic autonomy as essential for the sustainability of government colleges?
- iii. What is the importance of the BS program in government colleges and public sector universities?
- iv. What are the current obstacles and challenges faced by the BS Program in colleges?
- v. What measures should be taken to enhance and fortify the BS program in colleges?

Limitations and Delimitations

- i. There is a scarcity of literature available on the BS system of education.

- ii. The role of key stakeholders in assisting the policy-making process is less effective.
- iii. There are policy implementation gaps in different sectors of the education system.
- iv. The study was delimited to public sector colleges and universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa only.

Literature Review

Pakistan has implemented various strategies to increase literacy rates and improve the professional development of teachers. This effort began with the National Education Conference in 1947. Quaid-e-Azam, in his message to the conference, emphasized the importance of education for the future of the country and the need to keep up with the rapidly changing world. Subsequent education policies, conferences, and commissions called for structural reforms, moving away from the previous four-tier education system outlined in the All Pakistan Education Conference of 1947 and 1951, as well as the education policies of 1959, 1970, and 1972.

The British colonial system, which had influenced the Pakistani education system for many years, was based on a four-tier structure. Education policies from 1947 to 1978 centered on this structure. It consisted of primary education for grades one to five, secondary education for grades six to ten, college education for grades eleven to fourteen, and university education for fifteen years and above.

In 1979, the Education Policy of Pakistan introduced a three-tier structure. It included elementary education for grades one to eight, secondary education for grades nine to twelve, and higher education for thirteen years and onwards. This policy remained in place until the Education Policy of 2009, which further divided education into two sub-sectors. Bachelor degrees, spanning thirteen to sixteen years, would be offered in colleges, while postgraduate education, starting from seventeen years and above, would be the responsibility of universities.

“The quality of education depends upon country’s educational policy. Countries with a better educational policies and a continued funding can better attain the socio-economic development with an ease. Whereas, countries like Pakistan, despite its several educational policies, is yet to achieve the milestone of socio-economic development. The reasons for such failure may be regarded to partial or complete catastrophe in policy implementation. Moreover, factors like political and bureaucratic reluctance, weaker economy, inconsistency in policy implementation, clash of political ideologies, wars, toppled regimes and above all corruption have been among the major factors of failure” (Ahmad, 2021).

These policies emphasize the need for new reforms and transformations in the education system in order to produce specialized degrees. The goal of these degrees is to focus on faculty development and professional enhancement. These policies also suggest new imperatives that result in the re-organization and re-orientation of the Pakistani education system. Additionally, there is repeated emphasis on phasing out intermediate level education from colleges and shifting it to higher secondary schools to strengthen the BS programs in all colleges. The Education Policy proposes a paradigm shift in the structure and states:

Class XI and XII shall not be the part of the college level and shall be merged with the school level, forming part of existing secondary schools where needed and provision of necessary human and physical resources shall be ensured. This exercise shall be undertaken after a detailed study of the failures of similar previous efforts (National Education Policy, 2009, p. 29).

Several meetings of principals and other stakeholders have been convened since 2013 to shift intermediate level education from government colleges to Higher Secondary schools, as per policy provisions. Despite various efforts, intermediate level education in some areas is still under the control of government colleges. Most of the FA/F.Sc. classes have been transferred to the Elementary and Secondary Education sector. Therefore, it has become necessary for college teachers to enhance their professional skills and be prepared for their career by initiating a BS program. The purpose of higher education, which includes 317 Colleges and 42 universities, is to prepare individuals who are self-reliant and capable of working towards socio-economic goals. This includes a focus on research and contributing to economic growth through innovative ideas and critical thinking.

It is important to compare the responsibilities of colleges and universities. Their respective roles were established years ago. The roles of colleges are to provide equitable and affordable education to young people, and to deliver a well-educated, flexible, and employable workforce to universities. Colleges should offer learning opportunities in response to diverse demands and work cooperatively with stakeholders to ensure appropriate courses are available. They should make optimal use of physical infrastructure to meet increasing enrollment demands and share their expertise and facilities to support socio-economic regeneration and growth. The core responsibility of each higher learning institution is to deliver quality education and research. They should produce students with honors degrees who can then seek admission to M. Phil. and PhD. programs at universities. With the introduction of the BS program, universities will not have sufficient time to focus on their mandated research services (National Education Policy, 2009).

Similarly, universities are mandated to be engines of innovation and research, driving a knowledge-based economy through high-quality research, industry partnerships, and international collaborations. They cultivate academic excellence by specializing in specific areas, awarding PhDs of international merit, and implementing rigorous quality standards. These institutions also contribute to regional development by setting standards for affiliated colleges and fostering sustainable economic growth. Ultimately, these universities aim to be diverse, adaptable, and self-critical, constantly evolving to meet the needs of the region and the world (National Education Policy, 2009). It was envisioned, "All over Pakistan, there is a large network of degree colleges. Universities that already cater to the needs of Master's and Post Graduate Courses should exclusively concentrate on Master's, M.Phil., and Ph.D. studies" (National Education Policy, 1998). The functions of universities are given below as:

The justification for a university is that it preserves the connection between knowledge and the zest of life, by uniting the young and the old in the imaginative consideration of learning. The university imparts information, but it imparts it imaginatively...A university which fails in this respect has no reason for existence. This atmosphere of excitement, arising from imaginative consideration, transforms knowledge. A fact is no longer a bare fact: it is invested with all its possibilities. It is no longer a burden on the memory: it is energizing as the poet of our dreams, and as the architect of our purposes (Whitehead, 1928, p. 02).

Method

Research Design

For this study, the researchers used a comprehensive mixed-method approach (Sahin & Öztürk 2019) to combine both qualitative and quantitative techniques. This approach was chosen for triangulation (Noble & Heale, 2019), and gaining a deeper understanding of the comparative analysis of the implementation of the BS program offered in colleges and universities. The qualitative approach provided in-depth insights into the participants' interests, experiences, and perceptions, while the quantitative technique measured the strengths and weaknesses of the BS program in colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Data Collection and Participants

Quantitative data was collected through the questionnaire, while qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions. A well-designed questionnaire administered to 127 faculty members randomly selected from 65 colleges provided the foundation for quantitative analysis. Additionally, three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with 16 participants: the BS Controller of Examination, Head of the Department, and BS Coordinator; faculty members teaching at the BS level; and a representative from the Higher Education Department and universities. Interviews were also conducted with students and faculty from six universities to gather in-depth perspectives. Demographic information about the faculty (designation, qualifications, and research skills) was collected through the questionnaire.

Table 3

Demographic Information Collected from Colleges through Questionnaire

S. No.	Designation of Respondents	No. of Respondents
01.	Lecturers	74
02.	Assistant Professors	27
03.	Associate Professors	21
04.	Professors	05
05.	Post Doc Faculty	02
06.	PhD Respondents	18
07.	MPhil Respondents	40
08.	Masters Respondents	67
09.	No. of publications of BS students & faculty in HEC recognized journals	252
10.	No. of M. Phil faculty in the targeted 65 colleges among 127 faculty	585
11.	No. of PhDs in targeted population	256

Source: Collected from the questionnaire distributed among college faculty in October 2021.

Respondents represented diverse institutions such as the University of Peshawar, Islamia College University, and a total of 09 government colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, ensuring a multifaceted perspective. To delve deeper, semi-structured interviews were conducted with students and faculty at Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, University of Chitral, University of Haripur, University of Peshawar, and University of Abbottabad, exploring the merits, demerits, fee structure, and affiliation issues surrounding the BS program. Additional insights were gleaned from a December 2021 seminar led by the Higher Education Secretary, which involved representatives from universities, colleges and the Higher Education Department. Notably, the perspectives of the Director of Higher Education Academy of Research and Training and the Ex-Director of HED further enriched the study's understanding of policy implementation.

Sampling

Convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique (Taherdoost, 2016), was used due to its accessibility, with participants selected from the ongoing Mandatory Training Program for government college faculty organized by Higher Education Academy of Research and Training Peshawar.

Data Analysis

In order to increase confidence in the findings of the study, qualitative as well as quantitative methods for data collection and analysis were used for triangulation (Nobel & Heale, 2019). Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis following Miles & Huberman's (2019) coding method. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to compare the BS program implementation in colleges and universities.

Ethical Considerations

All interviews and Focus Group Discussions were recorded, transcribed, and translated with informed consent and participant confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process.

Results

From the interviews and focus group discussions, a total of 11 codes were identified, highlighting relevant issues. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* by Saldana (2015) and Wicks (2017) were consulted for the identification of codes, which were then classified into organizing codes.

Table 4

Organizing Codes and Issues Identified

S. No	Organizing Codes	Issues Identified
01.	Semester System	Lack of well-equipped labs and libraries, leading to insufficient facilities for BS students.
02.	Annual System	The current system does not meet global standards and needs to be restructured.
03.	Issues and Challenges	Availability of qualified faculty for BS programs.
04.	Academic Autonomy	Challenges related to migration, course design, rules, fee structure, and assessment techniques.
05.	Education system	Lack of collaboration and coordination among stakeholders.
06.	Evaluation and assessment	Inconsistent rules across affiliating universities.
07.	Facilities and Infrastructure	Insufficient resources for the implementation of BS programs.
08.	Lab work	Academic working environment concerns
09.	Resources Sharing	Obstacles to implementing BS in colleges and universities.
10.	Fee & rules	High fees, lack of uniformity in rules among universities, and varying admission criteria in colleges and universities.
11.	Relationship of colleges and universities	Unclear distribution of responsibilities.

On the basis of the codes, few themes have been drawn.

Table 5
Organizing and Global Themes

S. No	Organizing Themes	Global Themes
01.	The semester system is the best system as it provides an internationally recognized BS degree, enables students to compete with the world, is research-oriented, and requires meager financial resources in colleges	Access to higher education
02.	Provision of opportunities for private candidates	Outdated System
03.	The main hurdles we face in strengthening BS in colleges are the unavailability of specific books, examination issues, violation of semester rules, high drop-out ratio, delays in results' announcement, issues with position holders, communication gap between stakeholders, and issues with the contents provided by affiliating universities.	Solution and prospects
04.	Academic autonomy is needed to empower the colleges, enabling them to formulate their own curricula, assess students' performance, and award degrees. According to NEPs, BS is the domain of colleges.	Degree Awarding Status.
05.	The whole education system needs to undergo a paradigm shift. The instrument of affiliation needs to be changed as it adversely affects students in the end.	Partial Autonomy
06.	The spirit of the semester system needs to be revised.	100% Evaluation
07.	College teachers need training and seminars on the BS system, proper research orientation, a rationalization policy in transfers, as well as well-equipped resources, labs, library, and trained faculty.	Improvement in BS System
08.	Unfortunately, our colleges are not equipped with good laboratories. This is why students prefer to go to universities for research, where well-equipped laboratories for experimental work are established.	Universities: A hub of research and innovation
09.	The merger of resources, labs, experts, libraries, teachers, students, infrastructure, and departments is the only solution to the challenges faced by universities and colleges.	Merger of Resources

In the subsequent phase, a comparison was conducted on the fee structures of various universities and colleges. The researcher visited the admission sections and websites of different institutions in order to gather information for the fee comparison. It was observed that universities charge significantly higher fees for the same degree compared to colleges, which offer the same program at a more affordable cost. There has been an increase in BS student enrollment at Government Colleges due to the quality education and low tuition fees. Families are now considering Government Colleges a sound financial choice (Canche, 2014), especially for lower and middle-class students seeking cost-effective alternatives for higher education. The comparative analysis of both fee structures is presented in the figures and tables.

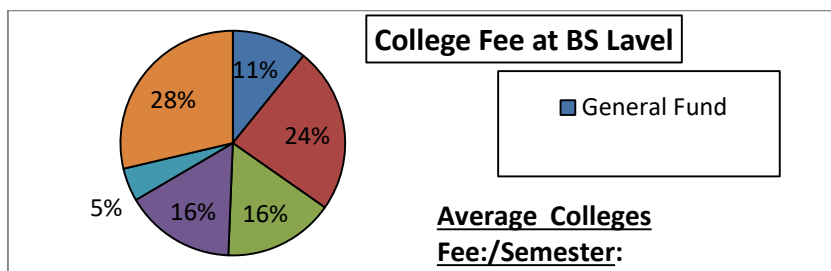


Figure – 1

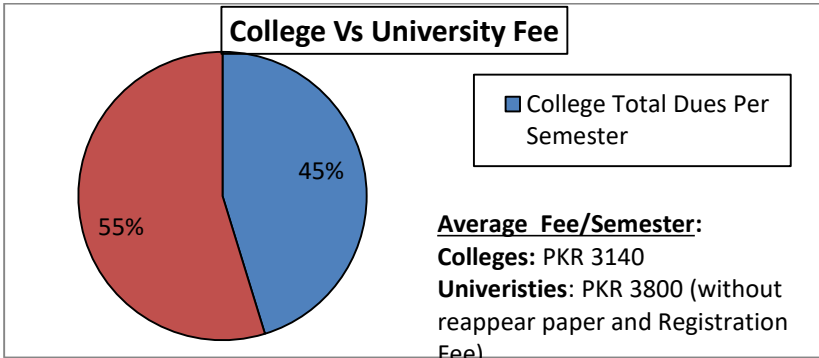


Figure 02

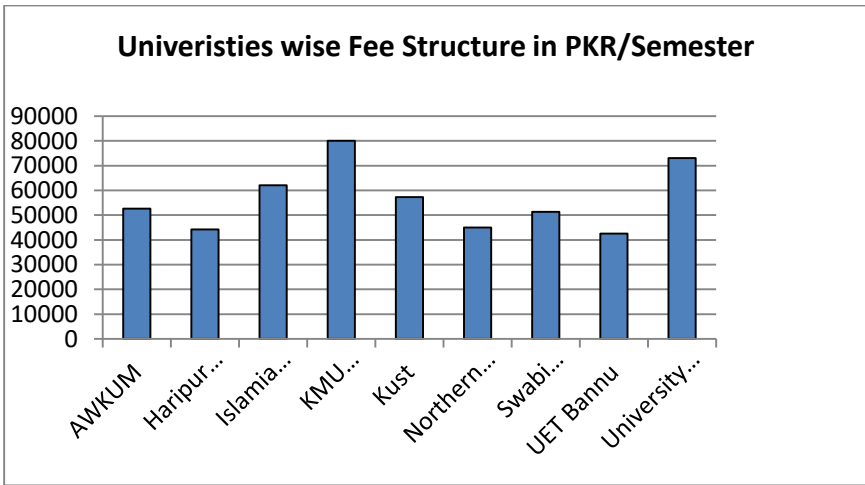


Figure 03

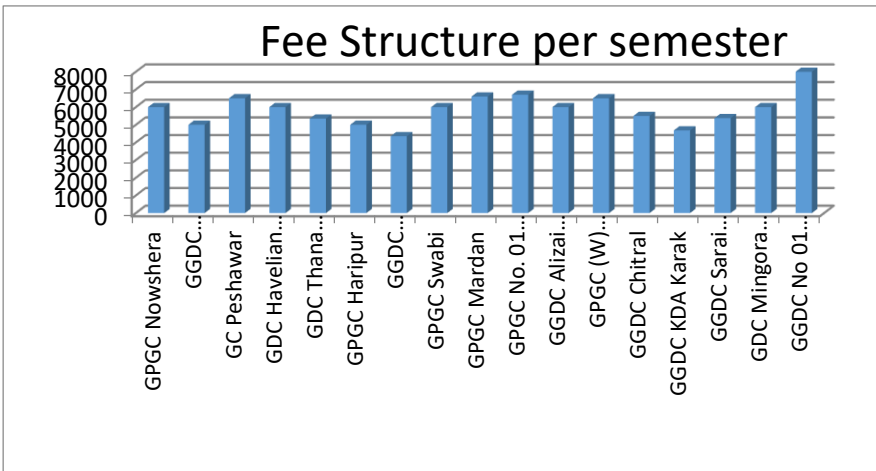


Figure 04

Another question was asked regarding the necessity of special courses, capacity building workshops, and training for college faculty to enhance their teaching and research skills. A total of 110 participants responded positively, whereas only 17 participants responded negatively. Another question, inquiring whether the BS program is a better alternative to the traditional system of annual exams, received 105 positive responses and 22 negative responses.

The question of whether universities or public sector colleges provide superior undergraduate (BS) education was answered by 82 faculty members in favor of colleges and 29 in favor of universities. 16 participants stated that both colleges and universities are equally effective in producing undergraduate graduates. The faculty were also asked about their preferred method of faculty selection, whether it is the university's selection board or the KPPSC that is more suitable for selecting employees for colleges. A total of 116 responses favored the KPPSC, while 11 participants favored the university selection board.

The escalating fees in universities have resulted in diminishing effects, leading to decreased enrollment and a decline in accessible education at colleges. Merit-based admissions in BS colleges are confined to forty seats, while universities have unlimited seats. The following graph illustrates the opening and closing merit of Govt. Postgraduate College Nowshera and Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan.

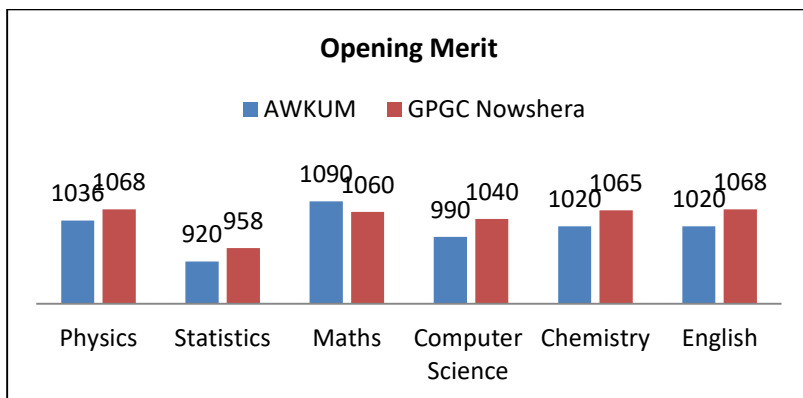


Figure 05

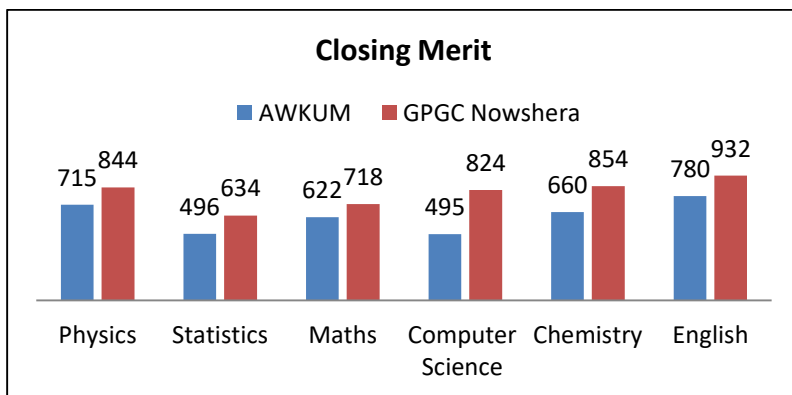


Figure 06

The subsequent question pertains to the necessity of granting degree awarding status to colleges, with the provision that administrative and financial autonomy remains under the purview of the provincial government. Out of the 127 respondents, fifty two respondents expressed a significant need for academic autonomy, while thirty-eight respondents expressed opposition to it, and another thirty-seven respondents remained uncertain.

One participant emphasized the need for the Higher Education Department to address the staff shortage in order to ensure the smooth functioning of the BS program. Another interviewee believed that academic autonomy was crucial to empower colleges, allowing them to develop their own curricula, assess student performance, and grant degrees. Furthermore, a participant argued that the semester system should be reinstated, emphasizing the importance of formulating uniform policies for all colleges and universities. They also suggested revisiting the Universities Act of 2012.

Another participant highlighted the importance of uniformity in courses and syllabi across colleges and universities, advocating for consistent rules throughout the system. Similarly, another respondent stressed the need for equal representation of college faculty in the Board of Studies, Board of Faculty, and Academic Councils. Likewise, one participant noted that universities, being autonomous institutions, generate their own funds and should receive full financial support from the government, comparable to the financial facilitation provided to colleges. The next participant suggested that merging resources, labs, experts, libraries, teachers, students, infrastructure, and departments may be the only solution to the challenges faced by universities and colleges.

Discussion

The BS program in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is facing difficulties due to a lack of adequate laboratories and libraries, which hampers the students' practical learning experience. The current annual system is inconsistent and does not meet global standards; therefore, requiring restructuring. Moreover, the scarcity of qualified faculty members poses a significant obstacle. The unclear distribution of responsibilities between colleges and universities leads to confusion and hinders decision-making processes.

Additionally, the lack of collaboration among stakeholders contributes to inefficiencies. The inconsistent rules across affiliating universities further add to the problem. High fees and varying admission criteria result in disparities and restrict access for deserving students. In order to overcome these challenges, it is crucial to increase funding for infrastructure development and faculty enhancement. Providing clear guidelines for academic autonomy can empower colleges. Encouraging open communication among stakeholders, streamlining fee structures, and revising admission criteria can foster a more inclusive and effective program. Only by addressing these obstacles can the BS program in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa truly empower its students.

Comparative Analysis of Bachelor of Studies in Colleges and Universities

While the BS program has revolutionized higher education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, students are faced with a critical decision: college or university? To make a good choice, it is crucial to understand the stark differences between these two paths.

Cost plays a major role in this decision. The BS programs in colleges have significantly lower fees, averaging around Rs. 5800/- compared to Rs. 35695/- for universities. This opens up opportunities for wider public access, especially for meritorious students from diverse

backgrounds. Additionally, colleges are located within communities, eliminating the barriers of travel and remoteness often associated with universities located in bustling urban centers.

However, when it comes to academic control and freedom, universities have the upper hand. They enjoy autonomy in curriculum development, not constrained by external bodies such as Higher Education Commission. This allows for greater flexibility and innovation in course offerings. In comparison, colleges have limited influence over curriculum, operating within the frameworks set by universities.

The focus of faculty roles also differs significantly. Colleges prioritize teaching, providing students with close support and guidance. While research activities exist, college faculty career progression is not heavily tied to publications and grants. On the other hand, universities are research-driven powerhouses. Faculty are incentivized to produce research outputs, which influences their career advancement. Sometimes, this focus on research can overshadow teaching, resulting in less individual attention for students.

Ultimately, the decision between college and university BS programs depends on individual preferences and circumstances. Students who prioritize cost and a close-knit community may find colleges to be the ideal choice. On the other hand, students with research ambitions and financial means may find universities more fulfilling. By acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of both systems, students can navigate the BS landscape with confidence and select the path that aligns best with their academic goals and personal aspirations.

The Transition of Intermediate Classes to Elementary & Secondary Schools

The success of the BS program in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa raises an important question: should intermediate classes move to higher secondary schools? This potential change requires a detailed analysis to ensure it aligns with the strengths of the BS program.

Supporters envision a smooth educational journey, with reduced dropout rates, better allocation of resources such as infrastructure, funding, and technology, and access to specialized learning pathways offered by higher secondary schools. These goals perfectly match the BS program's focus on accessibility, cost-effectiveness, and skill development. Opponents, however, emphasize potential disruptions, including the anxiety caused by relocation, dilution of college identity, and unequal availability of resources and qualified faculty across schools. These concerns need to be addressed in order to prioritize seamless transitions, community bonds, and equitable access to quality education – all key strengths of the BS program. Ultimately, the decision hinges on:

- i. Thorough analysis: Weighing the benefits of streamlining against the challenges posed by disruptions.
- ii. Engagement with stakeholders: Minimizing anxieties and ensuring smooth transitions.
- iii. Commitment to equity: Guaranteeing equal access to resources and quality education for all students.
- iv. Only through rigorous analysis and strategic implementation can Khyber Pakhtunkhwa leverage the potential of this change, building upon the success of the BS program and creating a stronger, more cohesive, and equitable education system for all.

Promoting a Research Culture in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Universities

Universities are mandated to promote research and innovation as they are considered centers of innovation and research. According to the National Education Policy (2009), their responsibilities include producing high-quality research and creating stronger industry-university linkages and partnerships to facilitate joint ventures. They need to work towards developing a knowledge-based economy and implementing measures for accreditation, quality assurance, and peer evaluation of academic programs that meet international standards. Universities should also aim to become diverse, flexible, self-analyzing, and adaptable enterprises. They must contribute to the sustainable economic development of the region and establish standards for affiliated colleges (National Education Policy, 2009).

Further, they have to work to receive research grants for academic projects, as "Universities and research institutes shall place greater emphasis on mobilizing research to promote innovation in the economy" (National Education Policy 2009, p. 12). It is imperative for them to award PhD degrees to individuals who have made "original contributions to the world body of knowledge as certified by international experts" (p. 12). They encourage innovation in the economy through both internal and external funding support. They also collaborate with the world community by developing split-degree programs in partnership with reputable foreign universities" (p. 52). Further it is stated, "To promote quality in teaching, universities should specialize in particular areas instead of attempting to cover the whole range of programs" (National Education Policy, 2009, p. 52).

Instead of developing excellence in specialized fields of study, universities have wasted their efforts and resources by offering admissions in BS programs in various disciplines. The emerging global trends also demand a restructuring of higher education through qualitative and quantitative reforms. The Higher Education Commission's 2025 new strategic vision provides a three-tier model of tertiary education. In tier-I, there should be research-based universities whose sole focus is on producing researchers and scientists. In tier-II, the role of the universities is to offer MA, M.Phil. and PhD programs. In tier-III, there are affiliated colleges that are equal to universities in terms of offering research-based degrees like the BS system.

Enhancing Academic Autonomy in BS Colleges

While the successful implementation of the BS program marks a significant step forward, significant challenges remain for government colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. One critical issue lies in the duality of control they face due to their affiliation with public universities. This creates a complex tug of war between administrative oversight by the provincial government and academic control by the affiliating university. Unlike universities, the colleges do not have any autonomy. According to the World Bank Report (2019), "Affiliating colleges are subject to dual management control: for administrative and financial matters, they are under the control of their respective provincial higher education departments, but for academic matters they are under the authority of their affiliating universities, which award tertiary level degrees."

The National Education Policy (2009) also highlights the same issue, stating: "On the governance side, the academic and administrative management of colleges remains an unresolved issue since the degrees are awarded by the universities while the administrative control of colleges themselves lies with the provincial governments" (p. 47). Autonomy is crucial to address the following issues faced by colleges with affiliating universities:

- i. Affiliation issues of colleges with affiliating universities
- ii. Lack of proper representation of colleges in course designing, meetings of Board of Studies, Board of Faculty, and Academic Council
- iii. Violation of the spirit of the semester system
- iv. Lack of provision for external assessment in the semester system, as it is run with the features of the annual system
- v. One-sided assessment and evaluation techniques, including paper setting and checking, grading system, and assessment methods
- vi. Financial burden on low-income students, including exam fees, affiliation and renewal fees, rechecking fees, inspection visits fees, degree fees, and migration fees
- vii. Insufficient physical infrastructure and human resources in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa colleges.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The implementation of the BS program in government colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has undoubtedly reshaped the higher education landscape, offering a four-year alternative to the conventional system. This study has delved into the rationale behind this transformative initiative, explored its current challenges, and envisioned its future prospects.

Firstly, this research sheds light on the "why" and "how" of the BS program's initiation. Driven by a desire to elevate educational quality, align with international standards, and provide affordable access to students, the program emerged as a strategic response to evolving needs. It offers a four-year alternative to the conventional system, aligning with national education policies and providing a smooth transition from intermediate studies. This shift away from the traditional MA/MSc and BA/BSc programs represents a significant step towards a 16-year education system.

Next, the researchers delve into the critical issue of the academic autonomy, deemed essential for the sustainability of government colleges. Our findings highlight that granting independent control to colleges over curriculum development, and student assessment and evaluation would empower them to tailor programs to local needs, enhance teaching and learning experiences, and unlock their full potential for growth and research. This, in turn, addresses the issue of unequal affiliation arrangements currently faced by colleges, emphasizing the need for standardized processes and uniform standards across campuses to create a more equitable and efficient system.

The study further underscores the dual significance of the BS program for both colleges and public sector universities. For colleges, it signifies an opportunity for growth, increased research potential, and enhanced community engagement. For universities, it offers a platform for collaboration, strengthened research culture, and contributions to knowledge production. Recognizing these intertwined benefits emphasizes the importance of a successful BS program for the overall progress of higher education in the province.

However, this research also identifies obstacles that hinder the program's progress. These include limited academic autonomy, disparities in affiliation arrangements, inconsistencies in resource allocation and assessment practices, and a lack of research incentives in colleges. To address these, the study recommends focused policy interventions. Granting partial academic autonomy, streamlining affiliation processes, promoting a uniform resource allocation mechanism, and standardizing assessment practices are crucial steps towards a more robust system.

Additionally, establishing dedicated research wings like HEART's Academic Audit Unit within colleges will foster a culture of research and scholarly pursuits.

Finally, the study paves the way for a fortified future for the BS program. Recommendations include policy interventions focused on strengthening college infrastructure and faculty development, promoting a research culture through financial incentives and dedicated programs, and allocating resources based on needs and performance. By effectively implementing these measures, the full potential of the BS program can be unlocked, leading to a vibrant and equitable higher education system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where quality education is accessible to all.

References

- Ahmed, Z. (2021). An Overview of Educational Policies of Pakistan (1947-2020). *Psychology and Education Journal*, 58(1), 4459-4463.
- Ali, S., & Shah, S. (2019). Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice: A Case Study of the BS/Associate Degree Program in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 10(2), 1-10.
- About Quality Assurance Cell. Retrieved from <https://www.qac.hed.gkp.pk/aboutus> on January, 2024.
- Canché, M. S. G. (2018). Geographical network analysis and spatial econometrics as tools to enhance our understanding of student migration patterns and benefits in the US higher education network. *The Review of Higher Education*, 41(2), 169-216.
- Education Policies of Pakistan, n.d. 10th October, 2021, retrieved from: [1586982123-unit-3 \(2\)](#).
- Ghaffar, S. A., & Ambreen, M. (2003). Educational policies in Pakistan. *Education in Pakistan*, 67-96. [HEC-Vision-2025 \(2\).pdf](#) retrieved on 19th September, 2021.
- Halcomb, E. J., & Hickman, L. (2015). Mixed Methods Research.
- Huberman, A. M., & Miles, J. S. M. B. (2019). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*.
- Javed, Y., Ahmad, S., & Khahro, S. H. (2020). Evaluating the research performance of Islamabad-based higher education institutes. *SAGE Open*, 10(1), 2158244020902085.
- Iqbal, A. (2017). Higher Education in Pakistan. Lahore, Pakistan.
- Mustafa, G. (2012). Education policy analysis report of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. *Islamabad: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation*.
- National Education Policy, 2009, n.d. 11th October, (2021), retrieved from [pakistan national education policy 2009.pdf \(unesco.org\)](#)
- National Education Policy 1998, n.d. 10th October, 2021, retrieved from The National Education Policy 1998-2010 | PDF | Education Policy | Cognition (scribd.com).
- Noble, H., & Heale, R. (2019). Triangulation in research, with examples. *Evidence-based nursing*, 22(3), 67-68.
- Project Management Unit. n.d. 17th September, 2021. Retrieved from http://hed.kp.gov.pk/page/project_management_unit
- Parveen, A., Rashid, K., Iqbal, M. Z., & Khan, S. (2011). System and reforms of higher education in Pakistan. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 2(20).
- Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.
- Samuels, H. W. (1998). Varsity letters: documenting modern colleges and universities. Scarecrow Press.

- Sahin, M. D., & Öztürk, G. (2019). Mixed Method Research: Theoretical Foundations, Designs and Its Use in Educational Research. *International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research*, 6(2), 301-310.
- Taherdoost, H. (2016). Sampling methods in research methodology; how to choose a sampling technique for research. How to Choose a Sampling Technique for Research (April 10, 2016).
- Whitehead, A. N. (1928). Universities and their Function. *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors (1915-1955)*, 14(6), 448-450.
- Wicks, D. (2017). The coding manual for qualitative researchers. *Qualitative research in organizations and management: an international journal*, 12(2), 169-170.
- Zimpher, N. L. (2012). *Universities and Colleges as Economic Drivers: Measuring Higher Education's Role in Economic Development*. SUNY Press.