



Vol. 4 No. 2 (February) (2026)

Examining the Role of Higher Education Quality in Promoting Professional Mobility for Economic Development

Dr. Sadia Aslam

Department of Education, PMAS-Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi

Email: Sadiaaslam034@gmail.com

Dr. Um E Rubab

Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Alhamd Islamic University Islamabad,

Pakistan Email: dr.umerubab@aiu.edu.pk

Shumaila Jeelani

Department of Education, Shifa Tameer e Millat University Islamabad

Email: Shumaila.doe@stmu.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

Education play a dynamic role in preserving a strong lifestyle in Pakistan. Higher Education with an unemployment perspective form one of the main origins to generate frailty and depression in graduates in Pakistan. The major purpose of the study was to identify the role of higher education in economic and social development in the context of the prevailing socioeconomic situation in Pakistan. The present study addressed the objective, for this purpose the quantitative design was used. The sample was drawn through a random sampling technique and the sample size was about 600 students from the Public and Private Universities in Punjab and Islamabad (ICT). A quantitative questionnaire was distributed to collect data, the questionnaire comprised two sections main sections, demographic and baseline evidence. After the collection of data through a questionnaire tool, the statistical package (SPSS version 20) was used and descriptive statistics, frequency percentage, mean, and correlation and t- test was employed to draw the results. The findings of the study revealed that education was adequately playing an important role in personal and professional mobility to the maximum output of tangibly contributing towards economic development of Pakistan.

Key words: Higher Education, Unemployment, Producing Skills, Future Vision, Professional Mobility.

Introduction

Education is regarded as a critical investment in both human and economic growth and development, which is influenced by the context in which it is provided. People and, by extension, population are at the heart of long-term development (Shabbar, 2021). Quality of educational services is a multidimensional category that encompasses all its functions and activities, including educational programs, research, human capitals, and logistical support, the evaluation of higher education value should be based on multivariate analysis, the structure of education, its content, technology, training, and university resource potential (Gulshan Fatima Alvi, 2021).

Higher education modernization procedures are becoming vitally essential not only for business and economics but also for social life. Higher education reforms are linked to broader issues with public sector reform on the one hand, and also, it's aimed to maximize



Vol. 4 No. 2 (February) (2026)

and boost the effectiveness of the universities on the other (McKelvey & Zaring, 2018). The socio-economic development of a country is seen as an improvement in indicators such as real GDP per person, life expectancy and age, infant mortality, literacy and employment. Thus, education secures the country's social and economic development by improving the distribution of its people's incomes (Hulten, 2017). Socio-economic development is the term used to describe the process of a society's social and economic growth. The indicators used to evaluate it include GDP, life expectancy, literacy, and employment levels. Personal integrity, liberty, personal safety, and the absence of threat of physical harm, as well as the level of civil society activity, are all considered (AEDA, 2021).

Pakistan is a diverse South Asian country. Pakistan is historically and culturally linked to its neighbors, Iran, Afghanistan, and India due to its predominantly Indo-Iranian speaking people. Throughout its history, Pakistan has fought for political stability and long-term economic progress. Following several economic restructuring measures, Pakistan today has a diverse economy, with state owned companies accounting for a significant percentage of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The country has investigated with numerous economic models throughout its history (Burki, 2021). Pakistan is a developing country and the education is the primary indicator to gauge human development index of any society. Economic development is the process of transforming a traditional, limited economy into a modern industrialized base. It is most generally used to refer to a transition in a country's economy that encompasses both qualitative and quantitative improvements, even though it is sometimes used interchangeably with the word "economic growth." (Krueger, 2012).

Literature Review

Development, involves the growth of the market's size or speed in line with economic growth, resulting in the production of additional goods and services. Traditionally, it has been assumed that if an economy produces more goods and services, people will have a better standard of living (SOAS, 2020). Many traditional development techniques have aimed to expand the economy (economic growth) to boost product and service output (Gonzalez Geraldo, 2021). Of course, without any changes to the underlying economic processes, producing more items and services will necessarily consume more raw resources and energy, as well as generate more waste. Advanced education is an important component of a country's socioeconomic growth. With each passing year, the influence of greater learning on the knowledge-based economy is growing (Levchenko et al., 2017). It is also highlighted by (Kotáskova et al., 2018) that the higher education significantly impacts the economic growth of the country. (Zhu et al., 2018) provided a Chinese case study; he claimed that improved education is one of the essential determinants for a country's socioeconomic growth. An in-depth examination of the developed economies reveals the importance that higher education is crucial in a country's progress. The sustainable development of a country relies heavily on higher education (Franco, et al., 2019). (Aleixo, et al., 2018) claimed the most crucial phenomenon is to understand the role of higher education in promoting the sustainable growth. The sustainable development of a country has three main pillars: economic development, social development and environmental protection Higher education is an investment in the growth of human capital that contributes significantly to a country's economic success. Higher education is becoming an important component of countries' development



Vol. 4 No. 2 (February) (2026)

towards knowledge economies. It helps to develop educated workers who can deal with the knowledge economy (Allam Hamdan, 2020). Higher education helps individuals socialize, aids in the modernization and development of civilizations, and, perhaps most crucially, helps to generate, absorb, and spread information through teaching and scientific research. Many research works have been conducted on economic progress and this determining factor, and there are several theoretic models of growth. It is critical to develop human capital, in order to achieve economic progress, is highlighted throughout the text. Human capital development begins with education. As a result, education is crucial to a country's economic development and is inextricably linked to it. Education, according to previous research, boosts human capital stock, which boosts productivity and, in turn, helps to growth. (Roychowdhury, 2021) on the other hand, took a different approach and discovered that various degrees of education are positively connected with various growth figures.

Higher education quality is a multifaceted notion that encompasses all the linked roles and activities that make up a university system's academic life. As a result, any framework for evaluating quality should consider the student, the instructor, the facilities, academic support, curriculum, evaluation, and learning materials (Ullah, 2020). Quality educational content should be able to help pupils develop their language skills and other talents, allowing them to unleash their creativity (Wendy Steele, 2021). Universities, is a key element in their potential for preparing young people who would help shape an international vision and a social ethic for harmony and social development, but the reviewers point out that we are currently living in the stage of spiritual suffering and "psycho-cultural dissolution." And that societies and societal institutions-including universities-are not able to pass on their values to young people. This incompetence to pass on to the new generation, the values of societies, is perhaps a sign of a deeper crisis (Feenstra, R. C. and Weinstein, D.E 2017).

The quality of a country's workforce's education and training is a foremost element in deciding how well its economy will operate (Olena Kryvylova, 2021). Poverty reduces the likelihood of educational achievement and outcomes in a circularly reinforcing manner; the reduced educational opportunity and outcomes prolong a poor existence. As a result, poverty and inequality have inherent drawbacks. While educational systems cannot completely eradicate social and economic disadvantages, they can magnify or lessen their effects (Lambrechts, 2013). Governments must ensure that all segments of the population have reasonable access to quality education if they are to achieve long-term growth (Lans, 2014). A well-resourced education system with adequately trained teachers may have a positive impact on developing an equal society while also accumulating an educated, skilled workforce for economic growth and good governance. Higher education reform strategies aim to improve the connection among universities, businesses, and society. Even though state-financed education is free and that equal entry to education assures equity, the education system (particularly for higher education) is challenged for its value and significance in answering to developing challenges in local and worldwide realms (Wickramasinghe, 2018).



Vol. 4 No. 2 (February) (2026)

Objectives of the Study

To identify the role of higher education quality for professional development in the context of prevailing economic situation in Pakistan

Research Questions

Does the higher education system of Pakistan meet the needs of national economic and social development?

Are our higher education institutions playing a dynamic role in promoting social development in the country?

Methodology

Research Design and Sample

The research design of study is quantitative. The sample was drawn through a random sampling technique and the sample size was about 600 students from the Public and Private Universities in Punjab and Islamabad (ICT).

Instrument and Participants

A quantitative questionnaire was distributed to collect data, the questionnaire comprised two sections main sections, demographic and baseline evidence. The baseline information of students was provided around their age, gender, previous qualification, and degree program. In the second section of the students' questionnaire, there were 45 items of close-ended questions.

Data Analysis

After the collection of data through a questionnaire tool, the statistical package (SPSS version 20) was used and descriptive statistics, frequency percentage, mean, and correlation was employed to draw the results. The data was tabulated and formulated form. In addition, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each dimension was found above 0.8 indicating the reliability of dimension measures. The validity of the questionnaire was checked by experts and internal consistency reliability of the overall scale was established with the help of Cronbach's alpha at 0.79. The refusal rate of the questionnaire was 3.6%. Reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) values calculated after piloting the instruments as .883 for the questionnaire.

Results

Table.4.2: Perception of cumulative students about higher education impact economic development.

	Dimensions	SDA	DA	UN	A	SA	Mean
1	Educational facilities	151 (26.9)	290 (50.6)	32 (6.6)	46 (8.6)	41 (7.3)	3.65
2	Quality of education	200 (35.6)	272 (48.8)	42 (7.5)	22 (3.9)	24 (4.3)	3.79



Vol. 4 No. 2 (February) (2026)

3	Personal mobility	191 (34.0)	208 (37.0)	51 (9.1)	64 (11.4)	45 (8.0)	3.70
4	Future vision	157 (27.9)	255 (45.4)	64 (11.4)	44 (7.8)	30 (6.6)	3.75
5	High wages	93 (16.5)	101 (18.0)	127 (22.6)	107 (19.0)	129 (23.0)	3.68
6	Producing enough skills	190 (23.8)	243 (43.2)	85 (15.1)	25 (4.4)	14 (2.5)	3.78
7	Unemployment	20 (3.6)	10 (2.8)	48 (8.5)	239 (42.5)	229 (40.7)	4.31

The dimension “educational facilities” in terms of statements satisfied with the educational facilities at the universities in Table 1 showed that 15.5% students were agreed and 78.5% were disagreed and 5.7% were with no opinions 6.6 % respondents uncertain about the statement. The mean value (3.65) of data also supported the claim. The dimension “quality of education” in terms of the statement, satisfied with the quality of education at the universities, Universities 78% were disagreed and 15.5 are agreed in same statement The tabulated mean value was (3.70) thus results also supported that the majority of students were not satisfied, with the quality of education at the universities. The data in Table 1 directed students' responses toward the dimension “professional mobility”, in terms of the statement education is playing an important role in personal and professional mobility, the highest responses were 19.4% students were agreed and 71% were disagreed and 9.1% were with no opinions. The mean value (3.75) of data also supported (the claim) that students remained dissatisfied with the statement that education is playing an important role in personal and professional mobility. Analysis of data in the above Table 1 statement educational level playing important role in the prospect of a student indicated that the highest number of the respondents favored agreed were 14.4% and students 73.3% were disagreed and 11.4% were with no. The mean value (3.68) of the data analysis supported the statement that the majority of the respondents were not satisfied that educational level is playing an important role in the future vision of a student. The dimension “high wages”, in terms of the statement that education level is playing an important part in scaling high wages, it was indicated that the respondents who favored strongly agree were 23 % as compared with those who agreed, which was 16%. On the other hand, 18% and 16% of respondents said they strongly disagreed while 22.6% were unsure about the statement. The data analysis of the mean value (3.68) supported this statement.

Table above shows that there were only 6.9% students were agreed and 77% were disagreed while 15.1% were with no opinions. Majority of students were found to be disagreed with the said that Education system is producing enough skills to fulfill the



Vol. 4 No. 2 (February) (2026)

changing dynamics of job market. Mean score is 4.18. Moreover, in terms of the statement in above given there were only 4.6% students were agreed and 88.8% were disagreed and 6.4% were with no opinions.

Table above shows that there were students 83.2% were agreed and 8.5% were with no opinions and 6.4% were disagreed 42.5% of students agreed and 40.7 strongly agreed in contrast with the responses in term of disagreed 2.5% and 3.6 strongly disagreed with the statement that the rise of unemployment in Pakistan is not due to a lack of quality education, 8.5% students were uncertain about that statement. The mean score was (3.78) which proved that the majority of the students were satisfied with the statement that the rise of unemployment in Pakistan is due to a lack of quality education.

Table 2: Perceptions of cumulative students towards the impact of higher education and economic development

Public	SD	Public	SD	df	Mean	SD	P-	Sig
	Private		Private		Difference		value	
1.54	0.89	2.20	1.37	559	0.69	1.59	0.00	0.015

Sector-wise comparison of higher levels of education and social and economic development is shown in Table 2 that public-sector university students in Table 2 are inclined to disagree with the statements that the mean score is 1.54 SD =0.89 whereas the score of private university students at the higher levels of education and social and economic development is 2.20 (SD= 1.37) with df = 559 Mean Difference is 0.69 with P-value 0.00. It means that there is no significant difference between the perception of private and public university students about the higher levels of education and social and economic development.

The data in the given Table 2 points out students' responses towards higher education's impact on social development. Different dimensions in terms of statements were analyzed.

Findings

Impact of Higher Education on Economic Development

The information about university students' response towards the role of higher education and economic development indicated that the provision of inadequate educational facilities and lack of quality of higher education have a greater impact on economic development. The findings of analyzed data revealed that students argued positively that higher education forms an important determinant for the imminent visions and individual and professional mobility of the students. The inferences drawn here proved that our education system is required to ascertain the skills that are demanded in the job market from an academic perspective for adjusting students. It is noteworthy to mention here that students perceived that the educational system in Pakistan is required to impart practical approaches to entrepreneurship in higher education so that students jump to novel occupations after finalizing education, as redundancy can be reduced if quality education provides to students. The optimistic responses specified that Pakistan's higher education needs to provide graduates with better probabilities of attainment and higher compensation that lead to better inclusive living standard.

The comparison is made based on significance values shown in the table the tabulated data sector-wise comparison of the higher levels of education and economic development indicated the estimated value of perception of public university students inclined to disagree with the statements, it means that there is no significant difference according to



Vol. 4 No. 2 (February) (2026)

the t-score value, perception of private and public university students, about the degree program and social and economic development in a higher level of education and economic development.

In the comparative analysis of difference of means across gender recorded was not appearing with greater variations either in the standard deviations (SD), with T-test values above the significance of the data analyzed in public and private universities, the impact of higher education on social and economic development as well as degree program towards social and economic development; while curriculum impact towards social and economic development remained significant (0.000) but in the total cumulative mean was recorded as non-significant (0.661).

Discussion

Pakistan is passing through the phase of transition to a knowledge base economy where education and its visibility will be resolute by the capabilities of its people to create share and use knowledge more effectively. The education for development regime has not been as successful as it might have been hoped. This research study was conducted based on the following three objectives identifying the role of higher education in economic and social development in the context of the prevailing socioeconomic situation in Pakistan.

It was found that respondents decided in favor of a curriculum towards quality education, warranting the market needs of the hour, such as findings recorded by the World Bank report (2020) and Haque (2021) supported by Umar and Hassan (2019) together with Indras National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO).

As per the review carried out in this endeavor, the concept of economic development was referred to Pearson (2000) and recent work done by Gonzalez (2021) the findings of the study revealed that physical capital formed a key variable to affects a long run development of the economy's together with human capital theories. The main approach in the discussion part has been the reciprocation of results of the study, the objective wise findings, and correlating these variable items with some of the prominent and recent work done at home and abroad. The exertion of Gunawardena 2020 reported that education also fosters social mobility by serving the deprived or underprivileged to enhance economic status, he also summarized that educational attainment in our generation led to increased schooling, work productivity, and income in the following generation, resulting in interpenetrated economic. A greater percentage of respondents 39.5% did not agree with any impact on unemployment whereas a lesser majority (8.2% to 9.4%) of respondents agreed that unemployment was due to the production of graduates/post graduates, not coinciding with the market needs and remaining unemployed. Such an outcome had been in reciprocal agreement work done by Turan (2020) supported with the accessibility of employment opportunities and improvements in terms and conditions for this purpose by Weight (2018) Ali and Jalal (2018), Malik (2020); Murtaza and Hui (2021), Hassan and Hussain (2020), Ahmed (2014) towards the creation of job opportunities, as well as described by Oliver and Jorre (2018).

Conclusion

Higher Education with an unemployment perspective form one of the main causes to create vulnerability and melancholy in young graduates in Pakistan. practical learning as obligatory coursework.

It is relevant to mention here that students perceived that the educational system in Pakistan is required to impart practical approaches to entrepreneurship in higher education This study concludes that the quality of higher education plays a critical role in



Vol. 4 No. 2 (February) (2026)

enhancing professional mobility and supporting Pakistan's economic development. While higher education contributes to personal growth and future opportunities, students' dissatisfaction with educational quality, facilities, and skill relevance highlights a significant gap between academic outcomes and labor market demands. The findings emphasize the urgent need for curriculum reform, practical skill development, entrepreneurship education, and stronger university–industry linkages to address unemployment and improve workforce readiness. Strengthening quality assurance, increasing investment in education, and promoting innovative teaching approaches are essential to ensure that higher education effectively contributes to sustainable economic growth and social progress in Pakistan.

References

- Aleixo, A., Leal, S., & Azeiteiro, U. (2018). Conceptualization of sustainable higher education institutions, roles, barriers, and challenges for sustainability: An exploratory study in Portugal. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 172, 1664–1673.
- Alvi, G., Safder, M., & Habib, M. (2021). Current issues and problems about the quality improvement faced by management in higher educational institutions. *Journal of Accounting and Finance in Emerging Economies*.
- Burki, J. Z. (2021, October 10). Pakistan. Retrieved from Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Pakistan>
- Feenstra, R. C., & Weinstein, D. E. (2017). Globalization, markups, and US welfare. *Journal of Political Economy*, 125(4), 1040–1074.
- Franco, I., Saito, O., Vaughter, P., Whereat, J., Kanie, N., & Takemoto, K. (2019). Higher education for sustainable development: Actioning the global goals in policy, curriculum and practice. *Sustainability Science*, 14(6), 1621–1642.
- Gonzalez Geraldo, M. (2021). Impact of a Spanish Higher Education teacher development programme on approaches to teaching. *Psychometric properties of the S-ATI-20 scale*. *Educación XX1*, 24(1), 213–232.
- Government of Pakistan. (2009). *National Education Policy 2009*. Islamabad.
- Haque, H. (2021). Education. Retrieved from USAID: <https://www.usaid.gov/bangladesh/education>
- Hamdan, A., Sarea, A., Khamis, R., & Anasweh, M. (2020). A causality analysis of the link between higher education and economic development: empirical evidence. *Heliyon*, 6(6), 40–46.
- Hulten, C. R., & Ramey, V. A. (2017). Introduction to Education, Skills, and Technical Change: Implications for Future US GDP Growth. In *Education, Skills, and Technical Change: Implications for Future US GDP Growth* (pp. 1–19). University of Chicago Press.
- Kotásková, S. K., Procházka, P., Smutka, L., Maitah, M., Kuzmenko, E., Kopecká, M., & Höning, V. (2018). The impact of education on economic growth: The case of India. *Acta Universitatis Agriculturae Et Silviculturae Mendelianae Brunensis*, 66(1), 253–261.
- Krueger, M. H. (2016, October 27). Economic development. Retrieved from Encyclopedia Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/economic-development>
- Kryvylova, O., Sosnickaya, N., Oleksenko, K., Oleksenko, R., & Khavina, I. (2021). The aqmeological framework for modern higher education as a step towards sustainable development of society. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 5(3), 55–64.
- Kuppens, T., Easterbrook, M. J., Spears, R., & Manstead, A. S. (2015). Life at both ends



Vol. 4 No. 2 (February) (2026)

- of the ladder: Education-based identification and its association with well-being and social attitudes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41(9), 1260–1275.
- Lambrechts, W., Mulà, I., Ceulemans, K., Molderez, I., & Gaeremynck, V. (2013). The integration of competences for sustainable development in higher education. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 48, 65–73.
- Lans, T., Blok, V., & Wesselink, R. (2014). Learning apart and together: towards an integrated competence framework for sustainable entrepreneurship in higher education. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 62, 37–47.
- Levchenko, O., Levchenko, A., Horpynchenko, O., & Tsarenko, I. (2017). The impact of higher education on national economic and social development. *Journal of Applied Economic Sciences*, 12(3), 850–862.
- McKelvey, M., & Zaring, O. (2018). Co-delivery of social innovations: exploring the university's role in academic engagement with society. *Industry and Innovation*, 25(6), 594–611.
- Ministry of Human Resource Development. (2019). All India Survey on Higher Education 2018–2019.
- Pearson, R. (2000). Rethinking Gender Matters in Development. In Allen, T. & Thomas, A. (Eds.), *Poverty and Development into the 21st Century*. Oxford University Press.
- Qaiser Tariq, M. A. (2021). Student's challenges in access to digital resources in higher education institutes of Pakistan. *Library Philosophy and Practice (ejournal)*, 5487.
- Roychowdhury, P. (2016). Visible inequality, status competition, and conspicuous consumption. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 69(1), 36–54.
- Shabbar, S. (2021). Population growth and socio-economic progress. Retrieved from Tribune: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2311292/population-growth-and-socio-economic-progress>
- SOAS. (2020). The Challenge of Sustainable Development. Retrieved from https://www.soas.ac.uk/cedep-demos/000_P501_USD_K3736-Demo/unit1/page_12.htm
- SOAS. (2020). The Challenge of Sustainable Development. Retrieved from https://www.soas.ac.uk/cedep-demos/000_P501_USD_K3736-Demo/unit1/page_12.htm
- Steele, W., & Rickards, L. (2021). *The Sustainable Development Goals in Higher Education: A Transformative Agenda*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ullah, M. H., Ajmal, M., & Rahman, F. (2011). Analysis of quality indicators of higher education in Pakistan. *Canadian Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1), 1–5.
- Volchik, V., Oganesyanyan, A., & Olejarz, T. (2018). Higher education as a factor of socio-economic performance and development. *Journal of International Studies*, 11(4), 326–340. (add page numbers if confirmed from original article)
- Weinstein, R. (2017). University selectivity, initial job quality, and longer-run salary.
- Wickramasinghe, V. (2018). Higher education in state universities in Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Educational Management*.
- Zhu, T. T., Peng, H. R., & Zhang, Y. J. (2018). The influence of higher education development on economic growth. *Higher Education Policy*, 31(2), 139–157.