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Reimagining the Issues of Governance & Administration in Public Sector Universities: An Analysis of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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ABSTRACT

Public universities in the province of KP in Pakistan are facing growing pressure to expand access, improve quality and be accountable under harsh economic conditions and legal complexity. There is a lack of studies on KP specific governance-administration dynamics that is impacting our understanding of the impact of legal systems on the performance of these institutions. Hence, the objective of this study is to review the governance and administration practices at KP public universities focusing on the issues of decision-making, accountability and major constraints affecting performance. Using mixed methods convergent research design this study collects quantitative data from a survey of 204 university stakeholders and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with 28 stakeholders along with analyzing legal instruments and institutional documents to allow data triangulation and thematic analysis. Findings suggest that though general legal framework for the institutions have been implemented their practical efficacy has been varied, administrative inefficiencies in procurement, human resource management and execution of decisions are acting as major constraints, leadership instability and unclear distribution of authority, are further degrading performance, and the accountability mechanisms have not been uniformly implemented. This study concludes that the governance constraints faced by universities in KP lie more in non-implementation and inadequate administrative efficiency than flaws within their legal framework. Improving digital systems, fostering leadership continuity, and granting operational autonomy with appropriate accountability are key to enhancing these institutions' performance.

Keywords: Governance, Public Universities, Administrative Efficiency, Higher Education Policy, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Introduction

Public sector universities are key to the development, economy and nation-building aspects of society, training teachers, doctors, engineers, researchers and civil servants to serve in both the public and private sectors. In Pakistan and particularly KP these



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universities have an added social function of ensuring low-cost higher education for a large student population from the low and middle classes. Universities in KP, in a rapidly growing student environment, are functioning in challenging circumstances as they deal with resource constraints, mounting pressure to conduct research and demonstrate greater public accountability and transparency, governance and administration therefore are central to their effectiveness.

Higher education governance broadly refers to the system through which institutions' roles, powers and responsibilities are defined with regard to policy and strategic direction of the institution and comprises bodies such as government institutions, university senates, syndicates, academic councils and university leaders. Administration concerns itself with the implementation structures of such decisions, including budgeting, HR, procurement, examination, students affairs and quality assurance mechanisms. As de Boer et al. (2007), Shattock (2010) and World Bank (2017) agree, the two concepts are inseparable. In addition, the successfulness of these governance arrangements becomes the decisive factor to quality improvement mechanisms functioning or not within the institution (Ahmed, 2008). A lack of proper administration will result in an ineffective governance system, whereas a lack of governance will create chaos administratively.

In recent global developments, higher education systems are seen to require balancing public accountability and institutional autonomy, ensuring research innovation and market response, with effective digital adoption. Trends identified by the World Bank (2017), UNESCO (2024) and the OECD (2025) indicate that leadership development, clear rules, quality assurances systems and funding security are critical governance issues impacting university systems globally and especially those that have grown rapidly without proportional reforms to their governance structures. This can be seen within Pakistani higher education systems.

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has been active in developing a standardized national policy system, quality frameworks and financial security and support for research through effective system and data development. Despite these efforts, governance and administration in provincial universities is hampered by overlaps between federal and provincial responsibilities, lengthy leadership appointments, poor internal coordination, politically driven decisions and resource constraints. These issues are pervasive, yet lack in-depth province-specific analysis concerning their governance dimension.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities Act, 2012 (amended till 2024), acts as the foundational law governing a large number of provincial universities in KP. While the law facilitates proper accountability, participation and management, it does not always guarantee effective administration in practice. Individual institutional experiences of implementing the act, co-ordination of statutory bodies and operational management are dependent on multiple factors.

The debate in public sector universities centers on government controls and university autonomy. The tendency towards closer government control may lead to enhanced accountability but can compromise strategic flexibility with bureaucracy. Conversely, unhindered autonomy may result in governance challenges. Effective governance according to Altbach et al. (2019) and de Boer et al. (2007) is a blend of authority, procedure and performance where leadership skills and robust policies come into play. This balance remains an issue in KP public universities.

Poor administration can be directly responsible for poor academic outcomes. Shortages in academic staff due to slow faculty recruitment, outdated learning resources due to lengthy procurement procedures and student mistrust of examination and record



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management systems. To perceive governance and administration solely as a managerial concern, therefore ignores the negative impact on equity and the quality of education as well as student outcomes.

A significant lack of research in higher education in Pakistan is found at the province-specific level focusing on governance and administration, particularly exploring the relationship between legislative frameworks and the reality at the institutions. Research is largely fragmented and focused at the national level, or covers issues of financing or quality assurance at a national level. An in-depth look at KP's particular circumstances is necessary.

The current study therefore looks into the governance structures and administrative mechanisms operating in public sector universities in KP, exploring how their respective statutory requirements work and how day-to-day operations and potential critical issues are impacting institutional efficiency, suggesting realistic solutions for enhancement aligned with current trends.

The central theme of the study is to provide a new outlook on governance and administration in KP public universities based on empirical analysis. We contribute to the existing discussion about public university reform, specifically in developing countries with the discrepancies between law and practice.

Research Objective

To examine the governance structure of KP public sector universities with respect to statutory bodies and leader's powers and accountability

To find out the administrative practices within the KP public sector universities and to observe their impact on the governance-administration related issues.

Research Questions

What are the governance structure and decision making mechanisms at public sector universities of KP?

What are the key administrative and governance challenges facing public universities in KP and what effect do these have on institutional performance?

Conceptualizing University Governance and Administration

Higher education governance trends indicate a move from traditional top-down state control toward multi-actor frameworks involving government, university leaders, faculty and student bodies. De Boer et al. (2007) describes the modern, 'hybrid governance' approach which combines bureaucratic controls, managerial practices and collegial traditions, thus creating possibilities for greater flexibility but also conflict. Legal mandates may exist for institutions but be contentious in practice.

Administrative systems are the vehicles that implement governance structures. As Shattock (2010) asserts, the failure of a governance system lies in its failure to achieve its objectives through effective administration. Typically, poor administrative systems in public institutions stem from being over-centralized, under-digitized, poorly coordinated or understaffed-clearly indicating the importance of both capability and clear mandates. Apart from legal and structure perspective, increasing attention is being paid to the human capital perspective within the literature. Administrative efficiency is not just a function of explicit rule and regulations but rather dependent on the working skills and motivation of human capital. Current empirically supported studies claim that a training program with well-structured system for the staff will be the prior condition for institutional effectiveness due to its significant contribution in increasing the productivity



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of a university by boosting employee's satisfaction with their job (Iqbal et al. 2024).

Political economy plays a major role in developing world public university governance and administration. As identified by Altbach et al. (2019), universities constantly balance conflicting goals of increasing access, academic excellence, research outcomes and demands for greater reporting and accountability with limited budgets, a dynamic often characterized as a "high expectation-low capacity" dilemma which is pertinent to the public sector universities in KP.

Theoretical Perspectives on KP Context

The following three theoretical frameworks have relevance for analyzing governance in KP public universities:

State Control vs. Institutional Autonomy: This approach helps examine the range of discretion an institution has over various crucial elements including staffing, budgeting and academics. The literature suggests a higher degree of institutional autonomy with a high level of public accountability leads to a better long term performance in comparison to either extremes of full state control or full university autonomy (World Bank, 2017). A historical perspective on these evolving approaches has noted that reaching an equilibrium is what institutions must do when trying to abandon traditional models that are characterized by top-down state domination (Esper, 2024).

New Public Management (NPM): this management framework incorporates measurable outputs and performance indicators, promotes increased efficiency in services, requires strategic planning and establishes an increased level of accountability toward the public through specific objectives and outcome targets. Though implemented widely, NPM in developing countries, particularly South Asia, is being increasingly debated for its impact on participation in academics and over-emphasis on quantifiable metrics. Empirical evidence has further indicated that reforms spurred by NPM can pose formidable barriers to career development and administrative complexities for support staff within the university (Caldern-Orellana et al. 2023). Marketization forces, it has been noted, has at times caused incoherence in governance rather than improvement in many of the provinces such as KP. This theoretical framework is useful in explaining some of the tensions observed between the administrative drive toward efficiency and the reality of collegial decision making processes.

Network or Shared Governance: Under this system, power is shared between various bodies and stakeholders within an institution. It relies heavily on the principle of stakeholder participation but also necessitates clarity of roles and confidence in decision making processes between all stakeholders. If roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined, or if the appointment process leads to delays, shared governance may degenerate into a meaningless procedural ritual. This scenario is often encountered in developing country public institutions, including in KP.

Global and Regional Trends in Higher Education Governance

The focus internationally continues to be on increased institutional agility, data driven decision-making and effective implementation to foster innovation (OECD, 2025). UNESCO (2024) stresses that successful educational systems, particularly those in developing countries, require effective governance, strong policies and efficient administrative capacity. South Asia has witnessed significant expansion of higher education, but at a slower pace compared to reforms in leadership development, transparent recruitment, fiscal autonomy and planning using empirical data, creating significant bottlenecks at institutional level which Pakistan appears to be facing as well.



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Higher Education Governance in Pakistan

Due to the federal-provincial division, higher education is a shared responsibility in Pakistan. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) aims to harmonize standards across the country by creating policy frameworks, setting quality assurances mechanisms and supporting research through data development and research incentives. In the case of Pakistan particularly, the efficiency of BoGs for maintenance of quality in the academia is another important variable especially in the context of differences between public and private institutional demands (Usman, 2014). However, institutional variations mean that effective implementation at the provincial level differs. This can be attributed to issues such as protracted leadership appointments, lack of institutional planning and monitoring capabilities, and limited operational autonomy, coupled with tendency for statutory bodies to be merely a forum for approval rather than critical strategic thinking. Fiscal management remains an issue due to over-reliance on government funding, where delays in budget allocation impede effective institutional planning and implementation strategies.

Governance and Administration in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities Act, 2012 (amended till 2024) provide the basic legal framework for a majority of KP's public sector universities and covers the constitution, functions and duties of their various bodies, leadership appointments and a focus on efficiency and transparency of the system. While the act highlights key improvements, actual implementation at institution level remains variable based on the institution's size, age and resources. Public sector universities in KP vary greatly between large and established with complex but established bureaucracy and smaller and new institutions struggling with limited human and financial resources and capacity for implementation.

Concerns are consistently expressed regarding delayed decision-making, difficulty implementing reforms and amendments, lack of coordination between various university bodies, and the slow pace of implementation of new policies. These issues are deeply rooted in the inability of the systems at university level to efficiently handle decisions once they are made at the decision-making bodies or in some cases at higher levels, suggesting an over-reliance on the existing formal legal system rather than improving its practical implementation.

Key Trends in Literature

Leadership Appointments: Stable leadership is vital for any successful system; delays in appointing university VCs and other leaders lead to administrative inefficiencies and policy instability. The current Pakistani scenario including KP faces issues with timely appointments.

Statutory Bodies: University bodies like senates and syndicates are key for governance but if not meeting consistently, are slow to react and if not evidence based are less productive in their recommendations. Decisions are often taken through adherence to formal procedures rather than in a way that enhances institutional learning and responsiveness.

Digital Administration: Modern digital platforms are essential for smooth administrative operations such as in admissions, finance and examination. While efforts are being made by HEC, institutional capacity is variable in adopting digital systems, thus creating disparities in administrative efficiency.

Quality Assurance (QA): The QECs of universities are an important body but their



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recommendations are rarely translated into the budgets, policies or implementation plans, thus limiting the actual impact of quality assurance systems at the institution level.

Debates and Research Gaps

A major debate in public sector universities regards whether or not administrative issues are caused by the laws or by faulty administrative management. Many scholars agree that these issues interact. While KP has seen some legislative reforms, there remains little empirical work examining how well they integrate into the existing administrative structures and how leadership is affected by this process. Another issue of debate involves the notion of autonomy; while greater autonomy has been proposed to address administrative issues it poses concerns about accountability. A balance of clear delegation, with accountability via performance monitoring and financially auditable systems seem like a more holistic solution, but specific operational details are missing from literature specific to KP public universities. The most conspicuous research gap appears in a province-specific in depth study combining administrative practices, governance issues and perceptions of actors towards both of these concepts. The study attempts to fill this research gap, concentrating more on suggesting implementable policy recommendations to the unique situation of KP.

Trends up to 2025 and Implications for Study

By 2025 policy indications are toward improved higher education governance and efficient administration through improved reporting and evidence-based performance, with HEC focused on enhanced systems-wide monitoring. The legislative reforms carried out at the provincial level in KP reveal the consistent efforts for better governance structure. According to the international trend "adaptive governance" approach prevails in higher education-implying need for responsive and decisive legislation, flexible to respond to fast change, and to promote public trust. Thus in the success of legislative reforms in KP, it is not only changes in legislation that must be addressed, but practical implementation plans are needed at the institution level which will be pertinent to current context of KP. The present paper, utilizing the existing literature, points out where and what needs to be reformed so that effectiveness and quality of public universities system in KP are improved.

Methodology

Research Design

A mixed methods convergent design was adopted for this study. A mixed methods convergent design requires that quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently and merged during the analysis. It is used in the study of governance and administration of public universities, as the structural factors are inherently tied to lived experience. Quantitative data measure the patterns while qualitative data provide explanation for such patterns, giving depth and validation to the results. Mixed methods also suit the study's two objectives; governance requires examining both the existence of structures and perception of their effectiveness while understanding administrative issues demands exploring operational difficulties and consequences through in-depth narrative analysis.

Population and Sampling

The universe of the study is the ten public sector universities of KP operating under provincial legislation. Through a purposive selection, universities of varied age, size and



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location were included in the study sample.

For the quantitative segment of this study, a stratified purposive sampling approach enabled the selection of 220 potential respondents. This sample comprises of faculty with a role in academic governance and in policy development, administrative staff, QA personnel and staff involved in student affairs at different levels within the universities. The final valid sample after removing invalid responses stands at 204.

For the qualitative data collection, 28 key individuals from the ten sampled public sector universities were interviewed including the university Vice Chancellors' office, registrars, treasury departments, quality assurance officials, senior faculty and members of the statutory bodies. This varied selection helped generate multiple perspectives regarding governance processes within the institutions.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Data was collected using four (4) sources;

A structured Survey Questionnaire. Respondents were administered a survey designed to solicit their views on administrative tasks and function of offices; transparency of the role of the university in governance; the role of the university in governance; decision making effectiveness, with a 5-point Likert scale (1- Strongly Disagree to 5- Strongly Agree). The survey was pre-tested and refined before its application.

Semi-Structured Interviews. Interview guide was used to elicit views on issues related to mechanisms of governance and administration from participants. A range of governance processes and administrative procedures, as well as views on present strength, weakness and suggestions were elicited through open-ended interview questions. All interviews were audio-recorded using voice recorder and later transcribed into text form without revealing identity of interviewees.

Document Analysis. Data was obtained through analysis of KP Universities Act, 2012(as amended till 2024); statutes of universities, wherever available; relevant policy documents; quality assurance reports, operational manuals; minutes of relevant committees, wherever accessed.

Institutional Process notes. These documents were developed based on information obtained through public university policy document analysis, supplemented by interview/survey data. It aimed to verify allegations on administrative procedures in institutions, approval process and internal file-handling.

Data Analysis Procedures

The descriptive statistical methods (frequencies, percentages and means) were applied to analyze the quantitative data extracted from the surveys. Composite indices for measures of governance clarity and administration efficiency were calculated. Reliability test of survey scale items was done by using Cronbach's alpha; acceptable scores were anything above 0.7. Survey scale and scale of governance and administration construction were confirmed.

The qualitative data collected from interviews was analyzed using a thematic analysis method. Initial codes from the transcripts were open coded; themes identified from open coding were then axial coded and organized to develop analytical themes such as administrative bottlenecks, issues in delegation of authority, influence of politics on the functioning of governance bodies, leadership effectiveness, etc.

Documentary data were subjected to directed content analysis; legal frameworks such as KP Universities Act, statutes and policies acted as guidelines for what evidence would be collected. Information in the documents was categorized based on its relevance to the



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research questions. Finally, the qualitative and quantitative findings were integrated during a narrative comparison phase whereby data from both sources were integrated into comprehensive analysis and interpretations.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were given full information about the research, the purpose, how data would be collected, and how it would be used. Participation was strictly voluntary, and individuals were assured that they could withdraw their participation at any stage of the research process without suffering adverse consequences. Confidentiality of participants was maintained by not identifying them individually, as well as withholding names of specific institutions in publications that would enable identification of individuals. All collected data were stored securely.

Methodological Limitations

There are three key limitations of this study: (1) Due to practical constraints not all relevant documents were accessible, which could potentially limit the depth of the document analysis. (2) The analysis may be skewed by the perceptions of respondents, as survey and interview data rely on subjective accounts which may be biased for various reasons such as an individuals' personal experiences and expectations at institution, thus a measure to address it was through ensuring a broad range of participants. (3) As this was a cross-sectional study, it only captured a snapshot of what was happening at institutions at a given time; it does not indicate whether such situation will be lasting in the long run, which can be influenced by many factors and therefore be subject to change overtime, for example if significant structural changes are implemented into the universities. A triangulation of various methods did serve to counteract most of these limitations.

Data Analysis

The total sample size in this study is 204 respondents from 10 public universities of KP Province. Nearly 38 percent of them were administrators, 34 percent teachers with roles in governance of the institution, 18 percent academic heads or deans, and 10 percent were from Quality Assurance or Student Affairs sectors. The sampled universities varied in age and size, the ten included institutions with a few of the oldest and largest, contributing a bit more responses toward them compared to newly established and smaller ones. Most respondents (more than 5 years of experience in higher education) were perceived to possess knowledge about governance and administrative processes. Most interviewees were in key positions; giving more credence to their information.

Governance Structures Functioning

Governance systems are found in nearly all 10 institutions, though perceptions of their effectiveness are mixed; the average response to the clarity of role of governance bodies stood at 3.1 on a 5-point Likert scale, this score tended to be lower in those universities where different governance bodies shared certain overlapping areas of responsibility, thus contributing to blurred lines and conflicting views. While 62% of respondents indicated statutory bodies met on time, nearly all participants in interviews and surveys indicated that the process of decision making is slow due to large agenda items and the constant postponement of decisions. Many universities adhere to stipulated frequencies of meeting but there remains lack of tracking for implementation of decisions taken, creating an illusion of governance that doesn't impact reality in a tangible way.



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Leadership and Decision-Making Mechanisms

Consistent leadership across departments was shown to be key to good governance. Higher scores in governance confidence levels corresponded strongly with leadership stability within institutions, in contrast to those that were facing extended interim leadership roles which displayed low confidence levels. The finding that over 57% of survey respondents thought of leadership changes to have a negative impact, is supported by numerous statements from interviews where leaders often avoided making risky or critical long-term decisions due to the tenuous nature of interim leadership. Stable leadership also correlates with higher scores on administrative efficiency.

Administrative System Performance

The administrative aspect was identified as a weaker area with a mean score of 2.8 on a scale of 5. Areas of concern primarily involved delays in the processing of procurement requests, HR issues (recruitment and confirmation) and lengthy in-house filing systems; more than 68% respondents admitted that the presence of a number of tiers in an administrative structure considerably delay ordinary administrative processing. Error and dispute generation is reported at over 50% across administrative functions, particularly those related to finance and examinations due to semi-manual processes. The research indicated that there is a need for greater clarity of delegations of authority as most of the time, administrators avoid tasks where they fear a wrong action may have repercussions in their administrative function. "Defensive administration" where administrators tend to circulate files unnecessarily can lead to substantial time losses.

Accountability, Transparency, and Trust

Half of the survey respondents (49%) admitted that mechanisms for accountability exist in their institution, yet only 36% felt that those mechanisms are implemented with any sort of consistency. Quality Assurance Units were acknowledged as being present, however the input from the Quality Assurance cells at university levels are neither integrated properly into their planning process nor the financial process, creating a gap that does not seem to benefit the university as a whole. Trust in systems seemed to decline as results were less transparent.

Legal and Policy Implementation

Over 61% of respondents recognized the importance of legal framework for universities and the amended rules; their application in their institutions however indicated varying degrees of adoption, based on university size, available resources, and the capacity of the legal department to respond promptly to the change in laws, thus implying a need for the provision of practical solutions for reform.

Combined Analysis of Findings

All results jointly reflect that while formal institutions appear to exist and to be institutionalized in KP universities, institutional action is an issue of enforcement of these systems. The core problems were perceived to exist at the administrative system execution stage; where it fails to enact institutional goals into action. In addition to the identified shortcomings in the administrative aspect, leadership stability, transparency of the entire process, consistent application of accountability rules and the quality assurances processes that are never effectively linked with finances and budget are key to a better system. All research questions were answered through this investigation of the way the governance systems at university level actually work.



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Discussion

These findings seem to strongly corroborate existing literature which argues that public universities can achieve results only through the coordinated implementation of authority, process and administration (Shattock, 2010; de Boer et al., 2007). The public universities in KP do have governance structures in place but in practice they are less coherent. It appears that despite well-defined and formally recognized statutory bodies the administration does not meet targets and deadlines efficiently causing them to defer decisions thus failing to meet their aims, suggesting an issue of process-oriented vs. Result-oriented governance which is a widespread dilemma at public institutions. Leadership is consistently considered to be key to institutional success and the present study further establishes that stability in leadership positions results in better functioning governance systems due to continued planning, effective delegation of duties and follow-up on decisions made. Delays in the appointments of university leaders result in long-term ad-hoc arrangements. A critical weakness identified by this study is in the administrative functioning of these institutions; administrative delays in key areas such as procurements, finance and human resources directly impact effective teaching and learning processes. The nature of the administrative functions, particularly in terms of over-circulation of documents due to perceived fear of culpability is indeed a form of "defensive administration." Such practices not only reduce administrative efficiency and the ability to deliver tasks on time but can also have negative implications for the institution's reputation and internal confidence. A strong leadership structure with an open and transparent administration is the only feasible way out.

This study provides some insight to the issue of university autonomy. Autonomy, although widely regarded as increasing the efficiency within the public university system, has a commensurate need for accountability mechanism that ensures public confidence and efficient use of public funds. The study provides a conclusion that "well-defined autonomy with more strong accountability mechanisms to public" and the integration of Quality Assurance Committees, with Planning and Budget departments be taken into more attention for making suggestions related to improvement into practices with real-time basis. The study reiterates that a more comprehensive approach that balances autonomy with accountability, processes and their implementation through strong leadership and effective system be adopted for harnessing the capabilities of the KP public university system. The study has limitations since it is based on interview and survey data, therefore, subjectivity by respondent and no longitudinal data can be obtained for the tracking of reforms, but the data provided give a true picture of the existing state of governance and administration within KP public university system.

Recommendations

Given below are few practical and pragmatic suggestions to the public universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in revamping of their systems of governance and administration:

Assisting the Implementation of Laws: Help Universities in adoption of the amended or new laws by providing readymade templates and frameworks for their absorption in the existing management structure so that the need to capacity build of the institutions towards effective and uniform adoption are met with appropriate operational guidelines and strategies.

Accelerating the appointment of Leadership: Specific timeframe and standardized processes be set for appointment of leaderships as frequent vacant positions which are on account of delays in selection and appointment have been stated to be a detrimental



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factor to effective administrative system and implementation of policies.

Preparation of Comprehensive Delegation Matrices: The delegation matrices must be created for each institution clearly outlining where (at what level) and when each of the various administrative duties could be managed. These matrices will substantially decrease redundant layers of approvals.

Convergence of Digitization of Administration and Governance Reform: Modern administrative systems (like submission of documents online and tracking of official files) should be invested in and introduced as an important part of a university's reform efforts; efficiency of the administrative system is a necessary component to effective transparency and accountability as well as it has the potential to reduce time and workloads significantly.

Strengthen Statutory Body Performance: Universities should create frameworks to ensure that meetings of the statutory bodies, though mandatory for legal compliance, become performance oriented by using evidence-based meeting agendas and by tracking the execution of the decisions taken; this ensures that meeting minutes reflect progress rather than just pending issues.

Integrate QA with Planning and Finance: Quality Assurance committees' findings should not only be noted but integrated into academic planning and budgeting cycles. Every important QEC recommendation must have an assigned entity responsible for implementing it, a timeframe within which it should be implemented and be linked to sources of funding, either directly from external funding sources or internally from the universities' budgets.

Provide Targeted Training to Staff: Middle and senior level administrators as well as members of the university statutory bodies must receive training on effective interpretations of the laws, effective meeting procedures and, data-based decision-making along with how each can better utilize technology to assist them.

Consider A Governance Observatory/Cell: A mechanism, such as a provincial higher education governance observatory or a performance cell, should be established to support institutional learning and help provide data and guidance to all public universities and institutions in the province toward efficient governance mechanisms through sharing the best practices adopted by individual institutions, so that a collaborative learning environment prevails at a province wide level.

The aim of the reforms should be threefold: achieving legal clarity, ensuring institutional autonomy with corresponding accountability, and re-defining systems to create a performance-based administrative structure which will result in the efficient service delivery to meet the needs and demands of the community served by the KP public universities.

Conclusion

In this paper we analyzed the governance system and administrative structure of public sector universities in KP using mixed methods of research. It was found that whereas governance system are indeed established at university level, the actual performance of its various functionalities differs from that established at legislative level due to a variety of reasons. Though statutory bodies function on scheduled time; but due to the presence of too many blockages at different stages; the decision execution time does not seem to have improved.

We identified that it is the administrative block that holds key significance between a good governance structure and the outcomes achieved. Procurements, HR processing, and file processing are some areas that have direct bearing over the efficiency of the



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entire institution and thus the institutional responsiveness. Leadership instability due to delayed appointments and protracted ad-holism is considered to affect policy making adversely, weakening the whole decision making mechanism. Accountability is found to be inconsistent across institutions leading to erosion of the confidence among the respondents.

This research established that in KP, problems are neither wholly caused by inappropriate laws nor entirely by lack of administrative competence but are to a large extent influenced by the interrelationship between the two. We found that amendment to acts should go hand-in-hand with enhancement of systems through administrative measures including clarification of delegating of authorities, utilization of technology and building administrative capacity of the middle tier administrative staff of the universities as well as the members of the university's statutory bodies. The evidence for effective higher education system in KP is linked to the combination of these aspects; therefore, the reforms at the higher education level in the country have to be comprehensive and institution based.

The implication of our research to theories suggest that the current model of governance is better suited to blended governance where State control and administrative techniques along with collegial governance must work together. It is perhaps essential that instead of establishing full university autonomy without adequate controls, precisely defined autonomy coupled with proper and structured performance related accountability along with enhanced operational efficiency would be more apt in context of the KP public universities.

A few significant limitations in the study includes unavailability of a comprehensive set of documents and lack of longitudinal research design which would allow tracing the reform process and identifying changes over a prolonged period of time and across multiple institutions for detailed comparison and analysis; however, the results presented have reliably indicated existing trends in this regard. Future studies can focus on an institution-wide approach to track longitudinal changes and evaluate policy outcomes.

It is both realistic and feasible to create ideal governance and administrative systems at KP public universities; it depends on an effort of defining clear parameters of work and creating autonomy balanced with strong accountability mechanisms along with well-designed implementation plans for effective and efficient delivery of institutional mandate toward human development.

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