

## PROMOTION OF RESEARCH CULTURE –ENHANCING QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

*Research is the first strand, embracing the systematic generation of new knowledge, development of new ideas and experiment with new techniques. These activities inform student learning and provide an intellectual platform for engaging in knowledge transfer. The second strand is learning and teaching. It explicates a body of ideas, is informed by available research, and instills habits of inquiry that reflect the provisional nature of knowledge. The final strand is knowledge transfer. It encompasses many dimensions of interaction between academia and the wider society – from the way public intellectuals use media platforms to participate in debate, to policy work for government, industry and communities, to contract research and education services, and to the complex and risky work of creating business ventures to distribute new knowledge. We are concerned about a Research Culture because:*

- *Research is the basis of how a university education works*
- *It is the intellectual life blood of our staff*
- *It should be the fundamental support of our teaching*
- *It is a basis of support for our community*

*Research and experimental development comprises creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of stock of knowledge to devise new applications. The essential characteristics of research activity is that it leads to publicly, verifiable outcomes which are open to peer appraisal. Research and experimental development comprises: creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase knowledge of humanity, culture and society, and the use of stock of knowledge to devise new applications.*

*Key Words: Research, Culture and Higher Education.*

### INTRODUCTION:

Research is an activity which is concerned primarily with secondarily with knowledge dissemination to academic peers and students. And Culture has been defined as „the software of the mind. More technically, culture consists of the shared norms, values, and practices associated with a nation, organization, or profession.

The term “research culture” is widely referred to, especially in relation to the “new universities,” polytechnics and professions in transition from a non-research environment into one that demands research activity. Research is the first strand embracing the systematic generation of new knowledge, development of new ideas and experiment with new techniques. These activities inform student learning and provide an intellectual platform for engaging in knowledge transfer. The second strand is Learning and Teaching. It explicates a body of ideas is informed by available research, and instills habits of inquiry that reflect the provisional nature of knowledge. The final strand is knowledge transfer. It encompasses many dimensions of interaction between academia and the wider society – from the way public intellectuals use media platforms to participate in debate, to policy work for government, industry and communities, to contract research and education services, and to the complex and risky work of creating business ventures to distribute new knowledge . we are concerned about a research culture because

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The essential characteristic of research activity is that it leads to publicly verifiable outcomes which are open to peer appraisal. Research and experimental development comprises: creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humanity, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications Any activity classified as research and experimental development is characterised by originality; it should have investigation as a primary objective and should have the potential to produce results that are sufficiently general for humanity's stock of knowledge (theoretical and/or practical) to be recognisably increased. Most higher education research work would qualify as research and experimental development.

Enhancing the quality of teaching and learning is a key strategic focus area in higher education. From a national perspective, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has identified the improvement of teaching and learning to be of critical importance for improving success rates and has acknowledged the strategic role of the monitoring, evaluation, and financing of teaching and learning (DHET, 2012). The importance of investment in teaching and learning is also underscored in the 10-Point Plan for higher education and training developed by the Development Bank of Southern African (DBSA), commissioned by DHET (DBSA, 2010). Internationally, public accountability demands on higher education institutions, especially in relation to the quality of teaching and learning, are increasing and higher education institutions have to find ways of providing evidence in concrete, observable and measurable ways of what they are doing to improve teaching and learning (McCormick, 2009). Research into student engagement shows that although student engagement measures are used in countries such as the United States (US), Australia and New Zealand for external accountability purposes, the greatest value of these measures lies in the fact that they promote critical, internal self-reflection or reflective accountability (McCormick, 2009). In other words, the data from these measures help institutions to promote a culture of evidence-based decision making by providing data to identify areas of strength and weakness in the teaching and learning environment. Used in addition to existing institutional data results from the surveys they assist institutions to develop contextually appropriate interventions to improve teaching and learning.

It is significant to understand that research is designed to solve particular existing problems, so there is a much larger audience eager to support research that is likely to be profitable or solve problems of immediate concern. At the same time we must also understand how research impacts our decision making. Most people make decisions without gathered informations to back them up. Only few do. The problem is most people aren't patient enough to put in the effort. Research requires time, effort, and sometimes money to have the evidence we need to make a sound decision that's why many avoid it. The research we do and evidence we gather will have impact on our future, and for this we be adviced and consider the risks or consequences of making an important decision with inadequate evidence

Objective of the paper and the research questions

The main objective of the study is to find out that how the teachers and students of higher education institutions view research and research activities, and whether they are involved in different activities to promote research culture at their institutions or not.

#### Methodology

This qualitative research study consists of a questionnaire based interview in which the following ten broad questions have been focused. Sixty teachers and eighty students of four public and private sector degree awarding institutions were interviewed, and the data were qualitatively analyzed.

#### Broad questions

1. What is your opinion about research?
2. How do you view the significance of research activity?
3. If you are engaged in research, what role are you playing in that?
4. Is there any compulsion of conducting research from the administration at your institution?
5. Is research a component of the degree programme you are teaching or studying?

#### Findings and Conclusion

There is no denying the fact that research is a complex skill and is different from some procedural or other skills, but despite its complexity we can't ignore its significance by considering some sort of lame excuses. The results of the study show that both teachers and students are aware of the importance of research but seem reluctant to use available resources for research. The respondents claimed that private sector degree awarding institutions have better facilities than the public sector universities but individual research is also a neglected area. Teachers supervise and students take up research project which is primarily a compulsory component for the award of degree, but that is done under compulsion which does not ignite students' inquiry skills nor attract teachers to go for voluntary research. Present is the age of knowledge gaining and transferring the same to posterity for better present and

comfortable future. But the area of research, as the results reflect, does not seem to be focused because the subjects feel research expert faculties are not available; libraries are present but relevant matter is absent; computer labs do not provide access to a rich treasure of knowledge, etc. On line access to valuable research journals is very discouraging; even at some places it's just like „building castle in the air“ , as uttered by some respondents. The study reveals that students are engaged in research because it is a compulsory part of degree programme they are studying; other wise they feel there is noneed of research, as said by some respondents.

#### Implications

In the light of these findings and conclusion the following implication are made for the promotion of research culture at the degree awarding institutions:

1. There should be upgradation of faculty members' research qualification through the completion of higher degrees.
2. University should increase the research capacity of faculty through short courses that may focus on research methods.
3. Curriculum may be designed in such a way that teachers and students should feel encouraged to conduct research enthusiastically.
4. The research theses, of the degree programmes, should be properly propagated amongst the concerned circles of learning so that a knowledge sharing culture may be promoted, and the students' inquiry skills should be polished in a creative manner by incorporating small scale research assignments periodically in their higher education programmes.
5. Federal and provincial governments as well as HEC should provide more logistic support to universities for the promotion of research culture.
6. There must be frequent seminars at universities on research in which faculty and students should participate, and their proceedings should be publicized in university/institution newsletter.
7. Ample monetary benefits should be extended to those who conduct voluntary research.

#### Conclusions

Research culture reflects the values, ideals and beliefs about research within the organisation. They, in turn, are reflected in the research behaviours, research actions and research symbols of the organisation. Just as the “teaching culture” of the institution is found in the teaching values and styles, and the “management culture” found in the managerial values and styles then the “research culture” would reflect the research values. The most striking finding of the study is related to faculty members who are also found less enthusiastic about research.

1) Research-based academic studies allow students developing research-related capabilities by promoting critical scientific thinking, solution of problems and use other analytic strategies and technical tools; enables students to place learning within a meaningful context, establishing environment that encourages and supports the research and emphasizes the synergy between research activity and learning in interdisciplinary research fields.

2) The development of students’ scientific thinking as the quality of students’ learning outcomes is facilitated by using various new learning opportunities: sources of information, new technologies, and several languages to reach an important subjective goal. This is a significant social and cultural context for facilitating communication and collaboration in research-based academic studies in various diverse interaction situations for mutual and social enrichment through which each master student constructs an important subjective goal on their own.

3) In the future research-based academic studies in our Master’s programme have to be ensured by improving of life wide learning quality. That means that it is needed to create transformative learning environment, capable of changing, in which all the involved are able to self-reflect and, alongside, re-create themselves via multidimensional opportunities to change life and work in life wide learning context.

4) Advantages in organization of opportunities of research-based academic studies – developed students’ research-related capabilities integrating learning, communication and collaboration.

5) Difficulties in organization of opportunities of research-based academic studies – developed students’ research-related capabilities by organizing socio-cultural learning in constructivistic system.

“In order to promote the students’ quality of learning outcomes – development of research-related capabilities in higher education in the research-based academic studies it is necessary broadening students’ experience, because then their social recognition would also get improved, which, in its turn, would have a certain impact on students’ self-feeling or by improving students’ social recognition, their experience would broaden, which, in its turn, would have an impact on students’ self-feeling

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