

## GLOBAL AMBITIONS, LOCAL REALITIES: THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL RANKINGS ON QUALITY ASSURANCE OF PAKISTAN' HIGHER EDUCATION

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### **Abstract**

*World university league tables have emerged as powerful forces in the shaping of higher education institutions throughout the world. In Pakistan, these rankings are increasingly used for universities' quality assurance (QA), policy priorities and the allocation of resources. This article explores how the global rankings are shaping the QA policies and practices in Pakistani universities and the contradictions between global and national (HEC) criteria and their impact at the institutional and academic levels. A qualitative, multi-case study approach was employed. Semi structured interviews of 15 higher education senior management (VCs, Registrars, QEC Directors) of 4 public and private Pakistani universities were conducted. The data were thematically analyzed for patterns and themes. Outcomes show that international rankings now occupy strategic space in the context of leadership KPIs and resource allocation. Ranking-maniacal reforms have warped QA priorities, research imperatives, and data disclosures. But these changes also produce conflicts with HEC norms, administrative overhead, faculty strain, and possible "mission drift" away from teaching and community service. Universities now need to reconcile between competitive in the global markets and the local needs of education. In Pakistan, being able to sustain quality assurance in Higher Education, a globally and locally responsive strategy which should be adopted in harmony, with a better research, innovative teaching and, society collaboration. The paper advocates for context-based QA approaches, stakeholder involvement, and lean compliance processes.*

### **Keywords**

*International University Rankings; QA; HE; Pakistan; HEC; institutional policy; academic culture.*

### **Introduction**

The expansion of international rankings of universities has transformed the higher education landscape throughout the world. Since their introduction in the early 2000s, rankings like the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings, Times Higher Education (THE) World University Ranking, and the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) have accumulated unparalleled power over (and effects on) universities, policy makers, and other stakeholders (Hou et al., 2021; Marginson, 2022). These rating mechanisms highlight multiple dimensions, such as research productivity, citation impact, qualifications of academic staff, international collaboration

and, increasingly, teaching standards, to evaluate and rank the performance of universities worldwide (Hou et al., 2021; Altbach & de Wit, 2020).

Worldwide, rankings are not only utilised as instruments of institutional self-reflection but also, an important driver of the global mobility of students, research resource allocation and national policy in higher education. Consequently, universities everywhere feel the heat to move up the worldwide rankings- which appear to safe or confirm institutional status, academic quality, and global competency (Lim, 2023; Hazelnorn, 2022). Pursuit to move up the ranks has led to marked transformation in the strategy of universities at the institutional level such as funding for infrastructure, international collaboration, faculty development and data driven systems of management (Marginson, 2022).

Critics contend that these rankings are inclined to tilt balance toward research productivity and internationalization to the detriment of quality of teaching, local relevance, equity, and community involvement (Altbach & de Wit, 2020; Malik & Javed, 2023). There are also concerns that global benchmarks may not always be in harmony with the local educational requirements and development priorities as, especially in developing countries the higher education institutions are resource constrained and are socially missioned (Hazelnorn, 2022; Nawaz & Saleem, 2022).

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) is the apex regulatory organization in Pakistan, responsible to define quality assurance (QA) standards, regulate accreditation, and provide direction on revisions in curricula (HEC, 2023). HEC has developed national QA frameworks including Pakistan Qualifications Framework, Institutional Performance Evaluation and program accreditation criteria to ensure the quality, relevance and accountability of the education (Shafiq & Mahmood, 2022). Notwithstanding these efforts, the growing urge of the Pakistani Universities to participate and excel in global rankings has encouraged numerous universities to reorient their policies, practices, and resource allocation policies to be in line with international practices (Ahmed et al., 2020; Shah & Khan, 2021).

This move towards international standards has led to some very pertinent questions of the alignment of international benchmarking criteria with the country's national educational priorities and QA systems. The increasing emphasis on research productivity and international exposure has been associated with radical alterations in the governance of universities, faculty workload, and allocation of resources, leading to a trade-off between the quest for international competitiveness and the reconciliation of local community, societal, and development objectives (Malik & Javed, 2023; Nawaz & Saleem, 2022). For example, universities might favour the production of research and global reach to improve rankings positions at the expense of innovative teaching, student support services and community engagement.

There is a need for evidence based research to question critically the impact of global ranking on QA policies and activities with in 'the Pakistani' social, civic, cultural and educational context. In particular, how do universities navigate the fit—or resolve the tension— between global standards and HEC's national QA benchmarks, and how do these processes influence governance, academic culture, and the larger mission of higher education.

Against this backdrop, this research analyses the influence of global rankings over local QA policies in Pakistani universities. It considers the convergence and divergence between global and national cultures, the effects on institutional strategy, and the wider implications for policy and practice in higher education. By revealing these dynamics, the research seeks to inform policy and debate regarding quality, access, and internationalisation in Pakistan higher education.

Therefore, the study seeks answers for the following research questions:

- What initiatives are taken by Pakistani universities for participating in global university rankings, as perceived by stakeholders of higher education?
- What are the quality assurance (QA) policies adopted by higher education institutions in Pakistan, according to stakeholders?
- In what ways are national quality assurance policies aligned with or different from the criteria set by global university ranking systems?
- How are global ranking criteria integrated into the quality assurance policies of Pakistani universities?

## Literature Review

### Worldwide University Rankings and Their Impact on HEIs in Pakistan

Global rankings of universities have become powerful devices and guiding forces in relation to higher education policy, funding and strategic thrust in much of the world. Since their creation, these rankings have evolved from league tables to well-articulated evaluation systems which dominate universities' internal and external agenda (Hazelkorn, 2022; Marginson, 2022).

The three most prominent global rankings are the QS World University Rankings, the Times Higher Education World University Rankings and the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU, also known as the Shanghai Rankings). They both have different methodologies but all give significant importance to factors such as research output, citation scores, faculty quality, international links and institutional brand name (Hou et al., 2021; Lim, 2023).

QS World University Rankings assess universities on six factors: academic reputation, employer reputation, faculty/student ratio, citations per faculty, international faculty ratio, and international student ratio. Research is the most weighted on the academic reputation that is determined through worldwide large scale surveys and this has significant effect usually for how universities think about their brand and reputation (QS, 2023).

THE World University Rankings also prioritize research and citation influence but incorporate factors such as teaching (the learning environment), industry income, and an international outlook. THE's approach tries to provide a more nuanced picture by complementing research and citation metrics with indicators on teaching resources and knowledge transfer, although these still account for the bulk of the score (THE, 2023).

Perhaps, for instance, ARWU (Shanghai Rankings), unlike the others which try to offer yardsticks that capture all aspects of a university's mission, is predominantly about research excellence as measured, it should be emphasized, largely in terms of standard bibliometrics (ARWU, 2023) (the size of bibliographic databases on which large universities may end by being able to purchase them means that they will always score disproportionately well according to these kinds of 133 The case of the MESH consortium or consortium-like institutions is probably here particularly interesting, given that they have manoeuvred themselves into a much more central position within their domestic higher education systems – we might see here, then, an interesting example of the theory of Giddens playing out with respect to the area of the global public good as well). This heavily data-driven system has also become highly influential globally, particularly for institutions wishing to attain 'world-class' research status (Altbach & de Wit, 2020).

Despite the methodological dissimilarity, the three ranking methods are biased towards research productivity and internationalization. This shift has contributed to an increasing recentralisation of university policies that encourage more research productivity, international networking, and institutional visibility. As Hazelkorn (2022) notes, ranking criteria are increasingly permeating into university strategic planning, resource allocations, and performance management. Public funding

and regulatory influence have in many countries including China, Singapore and Saudi Arabia, made explicit the connection between system-scale rankings and public investment or regulatory recognition (Marginson, 2022).

The rise of world rankings has been far from uncontroversial however. Critics contend that such systems may corrupt the mission of institutions by motivating institutions to focus efforts on actions linked to improved rank scores – eg, growing publication numbers, or hiring highly cited researchers – at the expense of quality teaching, affordability, or community service (Altbach & de Wit, 2020; Malik & Javed, 2023). They overlook the subjects of the humanities, social sciences, and professional studies whose citation generation may be less that has create a resource imbalance for individual academic departments (Shin & Toutkoushian, 2022).

In addition, it is increasingly questioned that heavy emphasis on quantitative and reputational indicators can put up establishing countries at a disadvantage as they would have less access to research funding and international collaboration (Hazelkorn, 2022). As Marginson (2022) observes, global rankings tend to mirror and entrench established global hierarchies, in which wealthy Western universities dominate the highest ranks and emerging or locally focussed institutions find themselves at a competitive disadvantage.

A second major criticism is that rankings seldom assess crucial aspects of higher education, such as teaching quality, the student learning experience, the employment prospects of graduates in local markets, or the role of the university in society (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). By way of answer, some ranking systems have recently added new indicators – such as THE 's new Impact Rankings, that measures universities' performance in relation to the United Nations ' SDGs, but these remain merely peripheral in the major league tables (THE, 2023 ).

Nevertheless international rankings of universities continue to influence the behavior of institutions and help determine the competitive environment in higher education. Their impact is eagerly felt in countries like Pakistan where the higher education system is both changing and internationalizing or simply expanding (Hou et al., 2021). The task facing university leaders and policy makers is to harness the benchmarking and transparency instincts of rankings to protect the wider educational role of universities, such as teaching quality, access, and societal engagement (Hazelkorn, 2022; Lim, 2023).

### **Quality Assurance in Pakistani Higher Education**

Quality assurance in higher education institutions (HEIs) is overseen and encouraged by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in Pakistan. HEC has initiated various educational reforms to make university education contemporary, uniform, and up to the international level since its inception in 2002 (HEC, 2023;Ibrar, Usman, & Ali, 2017; Mahmood & Shah, 2021).

HEC has introduced several comprehensive mechanisms for QA in public and private sector universities. One of the most impactful is the Pakistan Qualifications Framework (PQF) that defines levels of qualification degrees and equivalence, credit hours requirements, and expected learning outcomes across grades of academic studies (HEC, 2023). The PQF is a basic tool that will guarantee consistency, transparency and comparability in the national system and in compliance with international systems.

HEC further relies on accreditation mechanisms to ensure the QA. The HEC requires universities and their programs to participate in periodic review and accreditation through Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and their accreditation councils. These operations are a mix of self-assessment and regular peer review, and cover aspects such as teacher competence, adequacy of the curriculum, research work, infrastructure, governance and services to students (Shafiq & Mahmood, 2022).



Accreditation is also a condition for public funding, and recognition although it is not a requirement for achieving the standard that an institution must meet to be considered of good quality. HEC also stresses review and uniformity of curriculum. Periodic reviews are carried out by the National Curriculum Revision Committees (NCRC) comprising professionals and industry representatives. These boards revamp curricula to adapt to technological progress, market requirements and global developments with a focus on increasing the employability and competitiveness of Pakistani graduates (Mahmood & Shah, 2021).

Faculty development is one such cornerstone of QA. HEC has formulated criteria for hiring and promotion of faculty and capacity building for faculties, such as minimum qualification, research publications and training programs. The commission also offers competitive research grants and scholarships that can promote an atmosphere of ongoing academic development and theoretical innovation (Ahmed et al., 2020).

### **Changes in Assurances of Quality Assurance Models and Institutional Policy**

In order to boost positions in global rankings, universities have undergone comprehensive overhauls in their QA systems for the reforms. This encompasses re-engineering accreditation processes, enhancing internal attachments, and introducing sophisticated information systems designed specifically for use in international ranking (Hou, et al., 2021; Shafiq & Mahmood, 2022). For example, as QA offices and senior administrators increasingly subject institutions to greater scrutiny (sometimes with an eye to cost/benefit ratios), institutions must demonstrate research performance and individual faculty credentials and international partnerships instead of, or ahead of, less quantifiable (but not less important) features, such as teaching effectiveness, mentorship, and service (Rahman et al., 2023).

Resource allocation is affected too. University funds are increasingly being spent on research intensive departments, publishing in high-impact journals, and supporting international research collaborations (Kim & Lee, 2021). While it enhanced the global reputation of a few universities and facilitated their ability to access funding from elsewhere, it had the effect of marginalized departments or initiatives that are primarily focused on teaching, community engagement, or local-level development (Nawaz & Saleem, 2022). Faculty development, promotion, and hiring groups are increasingly privileging research productivity and international visibility, in ways that seem to devalue fields not usually producing high citation counts and global recognition (Marginson, 2022).

### **Faculty Work Load, Stress, and Changing Academic Values**

If anything, the greatest loss of the rankings culture is felt by faculty under pressure. For teacher recruitment, teachers will only be able to secure service in respect of teaching experience and will be responsible for their minimum qualification on merit-cum-seniority basis (Malik & Javed, 2023). As a consequence, participants have identified a “publish or perish” culture which, although drives engagement with research, can also result in academic pressure, low satisfaction with the job, and even burnout (Rahman et al., 2023). Faculty also indicate that they would be spending less time conducting research, specifically devoting less time to being an innovative teacher, advising students, or engaging with external groups in the community—a pattern that raises concerns about the potential long-term educational and societal consequences of a university education (Malik & Javed, 2023).

Furthermore, the emphasis on international recognition can lead to inequality between faculty. Early career faculty or those in less resource-rich contexts might struggle with publisher expectations or securing research funding, which can be deleterious to career advancement and mental well-being (Hazelkorn, 2022). Trying to get closer to the world can deepen the

marginalisation of research that is well suiting to the local context but unknown to the world (Hou et al., 2021).

### **Tensions and Challenges: Global Comparisons Versus Local Realities and National Agendas**

Despite the dynamic quality assurance (QA) systems in operation through the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, the prominence of global rankings has brought significant complexities to the policy and practice of the Pakistan higher education sector. As the universities compete to move up in elite international league tables (i.e., QS, Times Higher Education (THE), and the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)), they usually reorient their institutional strategies, policies, and allocation of resources to meet the parameters stressed by these global systems (Ahmed et al., 2020; Shah & Khan, 2021).

This quest for global standards can lead to a disconnect between the national QA frameworks and those imposed by global ranking agencies. Facilitates: The HEC, for example, strongly prioritises holistic quality, relevance to the national condition, faculty development, and community service, and the wider social and economic impact of higher education institutions. In contrast, world ranking systems generally weight heavily on research productivity (in particularly, publication in high ranking journals), internationalization, staff's qualification and citation impact (Marginson, 2022; Malik & Javed, 2023).

This discrepancy frequently puts the Pakistani universities in a difficult position as they are asked to meet two sets of standards which do not always work together. Dual focus on internationalisation and national priorities The dual focus on global and national priorities generates ongoing conflict and forces university leaders to strategically—and sometimes acutely—make trade-offs between investment in ranking-oriented research and investment in teaching quality, student support and locally relevant initiatives (Malik & Javed, 2023; Nawaz & Saleem, 2022).

A central operational challenge stemming from this twin pressure is the burden of administration, that is, having to prepare the same report in two different formats. Universities have to gather very detailed information, go through it, and then feed it to various agencies: the HEC's QA Agency, for national accreditation councils, for international ranking organisations. Each of these institutions demand information in different forms, at different times, and using different measures (Shah & Khan, 2021). For instance, the parallel reporting on faculty qualifications, research outputs, student outcomes, financial and budgetary details will lead to significant overlap and duplication. Apart from the fact that this places an impossible administrative burden on institutions, particularly those that are understaffed, the result is "compliance fatigue" on the part of academic and QA staff, who then turn their attention away from academic content.

### **Methodology**

The qualitative multiple-case study investigated the influence of world university rankings on QA policies in the Pakistani universities. Four purposively selected universities [1 each from Punjab, Islamabad, Sindh, and KPK regions (public-private mixed)] were selected for the study. Fifteen respondents' including VCs, Registrars, and QEC directors were selected for in-depth semi-structured interviews on the basis of diverse experiences on ranking-driven reforms, QA emerging trends, compliance impediments, and institutional responses.

Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and thematically coded inductively and deductively (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Analysis centred on strategic prioritisation, QA reform, alignment with HEC, resources, academic culture and perceived outcomes.

## Findings and Results

### Strategic Importance of Rankings

A key theme in the data was the focus and use, often strategically, of global rankings in institutional planning and governance. Overall, participants characterized the global rankings as “*central points of reference*” that inform not just policymaking but daily practices. One of the registrars stressed: “*Higher up there is a demand that we have to be in the top 500,*” indicating how targets for ranking are incorporated into annual reporting and faculty-level KPIs. This purely strategic concern with rankings constitutes a fundamental cultural change: rankings serve as both an incentive for excellence and as a touchstone for institutional status (also Lim, 2023).

### Transformation of Quality Assurance Policy

All interviewees agreed that worldwide rankings have led to significant QA structures. The QA criteria are meanwhile regularly updated to meet the demands of international accreditation, including guidance for international cooperation and the provision of incentives for research by the faculty. A QEC official said, “*We keep getting QA policies updated to bring them at par with the international standards...we have initiated a faculty publication bonus scheme.*” This entrenchment with international ranking measures has habituated new data points, departmental reference points and operations monitoring through which QA is routinized and evidence based (Hou et al., 2021).

### Alignment and Tension with HEC Standards and policies

The clash and, more often, convergence between international rankings and HEC quality assurance standards emerged as a frequent theme. Not all of the priorities are shared and given some that do not overlap, like the focus on internationalization and impact, they even diverge. The litigants also discussed the burdens of “*dual reporting*” and “*parallel compliance activities.*” One registrar explained, “*HEC views and priorities are also different... managing both is a problem.*” As a result of this double compliance, it is not unusual for staff to feel overloaded from dealing with administrative burden, conflicting expectations, and compliance fatigue (Shah & Khan, 2021).

### Resource Allocation

The information revealed a dramatic turnaround in resource allocation trends in the universities. No hindrance to being ranked is perceived by most that the “*departments etc.*” subjected to global ranking (research-active departments, international collaborations, ICT etc.), will be put in the forefront of grants allocation. As one registrar mentioned, “*Most research-active departments receive funding – conferences, conference travel, and IT upgrades.*” This has expanded research capability and international collaboration but has led to the potential marginalization of areas focused on teaching and of student support services (Kim & Lee, 2021; Nawaz & Saleem, 2022).

### Academic Culture and Faculty Experience

The role of rankings in academic culture was a “*mixed blessing,*” the report found. Academic staff are motivated to enhance research productivity and international collaboration, yet many say they have come under added pressure and burden, and a number have even confessed to burnout. “*There is more pressure to publish and partner internationally, which is good for the research culture — but sometimes faculty feel stretched too thin,*” said one participant. The move towards “*publish or perish*” has increased global exposure, but possibly at the expense of teaching quality and collegiality (Malik & Javed, 2023; Rahman et al., 2023).

### Institutional Outcomes: Visibility and Challenges

The pursuit of ranking globally has helped to increase the international visibility and reputation for Pakistani HEIs with the outcome being more staff and student mobility and more research networks. “*Our international visibility has increased, and we’re getting local and international*

*talent coming in,”* reported one VC. But this exposure has a downside: It also increases the administrative burden, compliance requirements, and the potential for “*mission drift*” (where your energies are directed, institutionally, away from local priorities and teaching toward ranking-directed measures (Hazelkorn, 2022).

### Discussion

The findings in this article confirm and extend previous work on the dramatic impact of world university rankings on institutional strategies, quality assurance (QA) frameworks, and the wider culture of higher education (Hazelkorn, 2022; Marginson, 2022). These influences are particularly pronounced in the Pakistan case, where the two competing contexts of global competitiveness and national educational priorities as articulated by the HEC, pull higher education policy in two different directions.

Results indicate that the implementation of international ranking criteria have led to modernization in QA practices that persuade Pakistani universities to endorse global benchmarks, invest on research infrastructure and develop international links. These trends have raised the national and international profile and competitiveness of several Pakistani HEIs, and have given them the ability to recruit more competitive academic staff, join global research networks, and hold external funding (Kim & Lee, 2021; Hou et al., 2021).

However, reaping all of these benefits don't come without a price. Greater administrative burden, stronger drive on academics for research productivity, and an increase in emphasis on metric valued which are important to ranking agencies may sideline as much important matters as quality of teaching, support of the students, and engagement with the community (Malik & Javed, 2023; Nawaz & Saleem, 2022). There is an observed transition in the academic culture point as professors raise anxieties in work-life balance, job satisfaction and perceived devaluation of the influence of pedagogical process and mentorship (Rahman et al. 2023).

One of the significant issues raised in this article is the waste generated by the requirement to be compliant in two ways at the same time, towards the two reference systems (national QA framework and global ranking systems). Universities have to collect and provide information for HEC and international ranking bodies, which have their own indicators, timelines and documentation requirements (Shah & Khan, 2021). This burden of duplication, however, has put significant pressure on academic and QA staff and, in some cases, has led to “compliance fatigue”. The need to massage the same data for multiple audiences is not just expensive, but saps the morale of faculty and administrators, taking their eyes off the ball of what really matters to good academic work and strategic development of the institution (Marginson, 2022; Nawaz & Saleem, 2022).

The study also resonates with the calls in the literature about “mission drift” where institutions of higher learning driven by the quest for international recognition veer their focus to research productivity and global prestige over local relevance and community relevance (Hazelkorn, 2022; Malik & Javed, 2023). This is especially the case in the developing world, such as in Pakistan, where universities are meant to deliver towards social justice, developing local work-force and addressing locally relevant issues. Uncritical implementation of international metrics can actually subvert the larger educational and developmental mission of the higher education sector.

To counter these harmful side effects, this investigation suggests that Pakistani universities and policy makers draw closer to integrated QA systems with global ranking demands, national norms and requirements, and Pakistani needs. Institution should not wholesale adopt global benchmarks, but critically assess which indicators will inform their educational mission and which are less pertinent in their local context (Lim, 23). Building QA frameworks into the fabric of an institution



is a strategy that can mitigate duplicative reporting, smooth data collection, and allow institutions to concentrate on a more balanced set of priorities.

Furthermore, a more comprehensive criterion would also take into account other types of academic contributions (e.g. teaching, mentoring, advising, and community service) in addition to research contributions (Rahman et al., 2023). These suggestions include revising faculty evaluation and promotion systems to consider teaching and service (so-called third missions) in addition to research, restoring balance to university work and recognizing and valuing the multiple missions of universities.

### **Policy and Leadership Implications**

For those in higher education leadership, this study emphasizes the value of clear communication, transparent management, and continuous engagement with stakeholders. Leaders need to shape an institution vision that synchronizes a global ambition with local pertinency, and must lobby and influence policies—within and without the regulatory agencies—that promote a healthy and sustainable academic ecosystem. HEC administrators and other policymakers can contribute by minimizing the burden of data, encouraging professional growth, and rewarding an improved quality of teaching and research.

### **Directions for Future Research**

Future research might consider the effects of QA reforms driven up the ranking on student learning experiences, graduate employability and societal outcomes. Cross-institutional studies comparing best practices between research-intensive universities and teaching-focused colleges might also reveal how best to harmonize global and local expectations and obligations.

### **Conclusion**

The rise of world rankings of universities has become an inexorable strategic reality for Pakistani universities. These rankings have been powerful triggers of institutional change—leading to more conformance towards international standards, revamping quality assurance (QA) mechanisms, and spurring investments in research capacity and international linkages. The quest for better positions in the rankings has, somewhat paradoxically, been perceived to serve as a vehicle to raise global relevance and profile, attract talented faculty and students, as well as better integrate into the global academic discourse.

But this evolution doesn't come without drawbacks. The results of this study highlight that an unwavering focus on global rankings can exacerbate pressure on faculty and administrators leading to administrative burden, fatigue, and an overt funneling of rankings of research. This focus may possibly marginalize the fundamental academic activities of teaching, mentoring students, and participation in local and regional society, which are less directly rewarded in many international sources of rankings.

Furthermore, the double requirement for both global rankings and HEC's domestic ratings can generate inefficiency and confusion as universities end up to having to meet two (sometimes divergent) sets of expectations. Such dynamics bring with them risks of 'mission drift', with universities perhaps forgetting their core responsibilities to support national development, meet local societal needs and educate well-rounded citizens."

For QA and higher education policy to be sustainable and effective in such a context, it is necessary to foster integrated frameworks that can accommodate global aspirations and shield national interests. Universities should have policies that appropriately balance the importance of teaching, research and community service as aspects of academic excellence. This will involve the reform of the structures for evaluating and rewarding academics, better management of reporting and

compliance and more adaptable institutional policies and strategies mirroring national and global trends and local circumstances.

Ultimately, however, the challenge—and opportunity—for Pakistani higher education is to take advantage of global benchmarking without forsaking its social mission. Universities in Pakistan could become globally competitive and locally relevant by integrating context-sensitive, comprehensive QA through commitment and recommitment to holistic education.

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