Intercultural Higher Education: 
A Challenging Situation for the Scholars from Developing Countries in Developed Countries due to the Gap between Research Levels

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Introduction
From the angle of an Academic Human Resources Knowledge Management Approach, the experiences of young researchers’ international mobility in Higher Education provide huge potential to develop integral strategies for individual, institutional, inter-institutional and international development in Higher Education. In the field of Intercultural Human Resources Management, experience, knowledge and process models have been developed in and for the private sector. Unfortunately for the field of Higher Education, an integral approach to international Human Resources Knowledge Management is still missing and has to be researched and—based on the case of young Pakistani academic mobility experience with Germany—developed further.

It is a reality that there are different levels of research in developed and developing countries (The European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) reports 2012). Further, it is common that scholars from all developing countries go to different developed countries for their research.
In the need for consultancy and support structures in Higher Education institutions (Ghulam 2014), in cooperation with the organisation GIBBZ the research question, "How can we strengthen and develop the given potentials of internationalisation between Pakistan and Germany?" has been analysed in its premature phase in the pilot study and academic work by Mustafa Ghulam (2018). The project identified needs and potentials for an intercultural Higher Educational Management Approach in academia.

**Internationalisation for academic excellence and the need for development**

Academisation and Internationalisation are goals for any country. Often, this intention is connected to the wish that those strategies might contribute, too, to the development of the country itself. As international young scholars’ mobility is becoming vital to global excellence and development. For example, the Research Mobility Program (RMP), Pakistan’s Higher Education Commission (HEC) Overseas Scholarship Program, has been sending young researchers abroad since 2006. Here, Germany is a highly relevant partner for the PhD and Postdoc phases. Cooperation with the German Academic Exchange Services (DAAD) is crucial. Higher Education Commission (HEC) and German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) encourage personal and academic development of individuals relatively early in their research careers. Programmes like this allow young scholars to advance their knowledge-base within their specific field of study and expertise (Worldwide University Network 2014).

Young researchers from Pakistan have been visiting institutions of higher education in developed countries to attain expertise in their respective fields. The numbers of these young researchers has significantly increased in the past ten years (Higher Education Commission Islamabad (HEC) 2014). One of the main reasons behind this is the increasing role and policies of the Higher Education Commission (Higher Education Commission (HEC) 2014) of Pakistan. The implementation of these policies and projects has been facilitated by the cooperation between the HEC and authorities related to Higher Education in the respective countries. As an expected result, there should be an increase in the academic and scientific human potential and resources for the good of the country’s development and governance.

By sending students and young academics abroad, national and international donor institutions hope to establish good and best practices, academic standards, international acceptance, international exchange in
relevant thematic fields in the country, as well as support the employa-
bility and development of the whole professional sector of a country. In 
this framework of expectations, the effective use of resources has be-
come a major priority for any Higher Education institution (Pounder 
1999; Harvey 2005; Mok 2002; Dollery et al. 2006). Pakistan is invest-
ing approximately 46,000-48,000 Euro in each doctoral student. There-
fore it is interesting to value the outcomes of international stays of 
young researchers and future academics.

In the last ten years, Pakistan has been struggling to develop its re-
search in all disciplines, however the total number of PhDs in Pakistan 
has reached the figure of 8,142. According to the data available with 
The International News, the number of PhDs has increased from 348 
(1947 to 2002) to 679 in 2012 in agriculture and veterinary sciences, 
from 586 to 1,096 in biological sciences, from 14 to 123 in business 
education, from merely 21 to 262 in engineering and technology and 
from 709 to 1,071 in physical sciences. In social sciences, the number 
increased to 887 from 108 during the last ten years. In the first 55 years 
since Pakistan’s independence, a total of 3,281 PhDs were awarded at 
Pakistani universities. However, since the establishment of the Higher 
Education Commission (HEC) in 2002, over 4,850 PhDs have been 
awarded to-date, which is more than what was awarded in the previous 
55 years (The International News 2012).

For this success in Academisation, the Higher Education Commission 
(HEC) scholarship schemes for internationalization (ninty per cent Overse-
seas Scholarship scheme – full scholarship, ten per cent Scholarship 
Overseas- partial scholarship etc.) have been and continue to be very 
helpful. Almost every second year, international scholarships have been 
offered. Germany is one of the countries in which the scholarships have 
been offered with the regular cooperation of German Academic Ex-
change services (DAAD) for PhDs in different disciplines. Approximately 
14,000 candidates are selected through a set of selection criteria. They 
then have to prepare a research proposal to look for a supervisor in 
order to realize a PhD in Germany. Many of them are and have been 
able to find a supervisor. Thus far, six batches of students have been 
sent to different parts of the world, including Germany, to pursue a PhD. 
After having completed their PhD, they are obligated to go back and 
work as young academics for five years in Pakistan. Most of them are 
appointed as Assistant Professors after returning with a successful com-
pletion of their PhD.

International placements, institutional, thematic and professional 
matching as well as academic strategies and re-integration processes in
the home-country, are complex and relevant dimensions of young academics’ success and excellence outcomes. Programmes support the individual career paths and trajectories of young academics in different ways. For example, the Mida General Strategy Paper (International Organisation for Migration 1983) shows that in 2,565 fellowships, young researchers were successfully assisted in their professional return and reintegration to their home countries through European Commission-funded programmes. These professionals brought experience mainly in the fields of management and administration, social and legal services (27 per cent), natural sciences and public health, education (17 per cent), physical and mathematical sciences, engineering (15 per cent) and senior executive level personnel (11 per cent), to address identified gaps in key socio-economic sectors of their countries of origin.

Not only national, international and institutional expectations are high—as well, individuals going abroad in general have high hopes regarding learning potentials and their individual career expectations in an international setting. Nevertheless, these expectations and hopes are not always fulfilled. While data and general information about structures of the Pakistani Young Researchers Development programme are available, there is a lack of process-related data, as well as the institutional and intercultural experiences of young Pakistani academics within the international, intercultural, and inter-institutional contexts. So what is the experience of young scholars? How are they prepared at home to go abroad? What is their experience in the host country of Germany? What is their experience coming back to the home country of Pakistan? What are the experiences of reintegration in the academic system in Pakistan? While going abroad young researchers have to manage complex tasks of language, of content, of searching out an institution and a supervisor, of cultural fit, of adequacy and transferability of what has been learnt in the host country and so on (Pilot Study by Ghulam 2018).

Many problems have to be faced and young academics have to learn what it means to be an academic. They have to learn the "rules of the game" in an international setting of academia (Weber 2014). At initial stages of their careers, they may not be familiar with evaluating the quality of published research work (Beso et al. 2007) and many other aspects of learning to become an academic in an international setting. Many international young researchers face a culture shock in their guest country, as this is reported not only for the field of international exchange, but also in any other field like the private sector or developmental aid (Institut für Interkulturelles Management (IFIM) 2001; AFS-Intercultural Programs 2014; International Exchange Erasmus (ESN) 2014). They feel they could be prepared more adequately to the cope
with cultural differences, institutional differences, the strategies to be developed and the placement and positioning decisions to be made in the academic field while preparing the re-entry in the home country (Baum & Oliver 1992). Furthermore the contribution concerning the country’s development in general could be developed more strategically and more systematically, as young researchers from Pakistan explain in a preliminary explorative study (Ghulam Pilot study 2014).¹

**Complex support and development structures in international inter-institutional cooperation as a source of academic outcomes and success**

Today’s processes of globalisation within Academia require young researchers to develop an expertise not only in cross-cultural and academic excellence, but also in international knowledge cultures. Especially the intercultural nature of the experience becomes relevant at the levels of different values, different institutional structures, different ways to organize processes and support structures as well as different ways of living. Young researchers need to develop not only cultural, but also "institutional" and "strategic literacy" in the academic field—and individual researcher strategies in an intercultural setting (Weber 2014). Therefore, organisational, institutional, cultural and personal value and development levels of the international experiences are going to be addressed much more systematically than they have been in the past. This challenging and complex demand has to be supported, in order to make sure that outcomes and academic excellence benefits remain sustainable.

The general trend towards securing success of young academics by developing and establishing support structures and inter-institutional cooperation is growing fast (Bittner & Reisch 1993; Czarniawska 1998; Emery 1995). As recent studies in this field show, support structures in academia are a relevant dimension for academic success (Ghulam 2014). Therefore, in Higher Education, more and more investments are made to establish support structures and academic consultancy and advice. Additionally, programmes of internationalisation and exchange intend to equip students with skills needed for future international academic success. Nevertheless, the institutional, cultural and human complexity of international exchange and study experiences are not always addressed systematically in the process of outgoing, incoming, re-entry and placement as young researcher both studying abroad and later in the home country.
The wish and need for internationalisation of institutions in the home country and young academics is growing. The experiences of young researchers, namely from Pakistan, show the cultural, institutional and conceptual gaps in preparation, stay, re-entry, strategy and placement in relevant thematic fields, individual career strategies and re-entry options. Clearly, there is a need for developing more complex and more complexity-adequate individual, collective, institutional and inter-institutional support structures in International Higher Education, as they are partly and field-specifically already given in international and intercultural cooperation in the private and developmental sector (Institut für Interkulturelles Management (IFIM) 2001; Anderson 1994; Bittner & Reisch 1994).

Although HEC arranges language learning programmes for young researchers moving to countries like Germany, there still might be potentials for institutional cooperation with relevant partners in an institutional networking approach. As we can see, there is a need and potential for analysis, development and innovation along the process chain of service delivery and support during the preparatory phase, the stay abroad and the re-entry to the home country of Pakistan. It is assumed that institutional structures could be developed further in order to support young researchers much better, in order to achieve better and more positive outcomes from the high investments being made in the field of international academic mobility.

**Hofstede’s work on culture’s consequences and its analytical and conceptual potential**

Since the 1970s, approaches of Intercultural Management (Hofstede 2001; Trompenaars 1997; Keller 1982) have been widely discussed in the private sector, however intercultural Human Resources Management Approaches are not developed systematically in the field of International Academic Cooperation (Festing, Knappert & Kornau 2014). Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory offers a framework for cross-cultural communication. It describes the relevance of a society's culture and the dispositions of value-sets of its members. How do these value sets relate to behavior? In his quantitative study, Hofstede analysed five cultural dimensions differing according to basic orientations, which are relevant, too, in the Case of Pakistan and Germany:

The first, the individualist-collectivist (the degree to which the society reinforces individual or collective achievement), is relevant. The second dimension, the "Power Distance Index (PDI)", differs between societies and cultures: here, the degree of equality or inequality between people
in the country’s society is addressed. Obviously, Pakistan and Germany differ a lot regarding expectations of equality or verticality in social relations. While Western countries tend to have a low PDI, south Asian countries like China or Pakistan tend to have a high PDI, which means, that the hierarchy expectation will be highly relevant in society as a whole, in institutions as well as in academia. The third relevant orientation pattern is the Masculinity Dimension, focusing on the degree to which the society reinforces, or does not reinforce, the traditional masculine work role model of male achievement, control and power. A high Masculinity ranking indicates that the country experiences a high degree of gender Disparity.

In Pakistan the male/female ratio is 1.06 (United Nations Development Program 2014), and due to cultural restrictions the international mobility of young female Pakistani researchers is very low compared to males. As well in general, gender roles are quite defined and female leadership not the norm but the exception. As a fourth dimension, the Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) focuses on the level of tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity within a society. A high Uncertainty Avoidance ranking indicates that the country has a low tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity (Hofstede 2001). The fifth dimension, the Long Term Orientation (LTO) indicates a society’s time perspective and an attitude of perseverance, that is, the society’s willingness to overcome obstacles over time (with a fair measure of will and strength). Obviously, regarding cross cultural experiences, the two countries have totally different cultural value sets, which should be taken into account in the analysis of young academics’ experiences and made fruitful for academics’ preliminary preparation and learning in the host country. The cross cultural approach of Hofstede (2001) for Human Resources Intercultural Management is relevant for the Pakistani-German case.

Theoretical and methodological foundations: multi-stakeholder-research as a source of analysis and innovation

As academic institutions create and offer support structures for inter-institutional negotiations, the research focused on a link between intercultural (Hofstede 2001) and organisational research approaches (Strati 1999). Highlighting the analysis of given structures, patterns of emergence and transitions, the focus of organisational education research methodologies is on the constitution of knowledge. Strati (2000: 47) formulates quality criteria for organisational research. Following Strati’s approach, organisational research should not have an overly rational image of the way organisations function, nor should it construct organisational theory as a reification of organisational goals.
It should avoid ideologically conservative assumptions and methods of analysis, as well as the view that organisations are integrated by a consensus of their members or a convergence of their interests. Organisational research and analysis should not be oriented towards a historical analysis or only focus on static aspects of the organisation. In general, organisational research and its analysis should not underestimate the influence of power relations, nor adopt conventional perspectives on organisations. It should not consider people to be devoid of agency, nor should it take organisations as the exclusive unit of analysis.

Based on these quality criteria the following question arises: how can relevant stakeholders be involved in a research process and develop visions and solutions for the future of an Integral Human Resources Approach in Pakistan’s Higher Education? This institutional cooperation approach is related to a systemic approach of knowledge creation. According to Nowotny et al. (2004), system-based approaches in future- and innovation research start from the analysis of "wicked problems" (Weisbord 1992) in a multi-perspective mode of knowledge production. This outlines the use of more integral perspectives in systemic thinking (Schamer & Käufer 2013). As there is never only one institution responsible for a project’s success, inter-institutional cooperation becomes more relevant in order to create systemic effects and systemic outcomes (Brint & Karabel 1991).

Endnotes

1 Mustafa Ghulam has carried out interviews with different HEC Scholars in Austria and in Germany.

Literature


The International News. Total number of PhDs. 8 Oct. 2012.


