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# Universities And Social Transformation: Using Students' Potential For Societal Development In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa And Gilgit Baltistan

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## Abstract

This research was designed to examine the ways through which university students in Faculty of Social sciences are trained for playing their potential role in societal development. Only 08 public sector universities seven from KP and one from GB were included. Initially, faculty members of teaching departments were consulted and then students of undergraduate programs were approached. It was a narrative biographical inquiry data and it was analyzed through thematic analysis technique. The data revealed that there was no specific training of university graduate about the services they may render for societal development. It was recommended that the faculty may build the capacity and increase motivation of graduates to extend their expertise for development/progress of their residential societies.

**Keywords:** universities, graduates, faculty members, social sciences, social transformation

## BACKGROUND

Generally universities are considered as vehicles of social and economic development at local and national level. In 21st century the role of universities has been considered more important for utilizing their skilled, knowledgeable and expert human resource for playing their active role in fulfilling the most pitching needs of their neighbor communities. In developed countries, universities are playing their role as anchor institutes of economic development. In Pakistan, there is a rapid growth in number of universities from just 32 in 2002 to 231 in 2021 (<https://hec.gov.pk/english/universities/pages/recognised.aspx#k=>) there is a serious questions of quality of education, increase in unemployment and many more. Our universities have very weak linkage or no linkage with communities where they

can put their focus; learn about more desirable areas to be researched; the kind of opportunities to avail for social and economic transformation and develop and strengthen partnership with communities for long last relationships. They need a plan of action to follow for contributing positively in communities where they live in general and those which are locating in the surrounding of their universities in particular. At present our universities are producing expert agriculturists, psychologists, educationists, medical doctors, microbiologists, economists, environmentalists, managers, religious scholars, public health administrators, engineers, software developers, information and communication specialists, and mathematician etc. who (each) thinks about himself more superior than any others. Unfortunately we are not offering variety of allied courses at Bachelor/master/doctorate studies due to which there is a divide among our experts. This is not good because our national level resourceful experts are not on same page. Each and every expert should be taught basic courses of art, humanities, languages, foreign policy, economics, health, education, etc. In each degree we are lacking important allied courses which are taught in the top ranking universities of the world. This project is an effort to inculcate relevant knowledge and skills necessary for each and every students and faculty member. According to Tandon (2008) Institutes of higher learning have long history of engaging local societies and one of the earliest universities of the world, Taxila (Pakistan) which began operating in 7th century BC had the motto of service to the humanity. More recently many universities in United States have been playing significant role in expanding their services for local working class and rural residents (Silver 2007; Altbach 2008; Menand, 2010). According to World Bank (2002), in the initial years of 21st century, role of higher education institutions gained the central issue around the globe in development of societies through advent of knowledge society. According to Hall (2011) nowadays the strongest trends of universities is to strengthen linkages with local communities for the last five to six years. In United Kingdom, The Higher Education Funding Council for England started institutionalizing in 1999 through a Higher Education Reach Out to Business and Community Initiative and now its revenue is about £ 3 billion for financial year of 2008-2009 (Lea, 2010). In twenty first century, there is rapid expansion of university off-campus activities mainly focused on economic and social development (Thompson, 2000), In 21st century, universities are more committed to engage local communities and these are seen as anchor institutes where social, economic and cultural development of communities ensures. Universities located in urban areas are facing many challenges and their fortunes are tied to some extent with their physical surroundings. Universities are expanding their partnerships with local communities to address their most pressing needs (Friedman, Perry & Menendez, 2014). For the achievement of millennium development goals, the role of universities is being explored through series of international conferences, with agendas of reinventing higher education in Thailand in 2007, 2010 in Spain and 2010 in conference

of Commonwealth universities. More recently forum of Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI) discussed social commitment of universities in social and human development. The Global Alliance for Community Engaged Research (GACER) in 2008 and final resolutions of UNESCO World Congress in 2009 discussed agenda of engaging institutes of higher learning in resolving societal problems (Bivens, 2011). It is argued that without strong linkage with local communities, universities cannot continue to be centers of excellence. During the recent past partnership between universities and communities has been one of the major areas of concern. For being purpose-oriented and relevant, universities are now trying innovative ways to develop and strengthen partnership with their communities (Martin, Smith & Philips, 2003). The biggest challenge for universities is to spare time and human resources to be engaged with local communities. Similarly, people at local level also reluctant to participate actively in solving their own problems. Engagement of youth in constructive and positive activities of communities is necessary for social, economic and national development. Universities are supposed to provide knowledgeable, skillful and dedicated young to play their active role in overall economic, social and political development of the country. Experts from universities can contribute positively in the local development through; putting youth at the center; developing good relationship with adult-youth; synchronization of agendas of youth and adult; recruitment of youth and adult persons from community; provision of support for youth organizations and; development of a support system for young people of community. Generally, youth development, community services, leadership development of youth, constructive civic services lead to community decision making of community. In Pakistan, Higher Education Commission is trying to promote universities-local community partnership through establishment of Business Incubation Centers. Still we have long way to go for ensuring local community development through universities.

The uniqueness of this research lies in the fact that a viable action plan has been provided for all teaching departments of the universities/colleges to develop and strengthen linkages/partnership with local communities to address the most pressing needs. The intellectuals may come forward in the field with innovative ideas and plans to uplift standard of common people of local communities. This research activity is qualitative in nature and for its successful execution; discussions with students and faculty members of social sciences departments, open seminars, planned trainings workshops, relevant research studies, reports, conference proceedings and projects completed in different communities were consulted. The general goal of this research endeavor was to develop a comprehensive plan of action for universities to play to foster local community development. This research was conducted to understand existing level of linkages between universities and their local communities; to develop plan of action for each teaching department of universities to strengthen and sustain local community

development programs on regular basis and; to devise ways and means how knowledge, creativity and expertise of students/faculty member may be integrated for addressing the most pressing needs of local communities. Beneficiaries of this research may be the common people of local communities who may learn a lot about important aspects of their real life experiences.

It was hoped that common people may get maximum benefits from knowledge, skills and creativity of educated youth and experts from their neighboring universities. They may have some closer contact with their relevant experts of their needs and demands. They may learn a lot without investing any sort of amount. Their living standard may be uplifted through application of new knowledge and skills. Local trade may be more strengthened and expanded. Their social and economic life may be improved and it is hoped that they would have a hub social and economic change in their local universities. They may learn to rely on their own potential, resources and knowledge instead of rely on different sort of non-governmental organizations of community based organization to bring some positive changes in their personal lives. Cooperation and love may be promoted and strong bond will be there in people's lives at local level. They may learn to respect one another despite of difference in opinion, sect or cast and creed etc. University education or higher education is considered as a vehicle for holistic development of human as well as material or technological development. We need to learn what type of input higher education give to the overall local, national and international development?

## **SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION**

The transition in the society is a continuous process with a subjective assessment of costs and benefits. A large number of reformists believe that social scenario continues to lose its moral bearings and social consistency which draw people inward to traditional structures based on biases of relations, clan and ethnic solidarities for security and mutual support. That makes dysfunctional the modernity. So, there is always a need for ideological transitions, ethical grounds, values and customs, not particularistic modes of behaviors. That is the way of ideological changes and modernization, wherein formal rules, formal institutions, social values of equality, non-discrimination, tolerance, efficiency, plurality, trust and behaviors become the base of strong social life (Qadeer, 2011). The social transformation is known to be a process of prioritized growth. Not all parts of the society change in equal measures, some sections remain static and still others shift sideways. The paper is based on the hypothesis the diverging scope and directions of change among different institutions become the source of cultural paradoxes in a society (ibid). The social transformation is the process of planned changes at large scale in a given society. In other words a shift in the social consciousness at individual, collective, regional and global levels is considered social transformation through which new dimensions come ahead and help in

resolving social problems. For all modernists the reasons or elements of social transformation in 21st century world are the technological and scientific inventions, urbanization and industrialization, commercial activities and the political economic. Furthermore, the impact of the highly developed countries of the world, the role of mass media of communication, migration, cultural diffusion, the literacy and finally the socio-political awareness among the people to help develop secularism are considered key tools to look towards modernity that is challenging the traditional paradigms of society. This relationship forms the dialectics of traditionalism and modernity and in that sense what is paradox is that traditionalism and modernity are not mutually restricted but complementary to each other and demonstrate through elements of social changes (Giddens, 1981). The process of modernization in Pakistan is proceeding by inventing new traditions, which is combined with economic status, caste system, ethnicity, subcultures (Qadeer, 2011). Historically, a state plays a critical role in the processes of social transformations and modernity. The state authorities try to introduce the transformation for a modern economy and constitutional rule. In the Western countries like Britain and Germany, the states have transformed from feudal to a modern society after the legislative initiatives of 19th and early 20th centuries (Jalalzai, 2001). In Pakistan and third world countries, the state is primary institution which can promote transformation/changes in different fields of life. However, the political crises in Pakistan are developing imbalance progress and less effective to modernize the society. The social legislation and public action for modernization of institutions has been lagging by the power rules. Many other institutional imperatives are too neglecting at different levels (Qadeer, 2011). In pre-colonial period the society is based on the agrarian system. The social order, caste and other customary norms were prior for the people. They depended on the animal power and human labour for their economy. A number of people were attached with the agriculture, where land lords, peasants and kammis interlinked with one another. In the colonial period the state authorities tried to bring prosperity and socio-economic changes in the society. They introduced advance technological changes to modernize the society. Thus, they contributed to a process of modernization that has continued to grow even after the independence (ibid). Social diversions in Pakistan: The political and religious unity of Muslims forced to the establishment of a new independent state. This unity was a mixture of cultural, linguistic and economic values that built up Pakistani nation. However, the sectarian, ethnic, religious and cultural groups of the society and their political and economic interests generated challenges to this unity. The separation of the East wing and the role of other socio-political and economic crises can be recognized alarming factors for the stability of the state. Pakistan is a country of pluralistic cultural, ethnic, political, economic and linguistic traditional values with rural and urban demographic divide. Different regions with separate languages, cultural norms, ethnic and tribal values claim

separate identity. All these are the factors contributing in the social transformation in Pakistani society. The tension between ethnic political, socio-cultural, rural-urban and regional identities are the issues that are the concerns for state stability and harmony. Economic disparities and sectarianism strife and contrast between gated estates of the feudal lords and the poor peasant and worker class is adding to this social discomfort. These are reflecting conflict between the peasants/labours social groups and the religious class respectively (ibid).

## **YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

There is need to understand the role of youth in promoting the community on behalf of the planners. Previously, the youth has not been given much attention in decision-making and action required for the communities. The localities are formed on the bases of groups from business, civic, education etc., who work for some goals. The community work has to assemble all these diverse groups found inside the community by focusing the common needs of the society. This way community is dynamic and continuously evolves while the interaction in a positive manner would lead the community towards progress and development (Wilkinson, 1991; Swanson, 2001; Luloff & Bridger, 2003). Luloff and Bridger (2003) and Theodori (2005) found community agency emergence as a result of interaction on behalf of the community. Wilkinson (1991), Luloff and Bridger (2003), and Brennan (2005) found community with increased adoptability and acceptance for all those who belong to each and every part of it. Now, the agency means to use all the available resources of the community and put them together to solve the problems faced. Most of the focus and attention is given to adults of the community while the youth can also be seen as important stakeholder in the overall process of development. The community is taken in high esteem by family being the part of that. In this manner, it becomes important for the youth to understand their roles and opportunities available for them. This manner, they can stay active and would not be a passive load on the community. The community development efforts involve having a link in between the community and young generation (Brennan, Barnett & Lesmeister, 2006). Sherrod et al., (2002) thought co-curricular activities to be the part where the youth could be engaged in civic activities to develop their sense of working in community for the welfare of all. The students should practice skills in the schools. Flanagan and Van Horn (2003) stressed to include better content and teaching methods that may make the behavior of teachers and students better toward the common good of all the participants of the society. The school curriculum should define good and acceptable form of citizenship in order to promote the involvement of the young. Flanagan and Faison (2001) and Sherrod et al., (2002) stated citizenship as a form of acceptable behavior. Besides, the knowledge to decide on what is good and what is not good, is also the part of community development (Torney-Purta et al., 2003). The students must be

given this knowledge of citizenship to equip them with so that they may later on practice to carry out their civic duties (Verba et al., 1995). Sherrod et al., (2002) found youth should be given some role in the community development because this way, they will develop more interest towards the larger set of benefits for their community. It is mandatory to prepare the young lot of a society in terms of leadership and by providing them more and more opportunities at school level, in order to make them productive adults later in their career. The adults and young both should be brought in together in order to address the social problems towards common goals, values and norms. Larson et al., (2006) found similar patterns of problems as those of adults in the lives of youngsters. Nitzberg (2005), Kubisch (2005), Cahn and Gray (2005) and Lynn (2005) found most of the literature on the subject to be rich with the ideas of community development through young people. Nitzberg (2005) suggested involving the youth in community work and in the change process and thus making them effective members of the society. Larson et al., (2006) laid emphasis on the youth to have capacity of leadership and that the adults should support them in their skill development so that to make them future assets. The young people can emerge if they are given opportunities in the community development. They should stay involved in policies and activities. Berk (2005) found youth can be given progressively complicated duties with the passage of time and in this capacity, they would be turn to be highly productive as adults. Zeldin et al., (2000) suggested involvement as mandatory for young people and to shoulder responsibilities. The youth must be developed and be provided with training, skills and knowledge to enable them to work effectively in the future. VanLinden and Fertman (1998) found awareness, interaction and mastery as three important aspect of youth leadership qualities. All these three part have five more dimension which are Leadership Attitude, Leadership Information, Communication Skills, DecisionMaking Skills and Stress Management'. Smith, Genry and Ketring (2005) suggest young people should be trained in certain important skills like solving problems, managing the conflicts, and other important set of skills which would help in future setup. The young generation should also be trained in civic duties and the development of mindset that takes into consideration the benefit of the larger community than merely focusing on individual gains. They should receive training in solving the practical problems of the community. At the same time, the youth should be trained in such a manner that they can build strong ties with adults and seek their guidance where needed. Huber et al., (2003) consider youth can be highly active in many ways like identification of the problems, and making programs for development, and conducting programs for betterment and representing the young lot in the society. The young people would participate more in the future for the development of their community when more meaningful roles are given to them. Larson et al., (2006) found schools, adults, organization etc., and others can benefits from the young generation if youth is given opportunities and proper investments are being made.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

Qualitative research approach was applied in order to achieve the objectives. This research activity was unique in nature as there was no single research studies conducted on this particular area. In order to achieve its objectives, current status of universities engaged with local communities was examined and analysis of situation was made in first phase. Visits were made to all sample universities and initial information were collected from faculty members and graduates. Faculty members and students studying at undergraduate level of all public sector universities of KP and GB were the population of this research study. Sample of this study comprised of 32 heads of departments from 04 targeted departments from each of the universities and 64 students of undergraduate studies (08 students from each of the sample universities) were selected on the basis of their CGPA in 7<sup>th</sup> semester. Those students who had better CGPAs were included in the sample.

Departments of education; psychology, economics and management studies were targeted to collect data. Research tools were separately used but in actual, these were almost similar in nature. Heads of the departments were simply asked to tell us about how students were trained to contribute at micro level, how community members were being made aware of the importance of this subject? How common people were targeted? How community members were involved? How graduates were guided to participate in community development process? How community people were guided to expand the contribution at macro level? How social work activities were designed? etc. Faculty members were requested first to tell about the whole process of building the capacity of graduates to contribute positively in community development and after getting their input, graduates were approached.

Data was analyzed through content analysis technique. Themes were extracted from the data and presented as below.

## **Results and Conclusions**

### **a) Department of Education**





Faculty members of department of education said, we trained better teachers for future through adopting the latest teaching learning strategies. Our prospective teachers have appropriate content knowledge and skills to serve in schools, we trained them in using different teaching learning strategies in classroom. We provided them practical knowledge during their studies at universities by giving them opportunities to go in public schools and apply the learned skills. We launched awareness campaigns through social media for attracting more capable individuals for the profession of teaching, we provided opportunities for those teachers who are serving in schools already for getting higher education (M.Phil/PhD). Through social work, we set up reading corners in public schools and aware teachers about the appropriate use of these corners. We financially supported many of our prospective teachers who were the poor and we tried to give proper orientation of research to prospective teachers.

Graduating students responded against the strategies which may be launched in the community successfully. The graduating students were of the view that they were never asked to do something for community e.g., to create awareness about importance of education; to set up free tuition/coaching center for children of the community; to set up private school; to spread awareness campaigns to aware people about the selection of better school for their kids; to aware people about their critical role in child rearing practices, in schools, etc. All of the graduating students acknowledged the services the faculty members claimed.

## **b) DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS**

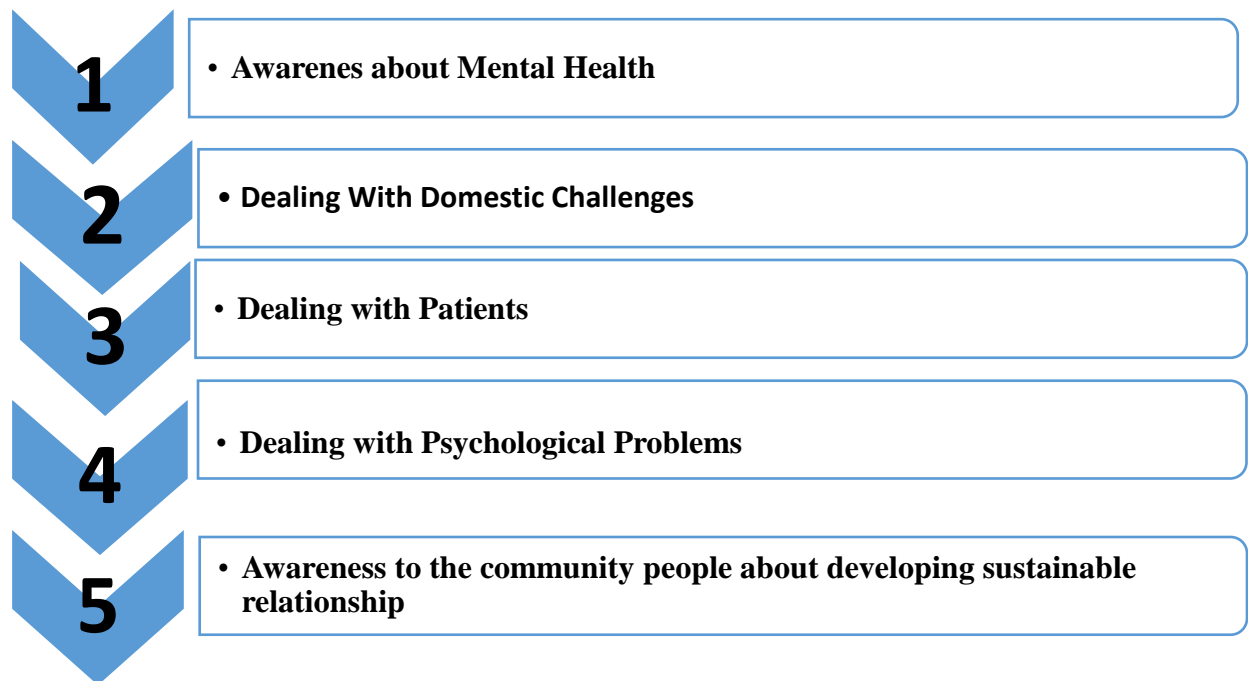


Faculty members responded that they made aware of their graduates about the economic development of the community. They also claimed that graduates of the department and many people of neighboring communities were also guided about how to set up small businesses in the community though seminars and workshops. Faculty members said, they shared ideas with their graduates to initiate economic activities; they arranged meeting with local communities to guide them what type of local businesses they can start like honey bees, cooking services to the people, vegetables growing etc. Teachers also said that they trained their graduates to make home budget, to limit your expenditures according to the income and to follow Elizabeth Warren’s 50/30/20 rule. Graduates and other youngsters of the communities were also guide how to develop your skills to grab good jobs; how they can prepare themselves for hunting jobs etc. Teachers also told that local communities are engaged in seminars, workshops or conferences to spread awareness about setting up local businesses, other economic activities at micro as well as macro level in the country. Those businessmen who are good at their business were guided how to expand the business while people having no job or business were guided to start business at small scale.

In contrast to the views of teachers of the universities, the graduates negate the views of their teachers in most of the points. They said, they were never ever told about how economic activities can be initiated properly at local level during classroom teaching; they never encourage or motivate us to do any economic activity; yes in seminars which were conducted few in our whole 4 years duration, the experts from outside told us how economic activities can be enhanced at local level. They also claimed that the teacher never

visited their local communities for guidance, they did not have any interim or voluntary activities arranged by the universities for them. They never take us to any business visit or meeting with local chambers of commerce and industries; the universities never make coordination with local production houses; companies etc. They took admission in the department without know what can be learn or hope to learn in the field; we just thinking about any suitable jobs.

### c) Department of Psychology

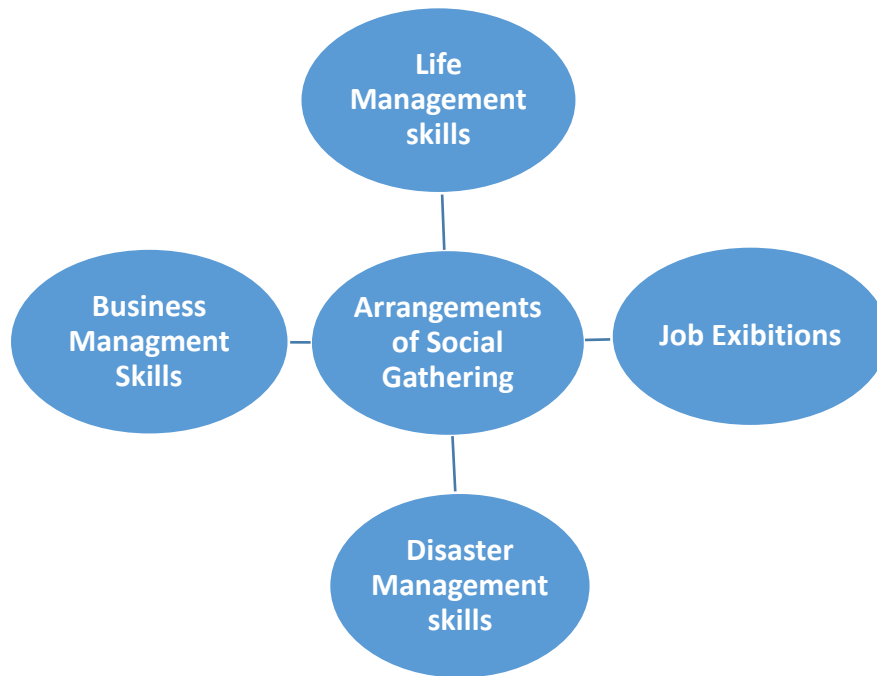


Faculty member from department of psychology claimed that they trained their graduates to; judge the mental health of the individuals; to guide family members/relatives about mental health; to solve the problems of those having poor mental health; to visit to the metal hospitals, having sound knowledge and experience of those having severe mental health problems and interviewed the individuals as well as the caretakers of mental health prisoners; to work voluntarily basis in hospitals to treat patients having any psychological problems. Similarly, teachers responded that they trained their graduates to create awareness among community members regarding different sources of depression, anxiety and stress and the ways to deal with these. The graduates were encouraged to make the people aware about how psychological problems destroy the relationships among human beings and why we need to observe prayers, bow to Allah the Almighty, correct our beliefs regarding Allah etc., to get rids of these psychological problems. Graduates were also

guided to provide counseling services in their communities especially the newly couples in order to building strong relationships and understanding. The graduates were also motivated to provide counseling services to the parents about good rearing practices and how strong foundations of personality can be laid down in early years of age. Graduates completed practical trainings/experiences of dealing with patients having different psychological problems. Family breakage is very common and family values are continuously changing with the rapid growth of technological advancement. At this hour of need, faculty members guided youngsters and their parents about proper use of different social media apps, choosing ideals of life, obeying elders etc., to minimize the breakage of family values/lives through proper planning. Graduates were instructed to provide guidance to community people about different problems of life associated with psychological disturbance. People having different types of phobias were also treated by our graduates. At the department, psychology laboratory or counseling lab is there to students of the departments as well as for all those who are present in the university in any capacity. Graduates are trained and opportunities were given to them to assess personality of teachers or fellows etc., in different workshops, seminars or conferences, students of psychology set up help corners for any psychological support for everyone. Students of psychology departments were strongly motivated to deal with people in order to guide them how sustainable relationship may be developed? What needed to do? How to sacrifice for saving good relationships? How to respect diversity in thoughts, in ideas, in deeds etc., to enjoy good relationship in different capacities.

Graduates of the department of psychology acknowledged all the academic as well as professional services/training provided by their respective teachers in the department. The graduates did not supported the views of their teachers that they encouraged/motivated/guided to extend their expertise for common people of the communities. Rather the teachers told the graduates how they can earn money through counseling and guidance services in the community.

#### **d) DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES**



According to the faculty members of Management sciences, business management is the core characteristics of the department. Teachers focused on developing management skills of students related to the whole life cycle. Students were training to manage relationships, to manage resources, to manage expenditure, to manage savings, to manage studies, to manage time, to manage family problems, domestic problems of relatives, to manage local problems of communities etc. Graduates are trained how to arrange job exhibitions for youngsters, what specific professional skills needed to be inducted in any job, what specific knowledge is needed? Etc. The teachers also claimed that apart from arranging job exhibitions, graduates of the department were also trained in arranging different social gathering like seminars, workshops, conferences etc., how to make arrangements, how to deal with guests, how to deal with resource persons, how to invite general public, make decisions about to whom the particular event suit etc. Students were trained to visit different industries, business houses, offer and create voluntary services, signed memorandum of understanding with different departments, association or organizations etc. faculty members also told that they also trained their students about how to create awareness regarding different issues of the society e.g., father day, mother days, pink ribbon day, literacy day, women day, blood donations day etc., The teachers patronized different societies of the students in the university who performed multi tasks within and outside of the universities. Students were also trained about what to do in the hours of need like spread of viral diseases, earthquakes, flood, and accidents or in any other emergency. Disaster management skills of students were polished and they performed well during the earthquakes, flooding and spread of viral diseases in the community. Students

were engaged in social work activities in the societies, organizations, in the fields etc., under the supervision of teachers of the department. As a social work activity, students were motivated to address general problems, challenges or issues of the community in order to bridge the understanding between neighboring communities and the universities. Students were guided to attend local community meeting, gathering of social events to provide their own expertise. Students were motivated to set up small businesses by their own with the minimum support of the family, friends or any other and to guide other youngsters of the community to set up businesses also. Students developed good understanding with local chambers of commerce and industries of the cities and they arranged many gathering/meeting to understand the current challenges of the business. Faculty members of the department also said that they made aware to their students about what type of business can be initiated with minimum investment, where to invest and what to know before investment or at starting of any business. Students are encouraged learn about online business especially at the time of Covid-19 pandemic and to guide other prospective members of the community to try online businesses.

The students of the department acknowledge the way they are trained by their teachers at the universities but they said they were never considered as experts of the field to contribute in communities. They never ever encouraged/motivated/guided to extend their expertise for community people.

In short, it was easily concluded that faculty member in their respective departments taught to the students very well but unfortunately they did not guide/motivate/encouraged their students to provide services to their living communities. This was a big gap and it needed to be filled by the faculty members of the universities.

### **The Way Forward**

After having the results and conclusions, the researcher feel comfortable to suggest the following steps for the universities to enable educated youth as real change agents for community development at micro level and national development at macro level in Pakistan.

1. Faculty members of the universities may compel to develop linkages between text and its application in real life situations.
2. Faculty members may be trained in such a way that they know about pedagogy and andragogy as theories to apply in their classroom teaching practices.
3. Teachers of the universities may need professional trainings about teaching as a profession rather than focusing on higher degree of academics only.
4. Higher education commission or provincial higher education departments may create a professional development center or team of professionals to training faculty

members of the universities in different and the most important areas of concerns regarding their jobs in universities soon after their induction.

5. The provincial higher education department may also need to allocate funds for professional trainings of teachers of the universities in annual budgets
6. The faculty members need to encourage their students to extend their professional and academic knowledge in addressing any of problems of their community/residential societies.
7. Students of the universities need to engage in identifying different challenges or problems their communities are facing and the way forward to solve these.
8. Students of the universities need to make aware about their particular potential which they may use for the betterment of the community.
9. Students of the universities need to believe on them as experts of their concerned field and what they may be expecting to do for their own community development.
10. Sense of entrepreneurship is the need of the time because there is very less chance of proper jobs and the youth need to train for their self-business according to their capacity and resources.

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