

Big shoes to fill

By Khalid Iqbal and Rudina Xhaferri | [From InpaperMagzine](#)

The Internet is the most potent and widely-available cognition enhancing drug. It provides abundant opportunities to a vast number of people throughout the world to learn, create and market their innovations globally. However, the key to unlock and master this universe of opportunities is education, especially the kind that instills and encourages innovations.

As the global economy and development are becoming increasingly education-based, it is critical, more than ever before, that educational institutions are led by visionaries. Among other skills, these individuals must possess endless motivation and abilities to persistently infect institution-wide cultures of intellectual freedom, development and generosity fit for innovations.

Principals and vice chancellors are among the most critical positions for the future development of Pakistan.

Blooming education in action

Within the span of 50 years, China has transformed from a third world developing country to the world's second-largest economy. It is on its way to surpass the United States economy within the next several years. This miraculous development is the result of the investment China made in educating and training its workforce to global standards.

China has quadrupled its output of college/university graduates to eight million per year during the past decade. By the end of the present decade China expects to have nearly 195 million graduates. For its fair share of jobs overseas Pakistani colleges and universities will have to produce well-trained and globally-competitive graduates.

Michael Bloomberg, the billionaire mayor of New York City graduated from high school with mediocre grades. On encouragement from his employer, who had a doctorate from Johns Hopkins University, Bloomberg got admitted at the university. In the Johns Hopkins environment, which encouraged creativity and innovations, Bloomberg flourished as a student and developed leadership qualities. Bloomberg made his first donation in the amount of \$5 to his alma mater one year after he graduated in 1964. This donation made several quantum leaps during the last 40 years with a single donation of \$350 million in 2012, making Michael Bloomberg (with a total donation of \$1.1 billion) the largest single donor to an educational institution. With regards to his admission in Johns Hopkins University, Bloomberg has said, "Let's be serious — they

took a chance on me” (source, The New York Times, Jan 27, 2013). Pakistan needs principals and vice chancellors who know when and where to take the “Bloomberg chance”.

Education’s revolutionaries

Colleges and universities where young adults in their most formative years, ages 17 to 24, are enrolled, must be headed by individuals with vision. These leaders must have a persistent motivation and the ability and drive to implement educational reforms that keep up with, and in fact are ahead of, the constantly changing needs of society. Colleges and universities must generously reward their faculties for their academic accomplishments. However, the positions of college and university heads should under no circumstances be doled out as medals of honour for a senior faculty member’s lifelong academic achievements or be based on earning a degree from a particular university or, even worse, a political affiliation.

That’s institutional suicide. To be truly progressive, the people in these high-responsibility positions must be selected solely on a highly competitive merit and transparent selection process aiming to select a candidate that can bring innovations to the institution. A successful leader should be expected to implement reforms and new programmes, including expanding the institutions’ financial power, which can be cherished decades after the end of his/her term.

Pakistan needs institutional heads with the passion, the motivation and the ability to bring on a truly healthy revolution in education which will make the country the fittest for the 21st century and beyond. Evaluation mechanisms that review the progress made by a principal or vice chancellor every two years should be in place. Based on the results, the institutional heads that meet their milestones/goals should be encouraged, supported and their terms extended, but those failing in their programmes have to step down.

Pakistani colleges and universities can no longer depend on government money but must involve the community and their students to raise funds to establish endowments which can be used to provide financial assistance to students and expand relevant academic programmes (see “Higher education: innovations and gains through self-help”, Dawn, May 6, 2012).

PEP Foundation along with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) is organising a National Education Fundraising Week in 2013 where colleges and universities throughout Pakistan should avail themselves of this opportunity to establish and/or expand their Student Advancement Fund Endowments (SAFEs). Pakistan needs principals and vice chancellors who can go beyond traditional training, who can inspire youths to become not only the Einsteins of the future, but also the future Rockefellers, Carnegies and Bloomborgs — visionary philanthropists of education.

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