

"Alumni potential for the sustainable growth of Pakistan's Higher Education Institutions"

Abstract

This practitioner paper aims to explore how Public Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) in Pakistan, which currently face challenges in engaging alumni for a sustainable future in times of economic crisis and budgetary cuts, could use alumni associations to nurture a culture of alumni engagement. This study employs a phenomenological approach and uses interview data from 22 alumni of eight different PHEIs of Pakistan to explore the role of alumni associations in nurturing alumni engagement culture in the institutions. This study reports that PHEIs generally undermine the importance of having formal alumni associations to nurture long-lasting bonds with alumni. This research found that generally, PHEIs in Pakistan lacked the presence of formal alumni associations, and if some institutions were having formal associations, then those were inactive. This research found several causes that showed the limited role of alumni associations in encouraging alumni to engage with institutions, including lack of acceptance as a formal entity, lack of support from institutions to establish alumni associations, lack of formal communication with alumni from the association, regular selection of alumni body, the dominance of selected alumni in the association body, and lack of clarity about alumni association's role in the growth of the institutions.

Based on these findings, this study recommends that PHEIs in Pakistan can leverage the benefits of alumni engagement to strengthen their organizational standing, provided they view the role of alumni associations as a crucial step in nurturing a long-lasting alumni bond that could lead to more frequent engagement of alumni. However, this requires PHEIs to adopt a proactive approach to make alumni aware of the personal and professional benefits of having a formal alumni association platform and its role in the sustainable development of the institution. Further, the presence of formal alumni associations would help institutions attract a more extensive support network to address the mounting challenges of state funding cuts. Research shows that institutions in developed economies have strengthened their bond with alumni and attracted a large pool of alumni support by establishing strong alumni associations. However, the role of alumni associations is undervalued in institutions from developing economies and calls for more scholarly effort. In this regard, this study attempts to fill this gap by exploring the role of alumni associations in PHEIs of Pakistan and recommends how institutions could leverage the benefits of alumni associations to nurture long-lasting bonds with alumni for a sustainable future.

Keywords: Alumni associations, alumni bond, Alumni engagement, Financial sustainability; Public Higher Education Institutions, Pakistan