

mal performance standards. Accreditation of public institutions has also been encouraged, given that some of the regional and local universities are having a hard time matching the standards of national institutions and private universities of excellence.

#### REFORMS OF GOVERNMENT MONITORING

Autonomy is the aspect that most likely comes to mind when higher education is mentioned in Colombia. The term is included in the 1991 Constitution in reference to tertiary education institutions and is developed further in statutory law. However, autonomy resulted in the proliferation of institutions that are having a hard time with evaluation and accreditation.

The current Uribe administration initiated a series of measures to reform the monitoring of both basic and upper levels of education. In higher education, the measures aimed at controlling the proliferation of programs with low quality standards and coordinating the monitoring of higher education with that of preschool, primary, and secondary schools. The steps taken have included the creation of a Vice-Ministry of Higher Education within the Ministry of Education, the setting of minimum standards for granting accreditation, redefining academic credit and the curriculum of credit-based programs, and enhancing technical and technological education. The last set of measures involves setting performance indicators for public universities as a basis for granting up to 12 percent of their budget. These indicators include completion time and dropout and enrollment rates, which all need to be improved if a public university wants to receive its entire approved budget. Teachers' salaries would also be pegged more strictly to productivity.

#### CONCLUSION

Whereas the measures taken by the Uribe administration will have an impact on Colombia's higher education system, the results have yet to be seen. The approach is well conceived in the sense that reforms include primary and secondary education as well and the public and private mix of the different levels. Yet, the challenge is big and the needs are extensive. ■

## Problems of Leadership and Reform in Pakistan

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The process of reforming higher education in Pakistan started with great optimism and energy in early 2001 and gath-

ered momentum during the following two years but seems to have hit a rocky road since. While there are a multiple reasons for the prevailing situation, I see the single-most-important factor that hampered positive change as the individual limitations of the key leaders, including the vice chancellors. Those who were expected to lead the reform, barring exceptions, exhibited a lack of vision and understanding, as well as the requisite qualities.

The reform effort in higher education in Pakistan gathered momentum during three years, from 2001 through 2003, spurred on by the 2000 World Bank-UNESCO report, *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise*. In Pakistan, the Task Force for Improving Higher Education (TF) and the subsequent Steering committee on Higher Education (SCHE)—in both of which I served as an active member—spearheaded the effort.

#### THE INNER SANCTUM

To begin with, most individuals in the two groups established to conceptualize and develop a road map for reforms largely failed to rise up to their tasks. The members' approach to the deliberations remained oppositional and subversive, rather than facilitative. The individuals had been selected by virtue of their positions held or some related factors. We were anyhow caught up in a paradox: most of us were likely to lose in one way or another, if and when the reforms were implemented. Those benefiting from the chaotic system were tasked to change it in a manner that could hurt their interests, which could undermine the very efforts the two groups were supposed to further. Despite the difficulties, the TF managed to produce a set of radical recommendations that, if implemented as envisaged, could bring about a sea change for the better.

#### STAKEHOLDER RESISTANCE

Of the many reforms proposed by the TF, a central one was to change the governance and management of universities, to make them more autonomous and introduce transparency and accountability into their administrative functioning. Here the main battles emerged with the chancellors, vice chancellors, and some senior members of the education bureaucracy. The chancellors foresaw an erosion of their unchecked powers. Most of the vice chancellors were concerned because the proposed reforms envisaged a transparent process of selection, a system of accountability of their performance, and checks on the blanket emergency powers they enjoyed. The systematization of university governance would similarly erode the power of the education bureaucracy.

Outwardly, all of them lamented the dire state of affairs in higher education and supported reform, as the pressure for that was coming from the highest authorities. However, behind the scenes their resistance to change was dogged and, unfortunately, effective. They clouded issues by quoting precedence, and raising legalistic and/or procedural constraints. Their opposition was informed by the mindset that the state

and its various organs must have hegemony and control, despite evidence that in Pakistan the outmoded functioning of the state is the problem that stifles the establishment of good-governance and credible and efficient institutions. Their position was that a better implementation, by “good” people, of prevailing procedures and systems will solve the problems.

#### LEADERSHIP DEFICIT

The TF had recommended that the arena for reform should be the universities, and as a corollary the figure of the vice chancellor emerged as the linchpin for taking forward the reforms. However, the appointment of the vice chancellor is the prerogative of the chancellor, and amazingly there are no criteria for this appointment, nor is there any transparent process that could ensure merit. Consequently, we have many vice chancellors who are not the best leaders—many not having been academics to begin with. Nevertheless, appointment as a vice chancellor bestows considerable executive powers on the person, and she or he has a key role in the trajectory of institutional functioning. Unfortunately, most are averse to learning and change. Their decisions and actions are primarily informed by what they consider would please the higher-ups, the desire to retain their positions, and secondarily with professional or institutional requirements. Thus, the most critical positions of higher education management are occupied by individuals who may not be too suitable for the job, are inwardly anxious and insecure, and lack the necessary qualities to provide credible leadership. The rather whimsical methods of their appointment, and the conditions of service; their lack of vision, confidence in themselves; and low institutional or professional commitment—all combine to make a pessimistic mix for reform.

#### CONCLUSION

The reform effort in Pakistan was derailed because of two crucial weaknesses. First, the overall mode of state functioning, policymaking, and governance is top-down, nontransparent, and rigidly hierarchical. That mindset bedevils reform in higher education, in general, and the manner in which universities function, in particular. For example, the TF had recommended that to drive and facilitate the reform effort, an apex Higher Education Commission should be established, which was done in late 2002. However, the commission is functioning like any other Pakistani bureaucracy. Second, at the microlevel, the leadership of institutions of higher learning is extremely weak. As indicated above, the leaders remained largely opposed to reform, and concern for improvements in institutional functioning remains a low priority. Initially, the majority of vice chancellors felt obliged to go along with the flow, they kept making the right noises at the right times and places but bided their time and tried to do as little as absolutely necessary. As the fervor for change started waning, the beginning of which was around late 2002, the old attitudes were reasserted. Those for the status quo but adept at the game of position, reascended; and, in an ironic twist, those who championed reform were

marginalized or ended up on the defensive: proving once again that in Pakistan the winning approach is doing the least, mouthing the right things, and staying the course of the status quo. The unfortunate upshot is that the reform process that was initiated with fanfare has largely come to naught and, some argue, has made the situation worse. The broader lesson that our case illustrates is that the determinants of the outcomes of such efforts are the commitment, honesty of purpose, and know-how of key actors; and the wider psychosocial and political context that shape and inform their decisions and actions. ■

## Recognition of Education for Refugees: The Norwegian Experience

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Many refugees arrive in Europe with few, if any, educational documents. Often it is difficult to obtain verifications from their countries of origin. Some people exploit this situation by producing fraudulent documents, and this necessitates an alternative method that enables candidates with bona fide qualifications to demonstrate the authenticity of their qualifications. Today, 100,000 refugees are settled in Norway, a country of only 4.5 million inhabitants, and about 15 percent of these refugees have some form of higher education.

In the Lisbon Convention, the issues relating to refugee credentials are covered by Article VII. The signatories are expected to put in place fair and expeditious systems for evaluation of qualifications for refugees with insufficient documentation.

In 1999, a working group from the European Network of National Information Centers on Academic Recognition and Mobility (ENIC) suggested using a “background paper” for refugees, based on the applicants’ own reconstructions of their educational backgrounds. In 2003, a Norwegian procedure for recognition of refugee qualifications was developed, mainly built on the ENIC recommendations and experiences with assessment of prior learning. There is, however, a difference between assessing documented informal prior learning and assessing undocumented, but formal, qualifications of refugees—the latter learning being a planned process, often within a known education system.

#### THE NORWEGIAN REFUGEE PROCESS

The procedure has two phases. The first is to establish the applicant’s educational portfolio by collecting supporting evidence and reconstructing his or her course descriptions. The