
Pakistan: why the reforms need work

I agree that investing in Pakistan's higher education will have a broad impact on development (*Nature* 467, 367; 2010). But at policy level, some things are different from the situation described by you and the Higher Education Commission overseeing this reform process.

The commission must prioritize according to the country's needs. For example, we badly need social scientists (economists, sociologists and anthropologists) to help to set goals of human development and social welfare.

The commission is unrealistic in suggesting that producing more PhDs locally and from advanced industrial countries will boost the knowledge economy. Establishing new universities in remote districts is unlikely to attract more foreign graduates and invite professors, who will continue to favour the metropolitan universities because of their better infrastructure.

The reform process is being partly funded by foreign partners, but it is not clear how much longer this can be sustained. And Pakistan's low tax-to-GDP ratio, coupled with burgeoning corruption (tax theft), won't help to increase local funding for higher education.

Faisal Abbas *University of Bonn, Germany, fabbas@uni-bonn.de*