

Making ‘Impact Factor’ Impactful: Universities, Think Tanks and Policy Research in Pakistan

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Acronyms

AERC	Applied Economic Research Centre
AKU	Aga Khan University
BNU	Beaconhouse National University
CERP	Centre for Economic Research and Policy
DFID	Department for International Development
HDR	Human Development Report
HEC	Higher Education Commission
IDE	Institute of Development Economics
IDEAS	Institute for Development and Economic Alternatives
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IED	Institute for Educational Development
KPK	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
LUMS	Lahore University of Management Sciences
LSE	Lahore School of Economics
MHHDC	Mahbub-ul-Haq Human Development Centre
NCCR	National Centre for Competence Research
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
NUCES	National University for Computer and Emerging Sciences
NUST	National University of Science and Technology
PIDE	Pakistan Institute of Development Economics
PSSP	Pakistan Strategy Support Programme
QAU	Quaid-i-Azam University
RECOUP	Research Consortium on Educational Outcomes and Poverty
SDPI	Sustainable Development Policy Institute
SDC	Sustainable Development Conference
SPDC	Social Policy Development Centre
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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A. Introduction

Today's Pakistan faces complex development challenges at all fronts requiring sophisticated policy responses. Amidst this complexity is the ongoing democratic transition creating new demands for transparency, accountability and informed decision-making. These demands are multiplied by devolution under the 18th Constitutional Amendment in 2010 resulting in provincial autonomy and multiplying the actors in the arena of policymaking. The need for a context-specific knowledge-base has thus increased manifold during the recent years. In contrast to this escalated need, the provision of knowledge for public policymaking appears inadequate and is marred with serious institutional challenges. At the core of these challenges is an overall weak research capacity, an alleged culture of disregard for evidence in decision-making and somewhat declining in-house capacities of policy makers to engage with research and analysis (Ikram 2011; Wood 2013).

The existing literature indicates that the frequency and intensity of political, social, and natural occurrences often outpace the capacity of policy discourse generated in the country to cope with, understand, respond to, and shape these developments in the future (Fiaz 2012; Naveed 2013a). Policy interventions in the absence of a vibrant discourse tradition, therefore, generally lack the required social consensus, which on the one hand undermines the success of such interventions, and on the other, creates a culture of ex-post analysis and crisis-driven responses instead of careful forecasts and prepared strategies. The ineffectiveness and insufficiency of policy discourses to precede interventions and events, therefore, merit a systematic analysis of the challenges that surround the formal knowledge systems supporting public policies. This gains particular importance in the wake of a scarce existing understanding of the ways various actors in research provision interact with each other and participate in policy processes.

Providers of policy research clearly have a critical role in Pakistan's overall development process and democratisation through their contribution towards improving transparency and accountability. The available literature on research providers focuses on the overall state of social sciences as the key determinant of research capacities (Inayatullah, Saigol and Tahir 2005; Zaidi 2002; Khattak 2009), the institutional dynamics of the providers of policy research (Naveed 2013a), and their relationship with the consumers of research, i.e. policy makers (Wood 2013;). Such literature highlights that due to historic, ideological, political and cultural reasons, and as a consequence of weak disciplinary and methodological training at most universities in Pakistan, social science based knowledge produced in the country is not just low in quantity but is also of poor quality.

Studies landscaping the key actors in policy research in Pakistan show that the number of active providers of policy research is fewer compared to the complexity of policy needs. Notwithstanding the recently devolved context of policymaking, research providers are geographically clustered in Islamabad and Lahore (Naveed 2013a).³ The landscape predominantly consists of non-government entities with a virtual absence of the public sector. The scarce engagement of universities in addressing questions raised by policy needs, despite a dramatic improvement in the higher education sector over the last fifteen years, appears paradoxical.

The available political economy analysis of research and its uptake into policies demonstrates the pitfalls associated with the overwhelming reliance of policy research on external donors (Wood 2013). There is a growing realisation amongst key stakeholders that the exclusive reliance of policy research on a financially vulnerable non-government sector results in research priorities influenced by international donor agencies, and has its own challenges.⁴ It is observed that often uncoordinated projects, reflective of deeper problems of international aid, fragment the core development narratives into uncoordinated and at times incoherent discourses with implications for the uptake of such research into policies (ibid.).

Such research highlights another concern that the current models of technical, financial and strategic support to policy research can potentially push the resource deficient and politically less engaged traditional knowledge providers, universities, further away from the locus of influence. These challenges necessitate a serious rethinking of the funding paradigms and modalities to bring the relatively autonomous research actors into their active role of solving the problems faced by society. However, efforts to engage universities with policy processes in the current policy contexts imply bringing them closer to other key actors contributing to policy discourses. There is thus a need to understand the ways both groups of institutions are currently positioned in the landscape of policy research and the ways they are engaged with each other.

B. Relational Dynamics of Knowledge Systems for Policymaking

Informed by the complexity of policy processes which are the sites of contestation, cooperation, and convergences of various actors with competing agendas and variable abilities to mobilise resources to demand policy change (Nohrsted and Weible 2010), this study explores the relational dynamics of the providers of policy research. It examines particularly the ways think tanks and universities in Pakistan within their respective mandates

³ See annex 2 for a geographic mapping of the institutions of policy research in Pakistan.

⁴ The current study, part of several regional studies funded by the IDRC, reflects this concern.

interact with each other, sometimes cooperating, sometimes competing, sometimes disassociating themselves with each other, and yet at other times converging into each other. These insights are important for improving the independence and quality of research being produced. Moreover, such an understanding contributes to the debate on reconceptualising the societal role that universities are increasingly expected to play, as is being realised under the new leadership of the Higher Education Commission (HEC).⁵

This overall context thus presents a compelling case for a nuanced understanding of policy research environs, and the role of different knowledge communities in policy processes. A range of stakeholders are actively engaged in supporting the generation of policy relevant knowledge to strengthen the culture of informed policymaking.⁶ We argue that strengthening independent think tanks is an important strategy, there are however other actors in the knowledge system mandated to produce policy relevant research with often competing interests, agendas and variable abilities to mobilise resources to demand policy change (ibid.). These suppliers of research such as think tanks and universities operate in relation to each other: as competitors or collaborators, and as barriers or facilitators of each other's demands (Hogan and Doyle 2007). At the same time, these groups of institutions are arguably located differently in the value chain of policy relevant knowledge, occupy different historic, political and ideological places in the overall policy landscape due to a number of factors, including but not confined to the organisational structures, respective mandates, sources of funding, and policy engagement constraints and opportunities.

Understanding patterns of these relationships is critical for strengthening policy research organisations. As the need for independent policy research increases over time, it is imperative to explore how externally funded research institutions interact with other research providers. A broad understanding of these interactions can help rethink aid modalities in such a way that strengthening one group of institutions does not compromise the other and is rather mutually benefitting through greater collaborations and constructive engagement. In the given context, the IDRC commissioned the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies (IIDS) to explore the relationship between think tanks and universities in South Asia. This Pakistan Country Paper explores the following questions:

1. What are the different types of relationships between think tanks and universities in Pakistan? What are the most important drivers, features, and consequences of these relationships in Pakistan's research knowledge environment?

⁵ As expressed by the Chairman of HEC, the Vice-Chancellors of PIDE, QAU, Allama Iqbal Open University, Fatima Jinnah Women University, and Karachi University and the Rector of the IIU at an SDPI seminar on April 21, 2014.

2. How are the relationships between think tanks and universities in Pakistan affected by the externally provided support to the policy research capacity building? How does providing support to one type of institution (think tanks) affect these relationships?
3. What are the ways in which think tanks and universities have developed mutually beneficial relationships, particularly in cases where support provided to one has generated increased value for the other?

C. Structure of the Paper

This paper is divided into seven sections. The next section on research design is followed by an appraisal of the overall weak state of social sciences in Pakistan which are the key determinant of research capacities of both think tanks and universities. It demonstrates continuity of the historic bias against social sciences inherent in higher education reforms over the last 15 years. It is followed by the overview of the institutional context of policy research highlighting Pakistan's landscape of research institutions and some of their political economy dynamics. The subsequent section presents the empirical findings beginning with outlining the distinct organisational characteristics of think tanks and universities before moving on to presenting the patterns of their mutual relationships and underlying incentives and disincentives. This is followed by a discussion on the role of funding arrangements in shaping these relationships. We then present four case studies that validate our analysis and demonstrate various forms of relationships between think tanks and universities. The last section concludes this paper by synthesising the analysis and making some key recommendations to strengthen the overall knowledge systems for policymaking in Pakistan.

D. Research Design

The universe of the study consisted of think tanks and universities in Pakistan. In 2012, SDPI conducted a detailed landscaping of the institutions of policy research and identified the key actors who constituted the sample of this study (for details, please see Naveed 2013a). The sample comprising 15 think tanks and 17 university departments was located in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Faisalabad and Karachi, representing the geographic spread of policy research institutions across the country. The initial plan to gather data by organising the focused group discussion of researchers based at these institutions was substituted with in-depth semi-structured interviews given the need for data on subtle institutional dynamics as well as the difficulties in bringing together the experts from both groups of institutions. In total, 32 interviews were conducted with the heads of the organisations/departments or senior researchers and faculty members.

The interview schedule consisted of two sections. First section gathered quantitative information on the proportion of collaborative projects out of total research and advocacy projects conducted by the institution over the last three years, the extent of collaboration, i.e. institutional and individual, across core areas, including research, advocacy, teaching and training. Second section of the questionnaire, which was extensively qualitative, covered: respondents' perceptions on the quality of research produced by think tanks and universities; their knowledge of and opinion about the nature of relationship between think tanks and universities; key areas where the two groups of institutions compete, cooperate and collaborate with each other; major incentives and disincentives for collaboration; financial resources available for research; the conditions associated with these resources; and the extent to which funding conditionality shapes the relationship between the two groups of institutions. It also gathered respondents' opinions on the best ways to strengthen the relationship between the two groups of institutions. All interviews took place in the offices of the respondents and the duration ranged between one to two hours. These interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed subsequently. These data were substantiated by the further scanning of the websites of sampled institutions. Additionally, four case studies capturing the instances of various forms of interactions between think tanks and universities in the country were developed and are presented in this paper.

The quantitative section was not fully responded to by most think tanks and universities since the records of the instances of formal and informal collaborations were not readily available. Our requests for compiling these records for this study were partially responded to by some think tanks without providing the sufficient depth and breadth of quantitative data to present in the country paper. Therefore the data generated is essentially qualitative.

E. Social Sciences in Pakistan

The critical and analytical faculties required in the highly inter-disciplinary field of policy research depend heavily upon the state of the social sciences. At the time of its inception, Pakistan inherited very weak infrastructure for social science training and research (Inayatullah 2001), which continues to remain weak despite certain phases of development. The ideological context and the political history of the country are often drawn upon by many analysts to explain the poor state of social sciences. The successive dictatorial and quasi dictatorial political regimes had serious bearings for the autonomy of the academic institutions by absorbing them into bureaucratic procedures and subjecting them to the civil service rules (ibid.). Zaidi (2002) stratified the post-independence period into five distinct phases of social sciences in Pakistan. Most of the pre-independence policies were followed in the first phase,

1947-58. The second phase, 1958-71, was characterised by a 'nexus' between bureaucracy and military with a strong US influence on the policies. Albeit a lack of independence, the development of social science picked up some momentum towards the end of the 1960s.

In Zaidi's view, the academic institutions started strengthening their roots from 1971 to 1977, which was the 'first democratic' era in the new Pakistan and was far freer and more liberal, and perhaps more creative as well. The subsequent military regime from 1977 to 1988, which constitutes the fourth phase, was a huge setback on the social and academic structure of the country through various tools including Islamization of the state and society including higher education. With a transitory period between 1988 and 1999, yet another military coup by General Pervez Musharraf put an end to the democratic era, however, with different implications for social sciences from the previous dictatorships. The establishment of the HEC promoted social sciences to some extent by sending a number of students and faculty members of universities abroad for doctoral training. While these investments are still being made, much of the research during and after this era has been produced outside universities, mainly in think tanks.

From Zaidi's perspective, the political culture of the country promoted a 'conformist' view instead of critical thinking necessary for the progress in social sciences (2002b). The authoritative nature of the state has tended to be biased against a culture of debate and dissent thus counter-productive for research. A five-fold increase in the number of social science teachers during 1963-2001 has failed to yield any academic environment of debate and ideas (Tahir 2005) not the least because there is an off-setting increase in population and the number of educational institutions. Saigol concludes a critical monograph by underscoring the key structural, ideological and institutional factors contributing to the poor state of social sciences in Pakistan by arguing that:

The overwhelming ideological orientation of teachers across the disciplinary spectrum revolves around religious and nationalist thinking. Most departments have courses in the Ideology of Pakistan and some form of religious teaching. These subjects are usually taught uncritically and from a single dominant viewpoint. Competing or alternative viewpoints on the subject are not entertained and there is seldom any debate over these issues such as what is the Ideology of Pakistan, who expounds it and why. Even the suggestion that there may [be] competing versions of ideology or alternative views about religion (say between the different sects and classes of people) causes hostility and defensiveness. (Saigol in Inayatullah et al. 2005:477).

Saigol further elaborates:

So deeply rooted are teachers and students in the hegemonic versions of state and society that even the social sciences, which are tasked to produce alternative visions, fail to do so. As a result one hardly finds any exponents of other schools of thought – say Marxist, socialist, feminist, subaltern or post-modernist. Very few faculty members are aware of other schools of thought so that there is seldom any ideological debate that could potentially generate new ideas. The absence of debate and controversy, discussion and contention, makes most of the universities very dull and insipid places where received knowledge from old books is transmitted from generation to generation in the same unchanging way. To some extent the problem is a consequence of a lack of basic research facilities, in particular in the public sector institutions. (Ibid).

In Saigol's view, commodification of the knowledge under the neo-liberal economic policies and the increased authoritarianism of the state over time have resulted in disciplines such as business and administration being preferred over the core disciplines such as history, philosophy and political science which are critical to the understanding of the state, society and culture. Saigol lists several key factors, responsible for the under development of social sciences in Pakistan. These include; little monetary reward for teachers, high student-teacher ratios, lack of academic facilities including libraries with up to date books, and a general lack of community of researchers to reflect upon the research produced to generate the debate. The scarcity of academic conferences and seminars results in a behaviour of 'inwardness' rather than sharing of the ideas, and cross disciplinary communication and interaction. She highlights that the extent of training in research methods is extremely poor, inefficient and outdated. Social scientists trained in these conditions find it hard to secure jobs and the better paid jobs are biased towards foreign qualified social scientists: 'locally qualified social scientists even if they have greater insight and intelligence or first-hand knowledge of the local institutions, fail to compete with foreign qualified individuals owing to the lack of respect for the degrees awarded by Pakistani universities.'

Lastly, Saigol points towards the elitist nature of social sciences in the country by highlighting that despite the majority of the population of the country being rural, the positions of prestige and power in the knowledge system are dominated by the urban upper classes. This is increasingly visible as one observes the uprising of the few private sector universities providing better training to those who can afford it, albeit with some contrary evidences contradicting this general trend, at least in development sector..

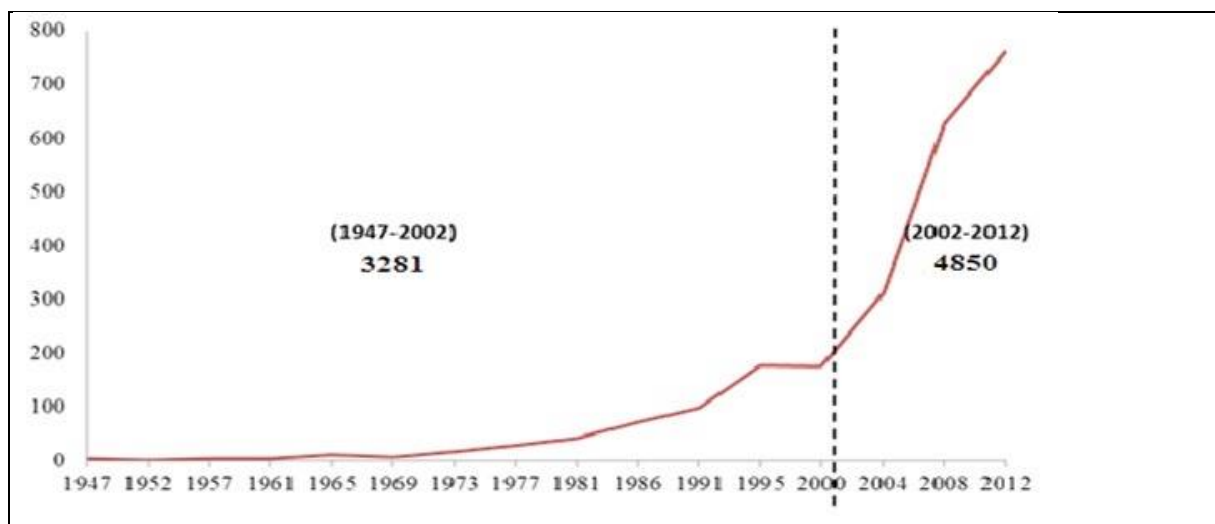
1. Higher Education Reforms

Despite the historic persistence of unmet research needs of economy and society, the higher education reforms beginning with the establishment of an autonomous HEC in early 2000 have been successful in transforming the overall landscape of higher education in Pakistan. This transformation is evident from the manifold increase in the number of universities, university enrolments, and the number of PhDs. To what extent these reforms are aware of the poor state of social sciences in the country, and attempt to overcome the historic bias against social sciences, can be seen from the evidences presented in this section.

There is a steady rise in the overall enrolment in universities in this post reforms (post-2000) period. The total number of students enrolled in universities rose from 276,274 in 2001-02 to 868,641 in 2009-10.⁷ A four-fold increase over just one decade exhibits a drastically increased capacity of higher education system to absorb the influx of new students given the ongoing demographic pressure.

One of the major thrust of these reforms has been on improving research at the universities through several initiatives. Most important of these is the strengthening of the doctoral research training at Pakistani universities which is reflected in rise in the number of PhDs produced during this period. Over the 55 years between 1947 and 2002, a total of only 3,281 PhDs were produced by Pakistani universities across all disciplines. In the subsequent 10-year period, about 5,000 PhDs have been produced, reflecting the transformation of universities towards research-oriented institutions. This is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Increase in PhD outputs during 1947-2002 and 2001-2012

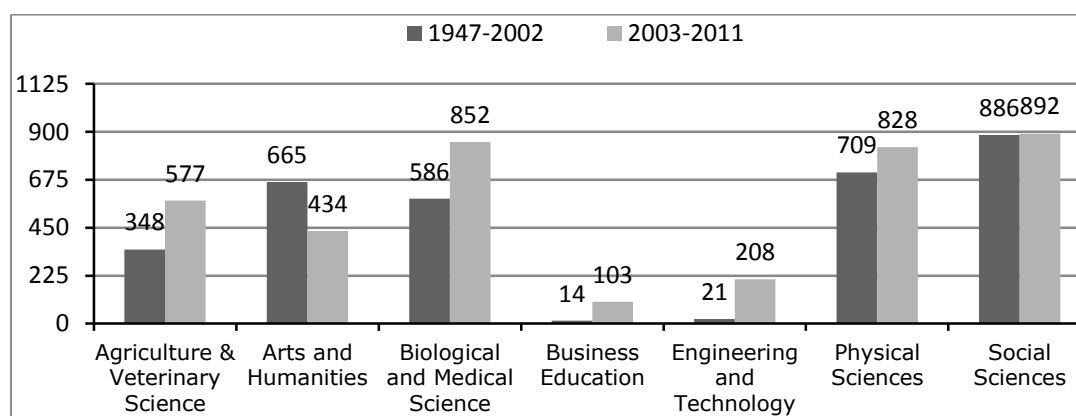


⁷ Source: HEC, <http://www.hec.gov.pk/Stats/Pages/Default.aspx>

Source: HEC⁸

Remarkably while the number of PhDs in social sciences over this decade has been equal to those produced over the last 55 years, which in itself is an achievement, the radical rise in the number of PhDs has mainly been in the non-social science disciplines. Figure 2 shows this major focus of these reforms on the disciplines of science, technology and engineering, implying that the arts, humanities and social sciences have not received sufficient attention. While this has been justified by the technology driven economic growth through trained human resources, the impact of personal backgrounds of the earlier leadership of HEC in the disciplines of science and technology cannot be ignored.

Figure 2: Discipline wise breakdown of PhDs produced



Source: HEC Annual Report 2010-11⁹

The relative neglect of social sciences in higher education reforms can be seen through the number of national and international scholarships awarded across various disciplines under these reforms. Several programmes were initiated to support PhD intake at Pakistani universities, such as the 'indigenous fellowships' that started in 2000, aimed at supporting 5,000 PhDs at local universities in five different batches. As Table 1 demonstrates, out of 4,874 scholarships awarded for PhD at Pakistani universities, only 745 scholarships, i.e. 15 per cent of the total, were awarded in all disciplines of social sciences.

⁸ <http://www.hec.gov.pk/Stats/Pages/Default.aspx>

⁹ <http://www.hec.gov.pk/MediaPublication/PublishingImages/Annual%20Report-2012%20in%20PDF/Annual%20Report-2012%20in%20PDF.html> . Last accessed Feb 20, 2014.

Table 1: Discipline Wise Breakdown of the PhD Scholarships at Pakistani Universities

Scholarship types	Development of S&D Manpower through Indigenous PhD		PHD Fellowship for 5000 Scholars		Merit Scholarships for S&T Manpower		Scholarships for Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities for University Teachers		Development/ Strengthening of Selected Departments of Social Sciences and Humanities		Total Discipline Wise Awarded
Disciplines	Awarded	Completed	Awarded	Completed	Awarded	Completed	Awarded	Completed	Awarded	Completed	
Agriculture & Veterinary Sciences	59	41	505	69	47	34	0	0	0	0	611
Arts & Humanities	0	0	251	2	0	0	26	0	0	0	277
Biological & Medical Sciences	19	19	760	85	30	20	0	0	0	0	809
Business Education	0	0	197	19	0	0	17	6	0	0	214
Engineering & Technology	73	49	511	29	41	23	0	0	0	0	625
Physical Sciences	89	63	1454	151	50	47	0	0	0	0	1593
Social Sciences	0	0	672	31	0	0	58	6	15	1	745
Total	240	172	4350	386	168	124	101	12	15	1	4874

Source: HEC Annual Report 2010-11

This bias in the allocation of resources to social sciences is not confined to doctoral fellowships at Pakistani universities only. Amongst all overseas PhD scholarships granted under reforms until 2011, as Table 2 shows, the proportion of scholarships for social sciences is even lower and less than 10 per cent of the total. Among the 2,529 scholarships awarded under this program; 775 have completed the degrees by June 2011, out of which, only 63 are from social sciences.

Table 2: Discipline-Wise Breakdown of the Overseas PhD Scholarships

Country	Discipline							Total
	Engineering & Technology	Physical Sciences	Biological & Medical Sciences	Agriculture & Veterinary Sciences	Social Sciences	Business Education	Arts & Humanities	
France	203	108	59	115	55	48	12	600
Netherlands	42	65	23	51	22	16	3	222
Austria	65	188	40	23	17	13	0	346
Germany	135	126	56	46	28	5	1	397
New Zealand	38	36	11	18	16	20	15	154
China	26	27	19	25	6	1	0	104
Sweden	76	73	27	16	0	0	1	193
Australia	4	0	9	12	14	5	1	44
Canada	2	2	0	2	1	0	0	7
United Kingdom	34	35	49	24	57	12	9	220
USA	17	5	0	0	9	2	1	34
Norway	15	22	4	2	9	2	0	54
South Korea	10	14	5	1	5	1	0	36
Italy	33	22	0	1	0	0	0	56
Thailand	31	8	2	7	10	4	0	62
Total	699	710	303	342	249	129	43	2529

Source: HEC Annual Report 2010-11

Alongside the obvious bias against social sciences in the HEC reforms, the overall increased number of PhDs produced by the universities is also subject to criticism on the grounds of quality. The drastic increase in the intake of research students without a matching increase in the training capacities means that quality has been replaced by quantity.¹⁰

A similar bias is reflected in HEC's "Distinguished National Professors" program to use the services of the outstanding senior professors and scientists in the universities and R&D organisations. Under this programme, a total of 40 distinguished professors were appointed since 2004 and only three were from the disciplines of social sciences (HEC Annual Report 2010-11). There is also a low share of resources for social science research under HEC funded research projects for the faculty members at universities. Out of the total 1,034 approved projects since the inception of the program, only 35 were approved for the disciplines of social sciences (ibid.). The reasons for the low number of social science projects may include low levels of applications from the social scientists which in itself is reflective of how deep rooted the problem is.

The cumulative impact of the HEC reforms over the last 15 years can be summarised in the trends in research outputs. Overall, these reforms have drastically increased academic research outputs in the country. The annual research publications were only 816 in 2002 which rose to 4,963 in 2010 – a six times increase in just eight years. The breakdown of these research outputs by discipline, however presents a very disappointing picture of the performance of social science faculties. Out of 4,963 research outputs, only 145 were produced by the social scientists. In fact, the share of social science research publications in overall research publications has fallen from 4.5 per cent of total publications in 2002 to only 2.9 per cent in 2010.

¹⁰ University Individual Interview 01.

Table 3: Annual research outputs 2002-10

Year	Total Publications	Social Science Publications	Share of Social Science Publications
2010	4,963	145	2.9%
2008	3,425	62	1.8%
2007	2,836	80	2.8%
2006	1,765	50	2.8%
2005	1,316	54	4.1%
2004	1,044	45	4.3%
2003	948	47	4.9%
2002	816	37	4.5%

Sources: HEC¹¹ for column 2; Arunachalam¹² (undated); Column 3 is authors' calculation

These statistics and the earlier section demonstrate the historic underdevelopment of social sciences in Pakistan. The evidences presented here suggest that the overall human resource capacity of research institutions is likely to remain under-developed in the near future unless there is a drastic shift in the policies of HEC. With this broad understanding of social sciences and the trends in higher education, we now look into the landscape of the institutions of policy research in Pakistan.

F. The Landscape of Policy Research in Pakistan

Globally, the internal dynamics of the knowledge systems informing policymaking are not widely studied and more so in the case of developing countries. Exploring these dynamics, therefore, requires developing a baseline understanding of the field. By building on some of the key analyses of the overall condition of research in Pakistan in general and of social

¹¹ <http://www.hec.gov.pk/Stats/Pages/Default.aspx>

¹² Based on Science Citation Index and Social Science Citation Index

science research in particular, SDPI¹³ landscaped the institutions engaged in conducting research across major policy themes¹⁴ in 2012-13 (Naveed 2013a). This study highlighted some important aspects of the political economy of policy research and its uptake in the country (Wood 2013). Given that this study provided the context of this paper, this section presents a brief overview of its key findings.

The historic concentration of political power and decision-making at the federal level had implications for the evolution of the institutions of policy research within and outside the public sector. These institutions were established largely in the capital given an easy access to both the end-users and the donors of policy research. The devolution of policymaking from federal to provincial levels in 2010 posed new challenges to the providers of research requiring context specific analyses of policy issues. However, even after four years of increased provincial autonomy in policymaking, the institutions of policy research continue to be clustered in Islamabad. Although the number of institutions in Lahore is increasing now, and a few are already located in Karachi, ironically, the provinces with the most complex policy challenges, such as Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), do not have any research institution that can significantly provide policy analyses. This spatially skewed presence of research institutions is also reflected in the overall policy analyses produced in the country, which is thinly focused on the core issues of these two provinces. This is, in all probability, also reflective of the lack of physical security in KPK and Balochistan, which marginalises the scope of conducting primary research by the institutions located elsewhere in the country.

With the exception of a few areas such as scientific, technological, and strategic/security research where there is a significant presence, (rather, dominance) of the public sector research organisations, all other key fields covering social, political, economic and cultural aspects of public policies are heavily dominated by non-government/private sector organisations. The few existing public sector research institutions in these fields, by and large, suffer from serious capacity constraints. This apparent 'outsourcing of thinking' by successive governments limiting themselves to implement ideas generated externally, and the postponement of investments in research capacities of the public sector, reflect the acute problems that stem from the demand side of policy research. A gradual erosion of the bureaucracies' capacities and interests to engage with the evidence, alternative ideas and arguments in making public choices was also documented (Ikram 2011; Wood 2013).

¹³ We were however advantaged as in 2012 as Wood and Naveed were commissioned by the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) to conduct a landscaping study on the institutions of policy research in Pakistan.

¹⁴ These themes included: economics, health, agriculture and nutrition, gender and poverty, governance and conflict, education, and evaluation/impact assessment.

While the field of policy research is dominated by non-government actors, public sector funds for policy research are ironically limited only to public sector institutions that produce a limited amount of analysis under the selected themes. Non-government institutions (hence the overwhelming share of policy research) rely heavily upon international donors (Naveed 2013a). In contrast, owing to a host of reasons, international donors' funds for policy research are also predominantly restricted to non-government actors, at least in practice, demonstrating a clear demarcation between the resource profile of public and private/non-government institutions. Importantly, international donors' funding for policy research is short-term and projectised (project-specific) in nature, triggering disposable project arrangements, rather than long-term capacity building of the institutions and actors (ibid.).

Another significant characteristic of this landscape of policy research is the invisibility of the institutions of higher education. Currently, there are 153 HEC recognised universities/degree awarding institutions in the country¹⁵ and only few of them, predominantly located in the private sector, are actively engaged in research that informs policies. Education as a discipline provides an interesting illustration of this point. There are at least 61 departments/campuses/institutes of education at various universities across the country including several educational research centres within them, employing at least 159 PhDs and more than 500 non PhDs mostly with MPhil degrees (Naveed 2013b). However, the contribution of such a huge human resource base with the highest academic credentials to policy research is rarely acknowledged by the policy makers.

The detailed thematic landscape of the institutions of policy research provided by this study is summarised in Box 1.

Box 1: Theme-wise Overview of the Institutions of Policy Research in Pakistan

- The largest number of policy research organisations is engaged in conducting policy research in the field of economics. These organisations are, however, largely clustered in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi. There are no organisations conducting economics research in Balochistan or KPK.
- Research under the themes of agriculture, food security and nutrition, essentially of scientific and technical nature, is dominated by public sector institutions including agricultural universities. Contrary to this, the research directly evaluating policies is conducted mainly by a few non-government organisations (NGOs).
- The research on health issues, particularly medical research, although seriously resource deficient, is mainly steered by the Pakistan Medical Research Council with a strong presence of Aga Khan University (AKU) in the private sector. The technical/scientific aspects of public

¹⁵ <http://www.hec.gov.pk/ourinstitutes/pages/default.aspx>

health are also addressed by a few organisations in the public sector. Very few of these organisations, mainly in the non-government sector, work directly on health policies and health systems.

- The research under the themes of poverty, gender and social policy is heavily dominated by NGOs with the public sector unable to provide official poverty statistics for the last eight years. While federal and provincial governments are struggling with their capacity to govern, particularly in the devolved landscape, there are very few NGOs engaged in policy relevant research on the issues of governance.
- Research under the theme of conflict and peace is dominated by public sector think tanks focused primarily on strategic and international/regional issues. There are however, an increasing number of non-government research institutions on this issue covering various dynamics of domestic (non-international) conflict. Overall, the organisations working on this theme are mainly concentrated in Islamabad.
- There are very few organisations specialising in issues related to education, which remains a small part of the wider portfolio of these organisations. Most of the outputs are quantitative/economic analysis and other key areas of educational research remain least studied.
- The landscape of evaluation is largely individualized with 'core group of experts' hired frequently as consultants, alongside the presence of a few Islamabad based organisations and consulting firms.

Excerpt from Naveed (2013a)

This study also uncovered some of the subtleties of the political economy of policy research and its uptake (Wood 2013). It observed that political instability inherently results in undermining the evidence based decision making, favouring short-term policymaking, and weakens the relationship between research and policy. It also identified a number of key barriers to conducting policy research in the country.

With this broad context of the overall landscape of policy research, the dominance of think tanks over this landscape, and the persistence of the weak state of social sciences in the evolving higher education industry, the relationship between think tanks and universities in Pakistan can be explored in more depth in the subsequent section.

G. Conceptualising Universities and Think Tanks in Pakistan

Understanding think tanks - universities relationships requires an appreciation of the similarities and differences between the two groups of institutions which can help us identify

opportunities as well as structural constraints in strengthening these relationships. Numerous factors ranging from the wider political economy to the immediate demand and supply pressures shape institutions' outlook and practices. Some elements of contrast and convergence in the practices of the institutions and hence the scope for interaction can however be traced by simply looking into their officially stated visions and missions. This section discusses the roles the two groups of institutions are envisioned and mandated to play, and identifies the between-group similarities and differences without undermining the in-group diversity.

Think tanks in Pakistan demonstrate considerable diversity in their officially stated vision, mission, objectives and specialisations. Their strikingly common feature is that they are envisioned to bring about change in public policies through applied research and analysis and proactive advocacy and lobbying. In fact it is a variable mix of research and advocacy which determines the internal diversity within think tanks as some of them are more focused on conducting research with limited advocacy while others are more known for networking, communication and advocacy. This variability is also evident from their visions and mission statements. The stated vision of country's oldest independent think tank, SDPI established in 1992 is:

To be a centre of excellence on sustainable development policy research, capacity development and advocacy in Pakistan.

The Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre, established in 1995, and which moved from Islamabad to Lahore in 2011 states its core objective as a commitment to;

...organizing professional research in the area of human development and promoting human development paradigm as a powerful tool for informing people-centered development policy.

The Karachi based Social Policy Development Centre, established in 1995, defines its mission as to:

...contribute to national economic and social development policies and programmes to make them more accountable, pro-poor, engendered and equitable.

While these premier think tanks have broad visions of advancing sustainable, human and social development, some have rather thematically specialised missions. For instance, the mission of the Islamabad based democracy focused think tank, Jinnah Institute is defined as:

...to promote independent policy research and policy advocacy in Pakistan that advances the cause of democratic institution-building, and strengthening state capacity for delivery on policy goals.

Similarly, the vision statement of the health focused think tank Heartfile is as follows:

Our vision is a future in which the entire population of Pakistan has an equal opportunity to attain the highest possible level of health and well-being.

The core objective behind the creation of think tanks is thus to bring about policy change in their respective areas of specialisation whether broadly or narrowly defined. They struggle to achieve these objectives not only through their own primary research but also through secondary analysis and by generating public debate through dialogues, as well as by networking with the key stakeholders. Sometimes they also engage themselves in capacity building such as conducting a range of training courses as in the case of SDPI.

In contrast to think tanks, universities in the country are envisioned to perform wider roles which by and large appear to be conceived to create knowledge based society and economy, and to foster leadership. Their official statements suggest these roles are seen to be played primarily through teaching although there is some focus upon research. As noted by Saigol (in Inayatullah et al. 2005), there is also an added emphasis on identity formation and the advancement of some aspects of nationalism within the stated visions of public sector universities. University of the Punjab Lahore, for example, has its official vision statement as follows:

....to be a lead public university in providing affordable educational opportunities to develop scientific, socio-cultural, economic and political leadership, through learner centred teaching and research, while strengthening our identity at national and international level.

Similarly, the mission statement of the Sindh University Jamshoro demonstrates its primary focus on teaching followed by the inculcation of identity and social values in the students.

To develop human resources by imparting quality education in all fields of science, arts and technology and to develop a body of teacher and taught who would be aware and proud of their culture and possess a high sense of honour and integrity and work with selfless dedication, commitment and responsibility towards society to contribute to the prosperity of people and peace and harmony in the country.

Balochistan University also retains the same emphasis on teaching and national identity formation albeit with a focus on research.

To be a model university providing affordable, quality higher education opportunities to develop the potentially rich human resource in Balochistan through knowledge centred teaching and research while maintaining high levels of ethical and professional standards and promoting national identity.

Generally, public sector universities seem to prioritise teaching over research, which is evident in their self-conceptualisation. The mission statement of the federal institute, Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU), which was initially established as a research university in 1967 appears to be striking a balance between teaching, social harmony and applied research for economic transformation:

Taking Pakistan forward by providing an affordable, high standard education to students from all corners of the country, creating interprovincial harmony, providing solutions through research relevant to the national needs, towards the transformation of the country into a knowledge-based economy.

Islamabad based National University of Science and Technology (NUST) also envisions the focus on research alongside teaching.

The National University of Science and Technology aims to emerge as a comprehensive residential institution responsive to technological change, dedicated to excellence and committed to international education and research needs of the country. NUST will continue to champion a tradition of distinguished teaching, research and service through evolving undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral level programmes of study in various disciplines in collaboration with renowned universities inside the country and abroad.

Except for a handful of public universities, the emphasis appears to be on teaching and training with research forming only a small part of their wider objectives. Some of the leading private sector universities, however, place high emphasis upon research. The Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), for example, states its vision as:

To become an internationally acclaimed research university that serves society through excellence in education and research.

Its mission statement further elaborates its emphasis upon conducting research.

LUMS aspires to achieve excellence and national and international leadership through unparalleled teaching and research, holistic undergraduate education, and civic engagement to serve the critical needs of society. It seeks to accomplish this mission as a unified institution with cutting-edge research, a modern and rigorous curriculum and socially responsible outreach to the nation and region.

The emphasis upon research is clearly articulated in the vision and mission statements of both NUST and LUMS. It is important to note that all the universities in the private sector are not envisioned to be research entities. Mohammad Ali Jinnah University, Islamabad for example states its mission as broad as:

Mohammad Ali Jinnah University, Islamabad, through the pursuit of excellence in an ethical environment, is committed to providing to a diverse student population the intellectual and technological tools necessary to meet the future challenges.

Reference to the vision and mission statements of both groups of institutions establishes that think tanks are envisioned to engage with policy not only through applied research and analysis but also by proactively advocating for the uptake of their research and a constant networking with key stakeholders. In contrast, universities are conceived to pursue broad objectives of transforming the economy and society primarily through teaching and training. Research makes a small component of their broad visions and missions. Most importantly, there is no explicit relevance of the universities' research with immediate policy needs. This broad demarcation between the respective purposes of creation of the two groups of institutions necessitates looking into their institutional characteristics before exploring their relational dynamics at length. This aims to provide a deeper understanding of the respective strengths and weaknesses of the two groups of institutions in relation to engaging with policy research, creating incentives and disincentives for them to collaborate with each other.

1. Institutional Characteristics

Universities

In line with their vision and mission statements, most universities in Pakistan have evolved primarily as teaching places with limited engagement with research. This national trend perhaps partly corroborates with the global educational policies in recent decades. Driven by the marginal (economic) returns to education, the neoliberal policies towards education, supported greater investment into basic education over the last three decades almost at the neglect of higher education (Bond and Tickly 2012). Consequently, in the global south, the 'golden era' of the universities as centres of excellence for teaching as well as research, if and

where it existed, faded into merely teaching regimes with compromised capacities to generate disciplinary, academic and applied knowledge. Universities in Pakistan particularly in relation to social sciences are also reflective of these global trends despite a decade and half of higher educational reforms.

The lack of indigenous knowledge creation, whether theoretical or empirical, results in the disciplinary training that does not necessarily and directly speak to the local contexts and realities. As a consequence, those trained in such contexts generally lack the start-up credentials and skills to engage with policy analysis unless they receive further and rigorous on-the-job training.¹⁶ There is surely some divergence from this general norm particularly in the case of research oriented few universities offering decent quality training in research which is also reflected in their vision and mission statements.¹⁷ Some of these universities also engage proactively with policy processes by providing relevant analysis, from time to time. This however, indicates a deeply problematic historic trend of education being implicated in social reproduction as these private schools cater largely to the educational needs of the elite. While the overwhelming majority of those who attend universities receive poor quality training, given the overall weak state of the social sciences, the critical and analytical skills required for policy analysis and hence the positions of power are accessible to small elite, albeit with some exceptions.

As demonstrated in the previous section, higher education reforms have significantly increased the number of public and private universities and are gradually increasing the number of faculty members with PhD degrees and the number of research students enrolled. Nonetheless, the quality of academic research and training at most of the universities in the country is criticised by the respondents for remaining weak. Despite the gradual increase in the number of papers published by universities, the overall impact of the strategic investments under these reforms on the landscape of policy research is yet to alter the previous trends perhaps because building research capacities is a long-term and painstaking process and requires a range of accompanying policies.

There are numerous factors mediating universities' engagement with policy process, including an overall weak research. Although universities are restructuring their policies to promote research, they are less likely to develop the incentive structures for their faculties' engagement in policy processes. Academic careers even in the post-reforms and restructuring context are, and will be, driven by the number of papers published in the peer reviewed journals not

¹⁶ Think Tank Interviews 01, 02, 11

¹⁷ Think Tank Individual Interview 02

necessarily explicitly linked to policy needs¹⁸. The outputs of policy analysis which is usually in the form of reports, policy briefs, and direct contributions to policy documents are rarely considered equivalent to the peer-reviewed academic publications, hence do not serve the interest of the academics.

Overall, universities lack formal mechanisms to appreciate and encourage their faculties providing the analysis that directly informs policies unless it is published in peer reviewed journals. They only value the 'impact factor' without any regard for the direct 'impact' on society. There are instead disincentives for those academics who spend their time in conducting policy research which does not count in their career development. At the same time, the formats of academic research, the peer-reviewed papers and outputs, are known to be stylistically inaccessible for policy makers, and universities do not have the tradition of producing simple, short and comprehensible policy briefs out of their academic papers.¹⁹ Consequently, their contribution to policymaking, even when their academic research is relevant to policies, is marginalised by design.

Additionally, the field of policy research requires a high level of inter-disciplinarity that sharply contrasts with the ways academics in Pakistan are traditionally organised along the narrow lines of disciplines.²⁰ Engaging with thematically categorised policy issues requires surpassing disciplinary boundaries, demanding additional time and efforts to acquire new skills. The competing claims over the time of academics work as the major barrier in their engagement with policy research since their core job (i.e., teaching and associated administration) does not let them engage with research.²¹ There are several universities where teachers are teaching as many as four courses per semester, leaving no space, in terms of energy or time, for conducting research.

Universities are, by and large, big organisations with complex bureaucratic structures and huge inertia. Taking new initiatives and introducing change in their practices is almost always subject to cumbersome processes which conflict with the short time frames governing policy processes. More importantly, engaging with policy research requires skills and aptitude to reach out to the diverse group of stakeholders, including politicians, bureaucrats, and officials at donor agencies, who themselves are less likely to proactively approach academics. In practice, academics in Pakistan and perhaps elsewhere too have a general tendency of 'being

¹⁸ University Individual Interviews 01, 06

¹⁹ Think Tank Individual Interviews 03, 05

²⁰ HEC Executive Director, Sep 21, 2012

²¹ University Individual Interview 12

sought' by others rather than 'reaching out' to the relevant stakeholders, consequently the prospects for their engagement in public decision-making are minimised.

Policy research anywhere is a political activity and involves engagement with the power structures in one way or another. The historic de-politicization and bureaucratisation of the universities under the successive military rules, as highlighted by Inayatullah et al. (2005), and Zaidi (2002), have promoted an apolitical, risk-averse and somewhat pro-government behaviour amongst academics who avoid controversies. Political processes around policy research thus conflict with the professional values held by academics and therefore restrict the scope for their engagement with these processes.²²

Policy research in the country is predominantly funded by international donors who generally have a preference for the civil society organisations to avoid procedural complications (Naveed 2013a). In contrast, most of the universities function within the public sector which rarely engages in commissioning policy research. The external donors are generally not the preferred funding source by public sector universities unless it is channelized through public sector arrangements (i.e. budgetary support, etc.).²³ Linked to the funding modalities is the agenda of policy research, which is accused of being largely driven by international donors (Zaidi 2002; Wood 2013) and potentially compromises the academic independence of research providers thus discourages universities to tap these resources. Funding regimes thus pose obvious constraints for the university based academics to engage in policy research. This is exacerbated by the lack of incentive mechanisms for university faculties for raising research grants through competitive bidding, apart from probably those under the recently developed Tenure Track System under which career progression is conditional to research outputs.

Think tanks

We have seen that in contrast to universities, think tanks' official visions, missions and mandates have nuanced articulation of engaging with policy processes. In many instances, they have well-defined thematic priorities within which they locate their activities. Within these broadly defined themes, they constantly restructure their programmes in order to provide timely responses to the challenges raised by policy needs. The research careers of think tanks are therefore, horizontal, diverse and adaptable rather than vertical and fixed. Such high

²² University Individual Interview 11

²³ University Individual Interview 01, 03

degree of institutional flexibility allows them to provide the real time analysis of the varied issues emerging out of policy needs.²⁴

Most think tanks in Pakistan are small organisations operating within the non-government sector and have flexible organisational arrangements. They have a strong tendency of devolved decision-making which enhances the procedural flexibility they enjoy in their day-to-day operations. However, helpful such organisational elasticity is in enabling think tanks to fulfil their role as somewhat real-time analysts, it has bearings for their long-term human resource capacity development. The vertical growth of skills and expertise in any particular area are traded off with the horizontal mobility of researchers across various themes which are determined by the opportunities offered by the funding regimes.²⁵ This flexibility also has bearings on the quality of research produced by think tanks.

Due to the fluidity of thematic priorities, think tanks research is often accused of lacking methodological and theoretical rigour, which is gained over time and through specialisation and selectivity. The pressure by the 'real time' demands of policymaking leaves little time for thinking deeply, designing rigorously, and improving the outputs constantly.

Another distinguishing feature of think tanks is their extensive engagement with key stakeholders through rigorous advocacy, dissemination and outreach arrangements. Their research formats such as position papers, research reports and policy briefs are written to be accessible to the non-technical audiences. Many think tanks have adopted innovative means to extend the outreach of their research and analysis by using social and mainstream media, web-based television, and regular public events. With a variable mix of research-advocacy, think tanks are frequently seemingly caught up in a difficulty to determine the optimum combination of these two core elements required for policy change. Overemphasis upon advocacy compromises research and focusing only on research defeats the very purpose think tanks conduct research, i.e., to change policies.

With the exception of a few public sector organisations, think tanks are independent, non-government and autonomous entities playing the role of watchdog by offering critical inputs and analyses. Their operational independence from the national bureaucracies and political influence grants them a leverage to provide critical perspectives, at times, even on the issues barred from public debate for being 'sensitive'. Their autonomy and officially non-partisan nature thus help them generate constructive discourse on the issues pertinent to development, social justice and democracy. However, to echo the earlier point made about the limitations

²⁴ Think Tank - Individual Interview 01

²⁵ Think Tank Individual Interview 11

on think tanks due to a dependence on funding from donors, their strict reliance on external financial resources reportedly puts limits on their autonomy.²⁶

Thus while think tanks often succeed in negotiating some autonomy in their research, their research agendas are generally considered to be influenced by international development agendas rather than independent analysis of the issues of national priorities (Wood 2013). Such positioning of think tanks in relation to the commissioners of research has implications for their interaction with the consumers of policy research, exacerbated by the lack of participation of the latter (public policymakers) in setting up these agendas. Instead, one finds a policy ‘monologue’ in the sense that both think tanks and commissioners of research co-construct the problems to be analysed by think tanks and presented to the policy makers for ‘policy change’.²⁷ This subtle disconnect between consumers and suppliers of policy research in determining research agendas impacts an effective uptake of the analyses into policies. Such disjunction is further aggravated by the way policymaking in the country, as a chaotic process, often understates the need for evidence (ibid.). Nonetheless some think tanks report to have protected their autonomy by turning down funding opportunities falling outside their respective mandates and/or producing research on certain issues without donor support.²⁸ Despite this disjuncture between suppliers and consumers of policy research, and persistent criticism over donors’ influence upon their autonomy, think tanks retain their strong influence on policies as they provide the analysis timely and adopt rigorous advocacy tools.

Summary of the Internal Characteristics of Universities and Think Tanks

It is useful to recap the arguments developed above to make immediate reference to in the subsequent sections of this paper. Table 4 presents the summary of the institutional characteristics of the two groups of institutions.

Table 4: Summary of the Institutional Dynamics of Think Tanks and Universities

Indicators	Universities	Think tanks
Aims/Mission of the organisation	Broad and includes research not necessarily linked to policies	Focused on policy research often clearly defining thematic priorities

²⁶ Think Tank Individual Interview 03.

²⁷ Think Tank Individual Interview 01.

²⁸ Think Tank Individual Interviews 01, 02, 04, 11

Human resource capacity (PhDs, other professionally qualified staff)	High	Low
Sources of funding	Public funds	Often international partners
Typology of funds available	Long-term and secure	Unpredictable, restricted
Endowment	Yes	Usually no or low
Unconditional grants	Yes	Rarely
External financial support	Not necessarily	Important
External technical support	Sometimes through external partnerships	Usually
Advocacy and networking (media, public, civil society engagement)	No	Always and rigorously
Activities other than policy research – consulting?	Rarely and individualised	Always – institutionalised form of consulting
Career of the organization	Structured, vertical, changes associated with the expertise of staff primarily	Adaptable, horizontal and to some extent driven by funding regime
Quality of research	Supposed to be rigorously monitored through peer review process	Monitored often internally and by the commissioners of research

Performance measurement	Peer review, 'impact factor',	Policy influence, review by commissioners of research, repeat business, media citations
Theoretical knowledge	Strongly expected	Often lacking theoretical orientation
Applied knowledge	Less likely	Always
Levels of inter-disciplinarity	Often narrowly constrained by disciplinary boundaries	Highly interdisciplinary
Degree of influence in policymaking	Low	High
Long-term capacity building (of staff)	High through doctoral programmes	Primarily through on-the-job training but rarely through further formal qualifications.
Adaptability to the emerging policy needs	Low or slow	High
Real-time utility	Low	High
Research agenda	Independent and driven primarily by the individual academics' research interests pursuing long term scholarship	The broad agenda is determined independently, however with short term research projects contingent upon funding
Research provision	Supply-driven	Demand-driven

Output formats	Peer reviewed books and journal articles	Policy briefs, position/white/working papers, reports, audio-visual products
Individuals	Usually long term careers	Usually high turn over

Source: Authors (based on the discussion on institutional dynamics in the preceding section).

It is fairly obvious that despite a shared goal of contributing towards knowledge based decision-making, both think tanks and universities have distinct visions and institutional characteristics, and follow different career trajectories. However, their overlapping goals of informing policies provide a basis for interaction between them. These insights into their institutional characteristics enable us to understand their mutual relationships closely. They inform the conceptual framework developed in the accompanying Synthesis Paper²⁹ which in turn helps us understand the relationship between think tanks and universities as presented in the subsequent sections of this paper.

2. Relationships and Underlying Motivations

Given the fundamental differences in their organisational structures and mandates, it is not surprising to find that the formal institutional collaborations between think tanks and universities are rare. Respondents across the board acknowledge that the two groups are 'living in their own silos'.³⁰ There are nonetheless certain identifiable patterns in the ways two groups of institutions interact with each other. This section discusses these general patterns highlighting some of the key drivers of these interactions whilst also identifying incentives/disincentives for both think tanks and universities underlying these interactions.

The most visible formal collaboration is the presence of senior academics along with key policy actors and politicians at the Advisory/Governing Boards of think tanks. On one hand, this gives strategic oversight on think tanks' priorities and practices, and on the other, it lends an element of academic credibility to their research agendas. There is also an increasing trend to include think tanks' representatives in universities' Boards of Studies/Syndicate/Senate to reflect that

²⁹ 'Protecting the Space for Policy Research: Comparing Think Tanks and Universities in South Asia', by Geof Wood.

³⁰ Think Tank Individual Interview 02.

universities are trying to bridge research-policy gap and are extending cooperation towards civil society.

There are very few instances of institutionally arranged research collaboration between think tanks and universities. Such an absence of formal research collaborations nonetheless does not mean there is no interaction between the researchers at think tanks and universities, at all. The overall scarcity of human resources, appropriately skilled in research, brings these institutions closer to each other. The majority of think tanks struggle to attract experienced researchers given the diverse needs of the projects they undertake on a recurring basis.³¹ The short term nature of their research projects discourages them from long term in-house capacity building primarily on the grounds of economic viability (Wood 2013, Naveed 2013a). These collaborations, by and large, are informal and individualized and cover a wide range of activities such as research projects, consultancies, policy advocacy/dissemination events and teaching and training. The academic experts permanently employed elsewhere are thus a convenient resource base to draw from for an unconstrained optimization of resources by bridging this obvious skill gap.

By and large universities also face similar human resource challenges. With the recent expansion of the higher education sector, the excessive demand for appropriately qualified faculty members exceeding their supply is often met by engaging mid-career level staff members of think tanks with sufficient research experience and academic training. The influx of new PhDs from foreign and national universities resulting from HEC reforms have started joining the permanent faculties at universities, however, the need for visiting faculty is likely to persist for a long period. Think tanks' experts, given their hands on experience on policy issues, are engaged by the universities to teach as well as evaluate theses and dissertations produced by research students (the authors of this paper, while being think tank researchers, have had a chance to experience such engagements first hand).

For think tanks, collaborating with university academics provides an opportunity to improve the quality of their research designs, refine instruments, and enhance the richness of data generated and analysis produced.³² Engaging academics often as consultants, and at times in the advisory panels and review committees, widens the scope of research as it links the otherwise empirically driven policy problem solving with broader theoretical debates. While policy research in Pakistan does not necessarily require peer-reviewed journal publications, think tank researchers across the board aspire to raise their academic profiles through academic publications. Collaboration with university faculties increases the chances of their

³¹ Think Tanks Individual Interviews 01, 02, 03, 05,06, 11.

³² Think Tanks Individual Interview 07.

joint academic publications adding to the recognition of their work beyond their own immediate circles of influence, i.e., donors and policy makers. The launch of the peer-reviewed Journal of Social and Policy Sciences by the Islamabad based think tank Institute of Social and Policy Sciences in 2010 reflects such aspirations and is an example of think tank – university interaction since the editors and contributors to the journal come from both groups. Additionally, policy research that meets some academic standards has greater opportunities for dissemination particularly to the learners' communities, students and teaching staffs at the universities³³. For some policy researchers, such opportunities are also seen instrumental in exporting 'pragmatic' research agendas into academic teaching and theoretical research.

Capacity building is another area where interaction takes place across the two groups of institutions. In addition to improving the quality of research outputs, engaging experienced university individuals, whether on research projects or on structured training events, provides opportunities to upgrade the methodological skills of the junior and mid-career researchers at think tanks. In fact SDPI routinely invites university academics to deliver training on research methodology for its in-house researchers alongside organising structured training courses for the researchers outside the institute under its training centre.

Such individualised arrangements with university based faculties for research or training, at times, provide think tanks a chance to identify the suitably skilled young/mid-career university faculties with doctoral degrees to subsequently offer permanent positions at think tanks.³⁴ Similarly, with their understanding of the local context, culture, language and traditions, students at local universities across various parts of the country are often engaged by think tanks to gather quantitative and qualitative data from the research sites given think tanks' geographically skewed presence.

As the data demonstrates, universities as institutions generally tend to see low incentives for collaborating with think tanks since most of the benefits of collaborative engagements favour individual academics. Collaborating on think tanks led projects offers university academics additional income, recognition outside universities, and policy influence. For universities, lack of funds available for primary research and the close networking of think tanks with international donors create some institutional incentives for collaboration although not pursued widely. Such collaborations also favour think tanks whose chances of winning research grants increase by the inclusion of reputed academics and/or their institutions in their bids.³⁵ Despite this, only eight per cent of the research projects undertaken by think tanks that were

³³ Think Tanks Individual Interviews 01, 02.

³⁴ Think Tanks Individual Interview 01.

³⁵ Think Tanks Individual Interview 08.

interviewed have some academics on board with even lesser proportion of institutional collaborations.

Think tanks across the country have developed sophisticated mechanisms and tools to disseminate their research to a wide range of stakeholders. These mechanisms include annual conferences, weekly seminars, roundtables, special lectures, web-based TV channels,³⁶ newsletters and social media. Collaborating with think tanks thus provides university based academics excellent opportunities to propagate their ideas at a wider level which are otherwise shared with limited academic fraternities through academic publications or rarely organised academic conferences and seminars. SDPI's case study demonstrates that over the last decade, one-third of the panellists of its annual Sustainable Development Conference (SDC) have been associated with universities.

Alongside several incentives, there are certain factors discouraging collaborations between think tanks and universities. The extent to which the faculty members at universities with advanced disciplinary training can offer skills exactly required by think tanks appears to be fairly limited. With certain exceptions, university faculties are rarely exposed to policy research and hence lack particular analytical skills beyond their disciplinary training. The academics equally skilled in academic and applied analysis and engaged in policy processes are often reported to be overly committed to teaching, research and policy analysis sometimes to the extent of compromising the quality of their outputs. Some are also moving out of universities and setting up their own think tanks, at times, retaining their teaching positions at universities. From the perspectives of universities, there are serious supply side constraints faced by the academics as their core jobs of teaching and conducting academic research are highly demanding leaving no time for engagement outside their campuses.

The lack of well-developed networks of knowledge communities such as the disciplinary/thematic/professional associations bringing together experts and stakeholders pursuing similar interests across institutional divisions further constrains the scope for joint initiatives. In the absence of such networks, the costs of establishing initial contacts for collaborations are significantly high and involve a level of uncertainty.³⁷ Consequently, most of the collaborations remain limited in number, and informal, individualized and personalized in contrast to more ones at the institutional level.

Academics inherently pursue long-term scholarships, which is in contrast with the short-term projectised mode of policy research.³⁸ There is thus a different 'sense of time' prevailing

³⁶ Such as Sustainable Development TV of the SDPI.

³⁷ Think Tanks Individual Interview s01, 07, University Individual Interview 13.

³⁸ Think Tanks Individual Interview 09.

across the two groups of institutions. Most importantly, there is an evident divergence in the career goals of the experts based at the two groups of institutions. Think tanks' research is driven by the desire for creating a direct 'impact' on society by influencing public policies. The academics pursue this indirectly through achieving the higher 'impact factor' by publishing in high ranked peer-reviewed journals. Core interests of the academics are thus least served by their engagement in policy research as the outputs are not given the equivalence of the peer reviewed journal papers. The direct impact on public policies, by and large, falls outside the ambition of universities hence partnerships with think tanks are rarely valued.

Another important barrier in collaboration between think tanks and universities is that both institutions fall on the opposite ends of the institutional flexibility scale. Universities being large establishments operate under well-defined bureaucratic procedures and structures, and involve cumbersome processes of approvals that slow down any initiative. Think tanks on the other hand demonstrate a great deal of procedural flexibility and are quick in making decisions and taking initiatives. The very *modus operandi* of the two groups of institutions, therefore, poses challenges in undertaking and sustaining joint initiatives. As reported by several think tanks, many initiatives to collaborate do not go beyond signing a Memorandum of Understanding with various universities primarily due to procedural mismatches. Moreover, with the exception of a few, most universities operate within the public sector under the ambit of government rules and procedures, and 'institutional rigidities', and think tanks are predominantly NGOs. Such organisational differences, given the less-than-ideal context of public-private partnership in the country, limit the prospects of collaborations between the two and tremendous efforts would be required to break away from the norm.

By reading through university based respondents' interviews, one comes across a sense of their engagement with the 'higher end' of theoretical and disciplinary knowledge production in contrast to the 'lower end' knowledge of policy problem solving. These perceptions create some sort of institutional hierarchy discouraging universities' interaction with think tanks. The overall impression of the weak quality of research produced by think tanks also exacerbates such perceptions. As the data suggests, think tanks are rather perceived by many in the academia as Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)³⁹ driven by donors, not something of equal academic and analytical standing to work together with a sense of reciprocity.

Lastly, it was observed that influencing public policies even on the basis of research and evidence is inherently a political process involving lobbying and networking with political actors and taking certain positions on policy issues. Think tanks have learnt how to advance their

³⁹ University Individual Interview 14.

objectives through understanding and engaging with the political economy of policymaking, and are immune to political pressures. Academia, however, continues to remain de-politicised, demonstrating risk-averse behaviour, and generally avoiding controversies.

Box 2: Agglomeration of Research Institutions in Lahore

There is an evident agglomeration of policy relevant research providers in Lahore given the presence of reputed private sector universities employing some renowned academics, mostly economists, offering rigorous training. Engagement of these universities with policy processes is also evidence of the changes taking place in bureaucracies and policy makers, at least in Punjab. Private sector universities such as LUMS, Lahore School of Economics (LSE), and Beaconhouse National University (BNU) have developed their own policy research centres which showcase the outputs of policy research projects undertaken by their teaching faculties and research staffs. These research centres have a varying mix of teaching and policy research engagements. Centre for Research in Economics and Business essentially relies upon the teaching faculties at the LSE. Development Policy Research Centre, which has been through various phases of its activism, engages LUMS' teaching faculty alongside full-time researchers. Institute of Public Policy at the BNU has dedicated policy researchers without or minimal teaching roles.

Lahore's policy knowledge system demonstrates new trends as some 'star academics' with academic and policy recognition primarily based at universities in Pakistan and abroad are setting up new think tanks outside universities while retaining their faculty positions at their respective universities. The Centre for Economic Research in Pakistan (CERP) conducts primary research projects to produce theoretical and empirical analysis of international quality at the same time offering policy advice. CERP is a joint venture of the academics based at leading US universities such as Harvard, Princeton and Pamona, UK's LSE, and Lahore-based LUMS. It serves as a platform for bringing together academics at international universities driven by the possibility of publishing in high impact factor journals and sometimes involving universities in Lahore, international donors and provincial policy makers. Such think tanks are breaking away from the problematics of typical think tanks and universities in providing policy research with theoretical and methodological rigor. Faculty members from LUMS and LSE collaborate with CERP whilst also providing young researchers with employment at CERP. The Institute for Development and Economic Alternatives (IDEAS) is another recently established think tank with somewhat similar arrangements albeit with stronger focus on policy research. These initiatives illustrate the central role played by a few academics who break away from the traditional character of university teachers and proactively engage with policy processes and collaborate with the relevant stakeholders.

3. How does funding shape these relationships?

Conditions associated with funding universally shape research agendas. Funding regulates the interaction not only between commissioners and providers of research but also amongst

research providers themselves. Overall, the scarcity of financial resources allocated for policy research in both public and the non-government sector is reflected in the fewer number of organisations engaged in policy research as compared to the amount of analyses required for addressing the complex questions raised by policy needs at the federal and provincial levels.⁴⁰

Data gathered for this study demonstrate the arrangements to fund policy research in Pakistan clearly create and promote separation between the two groups of institutions. Except for a few in the public sector, think tanks are rarely funded from public resources. In contrast, universities' research is mainly funded through public resources as well as by the funds they generate by charging their students a fee. International aid to the higher education sector, multilateral and bilateral, is primarily channelized through public sector disbursement arrangements, mainly through HEC. Those in the public sector follow public sector financial rules and all universities including private ones have to adhere to the financial regulations promulgated by HEC. Segregation of funding sources combined with the organisational differences and the overall low culture of public-private partnerships collectively minimize the prospects of collaboration between think tanks and universities.

Funding architecture blocks [collaboration] because public sector universities have to conform to the government funding framework. It is easy for think tanks to get international funding but very difficult for a public sector university. There is also the question of the ownership of research; university would not like to give the rights of that dataset to donor.⁴¹

Developing institutional trust, mutual respect and reciprocity are long-term agendas. Project based funding of policy research conditional to deliverables in a short time frame instead of a long term programme support rarely encourages research providers to develop long term institutional linkages and formal collaborations. Such funding regimes tend to create somewhat unsustainable project arrangements that do not help in developing any meaningful interaction with universities given the extent of bureaucratic procedures involved. The acute dependence of think tanks on short term assignments and the resulting financial vulnerability also contrast with the research interests of university based academics who prefer pursuing long term scholarship.

Moreover, the agendas of policy research are often narrowly defined by funding regimes which, on one hand, leave less space for any meaningful interactions across institutions, and on the other hand, create apprehensions amongst those who tend to develop the agenda of

⁴⁰ Highlighted in almost all Think Tank Interviews.

⁴¹ University individual interview 01.

their research rather independently. Trends in the priorities of policy research funding over time are seen representing changing priorities of international development agendas rather than reflecting national policy needs.⁴² Such perceptions further widen the gap between the communities of academic and policy researchers.

The relatively unconditional and sustained funding for think tanks' long-term research programmes addresses some of the structural constraints in collaborative engagement with universities. In Pakistan, both SDPI and Social Policy Development Centre (SPDC) have benefitted from IDRC led programme support under the Think Tank Initiative for the last four years (2010-14). This increased financial autonomy can be seen improving these institutions' overall research outputs as well as their outreach and contribution to policymaking. It has helped SDPI in initiating and funding research projects independently particularly in the areas which were highly policy relevant but external donors were reluctant to support them, such as energy governance, multidimensional poverty measurement, and food policy. It has helped think tanks overcome, to some extent, the perceptions about them being donor driven thus increasing their acceptability in policy circles and recognition in the academic community. However, given a number of structural constraints, increased financial autonomy of think tanks, per say, does not necessarily promote their collaboration with universities. We rather observe an inherent contradiction between think tanks' goals of intellectual independence and collaboration with universities.

The first step to break out of the stereotypic status of being donor driven is to build long term in-house capacity instead of relying upon the external resources which decreases the prospects for academic collaborations. Similarly, the increased resources for research available to universities are also resulting in the emergence of university based policy research centres albeit at the stage of infancy in most cases.

The research funds offered by HEC tend to support universities and public sector research organisations while ignoring the majority of think tanks that are non-government organisations. There are nonetheless certain departures from the funding regimes which create separation between think tanks and universities. The Pakistan Strategy Support Programme (PSSP), which channelizes the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) grants through the Planning Commission, is one major example as researchers at think tanks and universities both are funded from the same source thus brought together to compete with each other and interact closely in the process of award and dissemination. Nonetheless PSSP is also reported to have privileged universities since it makes grants to individual researchers

⁴² Think tank individual interview 07.

and think tanks prefer institutional grants. Overall, the project based funding, when open to both groups of institutions, encourages competition rather than collaboration. Besides, there are practical difficulties in collaborative research as it multiplies the channels of communication whereas donors prefer strong line management, compliance with procedures, and frequent reporting blurring the responsibility between the multiple actors involved.

Given the distinct visions, missions, and organisational structures, only funding modalities that exclusively support collaborative research projects between think tanks and universities can bring the two groups of institutions together.

If the funding is given on the condition that universities and think tanks will collaborate with each other, then collaboration can increase. International funding mainly goes to think tanks so they do not feel the need to collaborate with universities. They get their research done even by the average research staff they have instead of looking out for expertise. Collaboration will happen only if international funding requires it.⁴³

There is another aspect of foreign aid that distorts incentive structures for best graduates to pursue research careers. Over the last decade, there has been an unprecedented increase in the number and size of international NGOs and donor agencies working in the country. They have attracted well trained human resources at all levels by offering them incentives much higher than what research institutions and universities could offer. Consequently, research institutions struggle to find and retain young staff with sufficient training and skills. Simultaneously, the aid is also accused of 'importing' experts from abroad in the areas and at the levels where there is sufficiently demonstrated indigenous expertise.

These international institutions have come in and have spoiled young researchers by paying them very high salaries at very young age. They are not independent researchers yet and have become unaffordable for us. If we bring them in we cannot trust them with anything as they are not independent researchers. We cannot leave them with anything we have to guide them. Still their salary rate is high and we have limited resources. This is what international agencies are doing to us which is not a good thing for us and policy analysis in Pakistan. The other thing is that they bring in experts from outside who know little about Pakistan. This is double jeopardy for us.⁴⁴

4. Case Studies

⁴³ University Individual Interview 03.

⁴⁴ Think tank individual interview 04.

We now turn to elaborate our analysis presented so far through four detailed case studies. This section presents the cases of institutions – think tanks and universities – particularly highlighting their engagement with the issues of policy research and their interaction with others, demonstrating the instances of convergence, collaboration and cooperation between them. These cases were selected on the grounds of their relevance to the questions explored in this paper.

Case 1: Pakistan Institute of Development Economics: Evolution as a think tank and its transition into a university⁴⁵

Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) emerged out of the need for planning to channelize foreign aid, and on the “donors’ request to provide credible information about projects and plans to be funded”. The Government of Pakistan established a Planning Board in 1953 to develop the First Five Year Plan and sought the help of Ford Foundation for technical capacity building. Ford Foundation adopted a two pronged strategy by: a) involving external experts to overcome the immediate lack of expertise, and; b) gradually developing the indigenous capacity for research and scholarship with a degree of autonomy from the government. Foreign advisors, including the Harvard Advisory Group were deputed to advise the central government in Karachi and provincial governments in Lahore and Dhaka. International experts were deputed at the newly-established Institute of Development Economics (IDE) to evolve indigenous capacities. Some of the globally renowned economists such as Gunnar Myrdal, E.A.G. Robinson, Gustav Ranis and Paul Streeten have been associated with the institute. During its early phase, the institute also received a significant grant from the Aga Khan Foundation and more substantial support from USAID and the World Bank.

The institute initiated a quarterly journal, The Pakistan Development Review, in 1961 with Gustav Ranis as its first editor, who was also the Joint Director of the institute at that time. The journal continues making theoretical and empirical contributions to the areas of economics and social sciences. In 1964, the leadership of the institute was handed over to a Pakistani economist, Professor Nurul Islam of Dhaka University, and it was renamed the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE).

It was subsequently given under the administrative control of the Planning and Development Division in order to develop better linkages with and the ownership of the government.

⁴⁵ Institutional history of PIDE is extracted from Naseem, S. M. 2008. PIDE – from a Think Tank to University: A Brief History. Islamabad: Pakistan Institute of Development Economics.

During this early phase, Ford Foundation sent 26 people on training, mainly to the US, and more than half received PhDs. Most of these trainees came from East Pakistan. West Pakistan had weaker research capacities, which were elaborated after the head office moved to Dhaka in 1970. The East Pakistani staff preferred academic and research options whereas the West Pakistani staff took up positions in the international financial and development organisations. West Pakistanis dominated the Planning Commission and East Pakistanis, PIDE – Most of the PDR publications in the 1960s were produced either by foreign affiliates of PIDE or the East Pakistanis at PIDE. The relocation of PIDE to Dhaka further widened these regional differences as many West Pakistani economists were hesitant to move to Dhaka. Upon the creation of Bangladesh, this highly skilled human capital was not only staffed in the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies but also in the Bangladesh Planning Commission. Pakistan was left with non-researchers to work at PIDE as well as the Planning Commission.

The initial capacity building aid by the Ford Foundation was phased out in the 1970s – replaced by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), USAID and bilateral donors in most of the 1980s. In 1979, USAID provided an endowment grant of Rupees 20 million. An additional 15 million Rupees came from various firms and investment corporations. Over the years, the government has become the major donor in order to promote the long-term development agenda of the country – mainly through budgetary allocations, and no significant funding is available from the traditional foreign donors.

In 1982, Pakistan Society of Development Economists was founded. The Annual General Meeting of the Society is a major conference on economics in the country, which brings together all the key stakeholders on development issues.

Moving to Islamabad, and being in close geographic proximity to the QAU, gave PIDE the then best available graduates of the QAU, who became the backbone of PIDE in the years to come. In the 1990s, the institute faced new challenges of competition as there was a rise of think tanks such as SDPI, MHHDC, LUMS, and Applied Economic Research Centre (AERC) with less rigid structures. In the meantime, due to structural adjustment programmes, the government funding to PIDE did not increase which led to a decline in real terms. This resulted in: dependence upon contractual studies commissioned by various donors; dilution of the research agenda due to focus on short-term projects and; loss of prestige and brain drain towards NGOs, international agencies, and the private sector.

After relocation to Islamabad, PIDE's staff became engaged in teaching at various universities as visiting faculty members. Its Board decided in 1998 to utilise its teaching capacity by introducing and running a doctoral training programme to overcome the deficiency of PhDs in

the country. The Federal Government awarded PIDE a degree awarding status in 2003, however, under the HEC reforms, it was asked to initiate at least 5 departments in order to retain the status of a degree awarding institute. Currently, PIDE is running six MPhil and one PhD programmes. The earliest phase of this transition exhausted its faculty members, who undertook teaching and administrative responsibilities as Deans, Heads of Departments, and teaching staff. This had serious consequences for their research engagements. PIDE cherishes its successful transition towards a teaching institute at postgraduate level. In order to meet its teaching needs, PIDE has, since the beginning of this transition, been offering the status of visiting faculty members to teachers employed at universities like QAU, NUST, and the International Islamic University.

Working as the official think tank of the Planning Commission of the Government of Pakistan, PIDE has historically enjoyed easy access to policymaking. This transition from a think tank to university not only reduced PIDE's research outputs but also had further implications for its policy outreach. It had always been engaged in policy advocacy using various public forums, including mass media. Its transition into a university resulted in a sharp decline in the level of its engagement with stakeholders, including popular media, reducing its visibility in the policy arena in a context of policy research landscape increasingly becoming competitive. More importantly, unlike other think tanks outside the public sector, there is a lack of incentive structures for PIDE's faculty to engage in external resource mobilisation for research. With the declined research output, low visibility and continued financial pressures due to its inability to raise funding, PIDE struggles to retain its prestigious position in the landscape of policy research in Pakistan. Evident in this transitory phase is the ambivalence between its orientation as a university and a think tank. This tension is also visible from the recent creation of its School of Public Policy where engagement with public policy is conceived through teaching academic courses rather than through practical engagement with policy problems at the federal and provincial levels.

Teaching is demanding and we cannot delay it as academic programmes follow their own calendars. If we don't have sufficient human resources to conduct research, we might keep meeting the teaching demands only. We are constantly thinking about keeping the balance between teaching and research, say by dividing the time of our faculty members 50% for teaching and 50% for research, or some staff as full time teachers and others as full time researchers...we also need to align our research

programmes such that the projects undertaken by MPhil students are coherently aligned with our research programmes.⁴⁶

PIDE's case demonstrates the centrality of external aid in creating and strengthening research capacities in Pakistan. It illustrates the subtle role of QAU in rebuilding its human resource capacity after its relocation to Islamabad. It also shows the competition it has been facing with other think tanks in retaining influence over public policies over the years. Most importantly, its transition into university elaborates the conflicting demands of teaching and policy research given the structural differences that separate the two worlds. If PIDE overcomes the inherent tensions in this transition from think tank to research, it has a tremendous potential to offer policy analysis of rigorous academic standards.

Case 2: Aga Khan University – Institute of Educational Development

While the overall engagement of universities in policy research remains sparse, the research oriented AKU is, however, internationally recognised for its strong research tradition in the disciplines of social sciences, humanities, basic and clinical sciences, and education. Established in 1983 as a private university mainly located in Karachi, it has four other campuses in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and the UK.

The most distinguishing feature sustaining a rigorous research tradition at the university is the institutional arrangements in place to increase researchers' access to the external competitive research grants at the national, regional and international level. It also has a strong internal University Research Council, which channelizes the internal research grants and; a) develops university's research focus; b) monitors research integrity; c) lays out research policies and guidelines; and d) annually reviews research activities. The university encourages the faculty to seek long-term external research funding, which can then support graduate students, post-doctoral and clinical research and dissemination of research through conferences, seminars and outreach, promoting national and international partnerships. AKU proactively seeks international collaborations with universities and acclaimed research institutions internationally. The office of the Dean of Research and Graduate Studies particularly ensures high standards of grant management and transparency in research funds as required by external commissioners of research by developing the appropriate procedures and processes. Moreover, the Dean's office also assists faculty members in preparing bids for research programmes, serving as an information clearing house and provides the oversight of externally-funded research programmes.

⁴⁶ Individual interview with senior official at PIDE.

We illustrate the case of AKU by focusing upon its Institute of Educational Development (AKU-IED) which was established in 1993 as a teaching and training institute, and holds the most prominent position in the landscape of educational research in Pakistan. Over the last 10 years, the institute has conducted 323 research studies on a number of educational issues such as: teacher education; curricula studies; teaching and learning; educational leadership; mathematics and science education; English language teaching; early childhood education and development; pedagogy and assessment; educational leadership and policy studies; and, open and distance education. Until March 2012, its publications included 145 peer reviewed papers published in international journals, 60 books, 118 book chapters and 134 conference proceedings. This is probably the largest amount of research on education produced in the given duration by any single educational research institute in the country. IED is uniquely positioned in the policy research landscape due to its multiple roles as academic and policy research institute along with strong ties with the educational practices. Its research not only informs public policies at various levels but also the education practices through the institute's strong linkages with the Aga Khan Education Services that runs a large number of schools in various parts of the country.

It is important to highlight here that unlike the other institutes of higher education, the work-hours of the faculty members at the AKU-IED are equally distributed between teaching and research. The university also provides financial resources for conducting research with a strong emphasis upon quality assurance. The Research and Policy Studies Initiative of the IED is particularly aimed at strengthening the capacity of the institute to engage with policy research and disseminate research at a wider level through conferences, seminars and formal and informal dialogues with policy makers.

In line with the overall tradition of collaborative research at the university, the centre frequently partners with other research institutions internationally. Its partnerships so far have been with: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto; Sheffield Hallam University; Oxford University; Institute of Education, University of London; Centre for Global Citizenship Education and Research; and the Department of Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta. There is, however, a lack of partnership with local universities and think tanks.

IED's case demonstrates that university departments/institutes can be the active providers of policy research; however, there are certain preconditions for this convergence which include:

- a) Financial sustainability through access to internal resources and capacity building to tap external resources.
- b) A strong tradition of research at the university

- c) Institutional arrangements to encourage faculty members to conduct research as evident from the equal distribution of the time of the faculty between teaching and research.
- d) An appreciation of the importance of engaging with policies and practical interventions as well as dissemination and communication of research findings at the wider level.
- e) Openness to collaborate with external partners and the capacity to sustain such collaborations.
- f) The university's reputation of being non-partisan and free from political interference.

Case 3: University-Think Tank Collaborations: A Case Study of Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI)

SDPI is the premier think tank of Pakistan, established in 1992 on the recommendation of the Pakistan National Conservation Strategy emphasising socio-economic development within the context of a national environmental plan. With its broad mission to promote social justice within and across generations, the institute provides policy advice to the government and the private sector; organizes policy dialogues; supports in-house, visiting and external researchers; publishes research and policy analysis; conducts North-South South-South dialogue; engages in advocacy and networking at various levels; and builds capacities of various stake-holders through its training programmes. Over the last two decades, it has played a key role in the development of various national and provincial plans, policies and reforms in relation to the key areas of sustainable development in Pakistan. The current leadership of SDPI serves on a number of National Advisory Councils/Committees thus making a direct contribution to various public policies.

SDPI has collaborated widely with a number of research institutions within Pakistan and abroad on knowledge generation and its dissemination and the advocacy for policy change, and capacity building. It has also conducted some research projects in collaboration with universities, the longest one spans over 12 years with the University of Zurich under the National Centre for Competence in Research (NCCR). Other such initiatives include (but are not limited to), 'Reclamation of Chemically Contaminated Sites in Pakistan' in collaboration with the Agroscope Reckenholz Tänikon Research Station, Zurich, and the Environmental Science Department of the University of Peshawar. Similarly, 'Livelihoods futures in resource-scarce areas and the quest for the inclusion of marginal groups', led by the NCCR North-South, is another project under which SDPI collaborated with the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad (UAF). The UAF has led the research and analysis jointly with the SDPI researchers and SDPI has taken a lead on wider dissemination of the research findings and

networking for policy change. The key challenge in the collaboration highlighted by a UAF based researcher was the political nature of the proposed policy interventions which were against the academic tradition of the university. This collaboration has opened up further venues for collaboration. SDPI's Executive Director has been supervising doctoral research at the university and is currently appointed as the Adjunct Professor. He is also serving on the Board of Studies of two departments at the university.

Moreover, since 2012, SDPI is hosting the IDRC funded 'Fellowships in Governance, Security and Justice in South Asia' which funds the MPhil and PhD research students at the South Asian universities through a competitive programme. In the first two of this four year programme, a total of 14 Fellowships are awarded. The process serves as an excellent interface between SDPI and the university throughout the process – application, selection and monitoring of the programme.

While examples of institutional collaboration with universities on research are few, there are numerous instances of engagement with universities for dissemination and policy advocacy. SDC is the flagship three-day policy advocacy event hosted annually by SDPI. The 16th SDC was held in December 2013. It provides a forum not only for sharing SDPI's own research but also a rich mix of external researchers, academicians, scientists, policy makers and experts from different fields participate, interact with each other, suggest policy recommendations and enter into ongoing policy dialogue. In the latest SDC; out of the 105 speakers, a rough estimate suggest that almost 27% of them were affiliated with national or international universities and 34% with think tanks and the others from the government, international organisations and individual experts. The table below further presents the breakdown of participants (speakers) in the last five SDCs identifying the strength of collaboration.

Table 5: Representation of universities in the annual SDCs

Conference Year	Participants from					
	Universities	Think Tanks	International Organizations	Government	Others	Total
16th SDC (2013)	29 (27%)	36 (34%)	12 (11%)	16 (15%)	12 (11%)	105
15th SDC (2012)	22 (27%)	32 (38%)	12 (14%)	9 (11%)	8 (9%)	83
14th SDC (2011)	25 (28%)	42 (47%)	7 (8%)	4 (4%)	10 (11%)	88
13th SDC (2010)	21 (31%)	26 (38%)	6 (9%)	9 (13%)	5 (7%)	67
12th SDC (2009)	16 (24%)	20 (30%)	7 (10%)	12 (18%)	10 (15%)	65
Total	113 (27%)	156 (38%)	44 (11%)	50 (12%)	45 (11%)	408 (100%)

As evident from the table, almost one-third of the panellists in the SDCs over the last five years have come from universities and a slightly higher number has come from the think tanks. In addition to those who present their research, a large number of university students and teachers attend this event and interact with other audiences and speakers. SDC has become a key source of academics' interaction with policy research and dialogue. Alongside the SDC, SDPI organizes weekly seminars, distinguished lectures, special seminars, guest lectures and roundtables that are widely attended by academics, not only as speakers, but also as the audience. SDPI's new initiative, the web-based Sustainable Development Television, provides yet another opportunity for academics to disseminate their work or share their perspective on certain policies and issues with the public at large.

Another initiative, which brings SDPI into engagement with universities, is its recently initiated research programme on the knowledge systems for policymaking in Pakistan and South Asia. The activities under this programme have included a landscaping of the institutions engaged in policy research in Pakistan, a deeper understanding of the political economy of policy research, and this ongoing study on the relationship between think tanks and universities in South Asia. Various dissemination activities under this programme have brought together the heads of think tanks and universities to discuss the core issues affecting their research capacities and scope, and challenges in engaging with policy makers. In May 2014, for

example, six vice-chancellors of various public sector universities, one Rector, and the HEC Chairman were invited to debate on the overall societal role of universities particularly in solving the problems faced by society and the policy makers. It also debated the need for developing mechanisms for incentivizing the engagement of university academics in policymaking. In a similar spirit, SDPI is proactively interacting with various universities and exploring the opportunities for various joint ventures.

The SDPI case study illustrates how the role of increased external funding, for example, from the Swiss National Science Foundation and IDRC, helped it proactively reach out to the universities and engage them in long-term research collaboration. The IDRC's Think Tank Initiative support has helped SDPI researchers to devote more time and resources on the otherwise non-commissioned but highly policy relevant themes. An increase in such research outputs has extended SDPI's engagement in policymaking and an overall reputation resulting in an increased number of universities approaching SDPI for collaboration.

Case 4: Mahbub-ul-Haq Human Development Centre

The Mahbub-ul-Haq Human Development Centre (MHHDC) provides another illustration of the ways think tanks and universities interact with each other in Pakistan. It was established in 1995 by the renowned economist and the co-founder of the human development paradigm, Mahbub-ul-Haq, with a vision to address the real challenge of human development given massive poverty, illiteracy and poor health in South Asia. MHHDC has been producing the annual South Asia Human Development Report under various themes since its inception.

The Centre emerged as a strong voice for greater investment in key areas of human development in the region. Given the global recognition of the leadership of the Centre and strong influence within national policies, its focus largely remained on research with minimum involvement in advocacy activities. Led by senior researchers, it has relied on a team of young researchers and external experts from South Asian countries, conducting background research for the annual South Asia HDRs. In 2005, the Centre expanded its human resource capacity after partnering with the Universities of Cambridge, Oxford and Edinburgh under the five years (2005-10) Research Consortium on Educational Outcomes and Poverty (RECOUP). RECOUP explored the social, economic and human development outcomes of education for the poor in developing countries. Various themes of the project were led by the academics based at these universities who worked closely with MHHDC based researchers with a strong focus on building their capacities. The project contributed, directly or indirectly, to three PhDs at Cambridge and one at Edinburgh universities. Moreover the research produced under the consortium on education and poverty has informed national policies.

The Centre was set up as a sister organisation of the National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences (NUCES, also known as FAST) under the Foundation for Human Development. There were thus institutional linkages with the university right from the inception. However, the technology focused nature of the university without academic departments of economics or social sciences meant there was little relevant analytical support available at the university for the Centre.

In 2010, the Centre decided to collaborate with LUMS as a reliable arrangement to provide intellectual and institutional support when needed without compromising its institutional legacy and individual identity. As a result, the Centre was relocated from Islamabad to LUMS campus in Lahore, although as a tenant, without entitlement to the institutional cross-subsidies at this stage. There is, however, an increased informal interaction between researchers at MHHDC and the LUMS academic community, and a greater participation in the seminars individually organised by both institutions. The Vice-Chancellor of LUMS is also the member of the Board of Governors of MHHDC. There is also an increasing number of young researchers graduating from LUMS and joining the Centre. While the Centre has geographically distanced itself from the Islamabad based traditional policymaking communities due to its relocation to Lahore, it is, however benefiting from the emerging knowledge agglomeration in Lahore.

In contrast to most of the think tanks in the country that are financially vulnerable and dependent upon project funding, the Centre has always enjoyed a long-term programme support for its annual HDRs by a number of donors, including the UNDP. Its unique collaboration with LUMS in the wake of its perceived future challenges for human resources offers a dependable solution while also adding an academic rigour to its research.

H. Conclusion

The analysis and evidences presented in this paper suggest that the formal knowledge systems for policymaking – think tanks and universities – are based on a weak foundation of social sciences in the country. The ongoing higher education reforms offer an opportunity to improve these foundations but only if their inherent bias against social sciences is addressed. Our analysis also suggests that think tanks and universities are conceptually and structurally different organisations hence are differently located in the landscape of knowledge systems for policymaking despite an overlap of the broader agenda of contributing to informed public policies. Thus the interaction between think tanks and universities is understandably limited and informal. The existing regimes of funding policy research also tend to create and maintain separation between the two groups of institutions. The key question resulting from this analysis is; what are the best ways to strengthen the relationships between think tanks and universities in the country? However, the even more fundamental question for those

concerned with strengthening the overall knowledge systems for policymaking is whether an increased interaction between think tanks and universities can strengthen the overall policy knowledge environment.

So, what are the possible gains of the increased interaction between think tanks and universities for the overall landscape of policy research and hence policymaking in the country? We have demonstrated that both groups of institutions have their own strengths and weaknesses given their distinct nature, visions and missions, career trajectories and sources of funding. Bringing them closer to each other potentially offers them opportunities to overcome their weaknesses by building upon each other's strengths. Based on these insights, we anticipate that the increased collaboration can contribute to improve following core aspects of effective policy research.

1. **Relevance:** Think tanks exist because of the strong relevance of their research to public policies, whereas universities are remotely linked to policy processes. It is only now that questions are being raised about the social gains of investments in higher education to redefine the role of universities in society beyond teaching. An increased interaction with think tanks can potentially import the pragmatic agendas of policy problem solving to the university research.
2. **Quality:** Given the disciplinary orientation and methodological rigor involved in peer reviewed academic research, think tanks can improve the quality of their research outputs by involving academics at various stages of their research project cycles.
3. **Outreach:** Universities rarely disseminate their research at a large-scale, apart from selected audiences through academic publications; they don't reach out to policymakers; they are also least known to network and lobby for policy change. On the other hand, think tanks are known for these activities. Through collaboration with think tanks, universities can widely disseminate their research and build networks.
4. **Timeliness:** Think tanks have comparative advantage in providing somewhat real time analysis and input in the policy processes. Their interaction with university based academics can increase their engagement with contemporary policy issues, which academics take a long time to involve with otherwise.
5. **Autonomy:** By using a reductionist approach to an otherwise broad notion of autonomy, we can see think tanks and universities are differently located on the scales of autonomy from political powers, more specifically the government and bureaucracies, and the donors of their research. In terms of autonomy from political

parties and the government bureaucracies, think tanks in Pakistan have succeeded in negotiating a higher agency, which is their greatest achievement, and are doing better than universities. However, in terms of research priorities being somewhat influenced by the commissioners of policy research, universities demonstrate considerable autonomy in contrast to think tanks. Increased interaction of the two groups of institutions can generate critical reflections on these aspects of their research and hence contribute towards an overall independent knowledge creation for decision-making in the country.

- 6. Innovation:** Effective policy research requires flexibility and innovation in engaging with issues across disciplines and methodologies, and across the range of stakeholders. Think tanks research demonstrates a high level of inter-disciplinarity as well as procedural flexibility in their day to day operations in contrast to universities where disciplinary boundaries are strict and procedures are complicated. Engagement of university academics on think tank led projects can provide them the opportunity to communicate across disciplines and expose them to alternative institutional arrangements that facilitate greater engagement with policy processes and stakeholders.

There are thus sufficient normative grounds for making the case for increased interactions between think tanks and universities as they can contribute to improved decision-making by adding to overall effectiveness of policy research. This takes us to our earlier question on how best to increase these interactions and on the role that external support to policy research can play.

Funding has to play a crucial role in strengthening these relationships. However, merely increasing the size of grants disbursed for policy research will not bring about any significant change given the structural differences between the two groups of institutions. There is instead a need to somewhat blur the tight boundaries separating the two groups of institutions through both funding and non-funding interventions. It is important to trigger the debate for rethinking the societal role of universities beyond teaching and training so that they may engage themselves with the practical problems faced by society. The orientation of their research needs to move beyond sole concerns with the 'impact-factor' towards making a real 'impact' on society. This, however, requires considering policy analysis worthy of academic recognition. Think tanks need to be recognised as legitimate knowledge creation entities instead of mere NGOs. HEC can play a significant role in this regard. There is a need to encourage the exchange of appropriately qualified staff at both groups of institutions under specific arrangements without disrupting their careers. Lastly, external donors need to move

away from the tradition of funding short-term projects with narrowly defined agendas towards long-term research programmes respecting the autonomy of research providers and encouraging them to develop linkages across the two groups of institutions.

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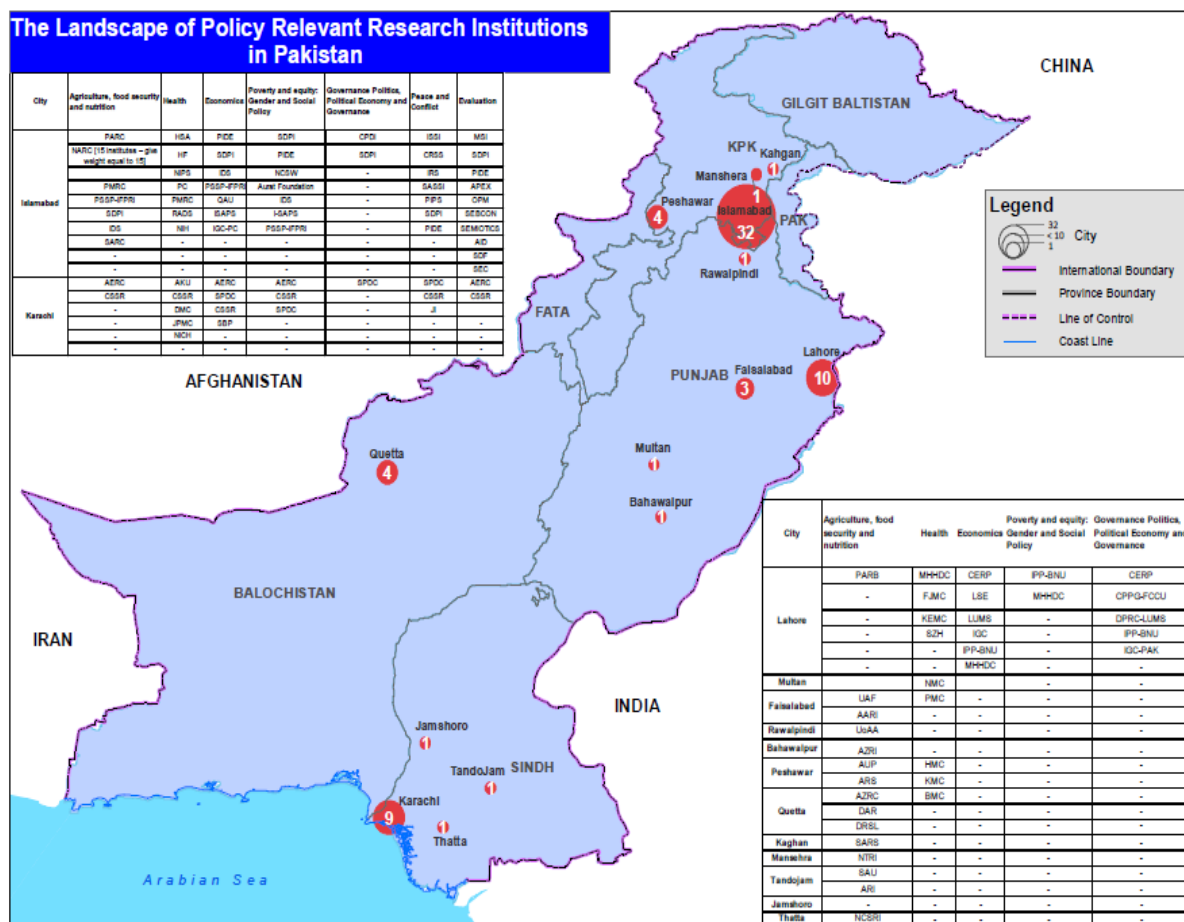
Annex A: List of key informants interviewed

1	Dr. Vaqar Ahmed	Sustainable Development Policy Institute, SDPI,	Islamabad	23 Oct 2013
2	Dr. Suleman Humayun	Institute of Social and Policy Sciences, I-SAPS	Islamabad	24 Oct 2013
3	Mr. Abdul Basit Khan	National Institute of Population Studies, NIPS	Islamabad	25 Oct 2013
4	Mr. Zahid Abdullah	Centre for Peace and Development Initiative, CPDI	Islamabad	28 Oct 2013
5	Dr. Rasul Baksh Rais	Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, ISSI	Islamabad	28 Oct 2013
6	Dr. Sania Nishter	Heartfile	Islamabad	29 Oct 2013
7	Dr. Maria Sultan	South Asian Strategic Stability Institute, SASSI	Islamabad	04 Nov 2013
8	Mr. Hassan Akbar	Jinnah Institute, JI	Islamabad	07 Nov 2013
9	Mr. Khalid Rehman	Institute of Policy Studies, IPS	Islamabad	11 Nov 2013
10	Dr. Rasheed Khalid	Quaid-i-Azam University, Department of Defense and Strategic Studies,	Islamabad	11 Nov 2013
11	Dr. Aliya Khan	Quaid-i-Azam University - School of Economics	Islamabad	11 Nov 2013
12	Dr. Muhammad Islam	IQRA University	Islamabad	12 Nov 2013
13	Dr. Arshad Muhammad Khan	Global Change Impact Studies Centre, GCISC	Islamabad	13 Nov 2013

14	Professor. N. B. Jumani	International Islamic University, Islamabad, Faculty of Social Sciences	Islamabad	13 Nov 2013
15	Dr. Anjum Nasim	Institute of Development and Economic Alternatives, IDEAS	Lahore	19 Nov 2013
16	Dr. Naved Hamid	Lahore School of Economics – Centre for Research in Economics and Business, LSE-CREB	Lahore	19 Nov 2013
17	Ms. Hina Shekh	International Growth Centre	Lahore	19 Nov 2013
18	Mr. Abbas Rashid	Society for the Advancement of Education, SAHE	Lahore	20 Nov 2013
19	Dr. Khalid Manzoor Butt	Government College University, Department of Political Science	Lahore	21 Nov 2013
20	Dr. Khalid Mahmood	University of Education	Lahore	21 Nov 2013
21	Dr. Tasneem Zafar & Uzair	Government College University, Department of Economics	Lahore	21 Nov 2013
22	Prof. Mohammad Aslam	University of Health Sciences	Lahore	22 Nov 2013
23	Professor Micheal Cullen	Centre for Economic Research in Pakistan, CERP	Lahore	22 Nov 2013
24	Dr. Aisha Gauss Pasha	Beaconhouse National University, Institute of Public Policy, BNU-IPP	Lahore	25 Nov 2013
25	Dr. Iqrar Ahmed Khan	Agriculture University of Faisalabd	Faisalabad	24 Nov 2013
26	Prof Malahat Kaleem Shervani	Applied Economic Research Centre, AREC	Karachi	28 Nov 2013
27	Muhammad Asif Iqbal	Social Policy Development Centre, SPDC	Karachi	28 Nov 2013

28	Dr. Shehla Zaidi	Aga Khan University, AKU	Karachi	29 Nov 2013
29	Dr. Dilshad Ashraf	Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development	Karachi	29 Nov 2013
30	Dr. Muhammad Zakria Zakar	Punjab University, Institute of Social and Cultural Studies	Karachi	23 Nov 2013
31	Dr. GM Arif	Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, PIDE	Islamabad	
32	Professor Asad Zaman	International Institute of Islamic Economics, International Islamic University, IIIE-IIU	Islamabad	

Annex B: Landscape of the institutions of policy research in Pakistan – geographical mapping



Source (Naveed 2013a).