

How “similarity” in higher education can improve assessment quality

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Abstract: Higher education is the product of three constituents, the policy makers or government, the executors or faculty and the recipients or the students or scholars. Steadiness among different constituents in given social interaction can act as facilitating motive and it could make higher education more smooth and productive. The “steadiness” in the pilot study is “a parameter that helps the three constituents of higher education to communicate to each other without ambiguity or say on a same frequency” and is very close to the factor “similarity”. Studies prove that “similarities” help group cohesion, improve performance and social relations etc. So to assume that the presence of like-mindedness or “similarity” or say “steadiness” in the field of higher education has the potential to decrease the amount of stress and to increase the productivity or outcome (successful policies, objective assessments, scholars, research, utility etc.), is justified. And the assumption possesses the testable potential to study policy, assessment, implementation and other allied issues objectively. Many methods of social research and experimental designs are feasible for such study. A pilot study of a biography proves that the study of “similarity” in higher education for quality and assessment is viable and possesses the potential to produce better scholars, can enable the government to improve economy, can help to produce a strong next generation, can positively contribute to strengthen the social institutions and society and above all can bring a positive change in higher education that has been merely claimed for last many years. It is recommended that the proposed “similarity” may be studied in the field of higher education to help the government to formulate and execute policies based on social psychological evidence to enable the executors to best utilize their potential to help the recipients and learners to grow as per their full potential.

Key words: higher education; similarity; productivity; assessments; quality

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of higher education is the product of three constituents: the policy makers or government, the executors or faculty and the recipients or the students or scholars. In other words, constituents of higher education form a group. Group dynamic expert Marvin Shaw (1981) argues that all groups have one thing in common: their members interact. He therefore defines a group as “two or more people who interact and influence one another” (Myers, 1993). Moreover, the presence of *Higher Education Commission* further justifies higher education in Pakistan as a group for “groups perceive themselves as us in contrast to them”. John Turner (Myers, 1993) expresses that “groups exists for a number of reasons to meet need to belong, to provide information, to supply rewards, to accomplish goals”. In addition, higher education commission performs almost all these functions. It is a general social observation that steadiness among different constituents in a given social interaction or group proves to be a facilitating motive: “Being with someone who expresses similar attitudes and opinions is reinforcing because it validates our own experiences: if she or he thinks the same way I do, you may

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think, I must be right myself. Since most of us like to be right, this provides a large reward. Also, since we tend to be convinced that our opinions are the correct ones, we will admire the judgment and right thinking of those who share our outlook. We often assume that those who think like us will be favorably inclined towards us, which makes us favorably inclined towards them”. So the presence of steadiness in the constituents of higher education could help the process of higher education to work in a more smooth and productive manner. Many psychological study support the relationship, for example, Griffitt and Veitch (1974) proved that people wanted to keep the ones most like them and wanted to get rid of the ones least like them (Papalia & Olds, 1985). “Both friends and spouses tend to be similar in race, age, socio- economic status, religion, education, intelligence, values, and leisure activities” (Papalia & Olds, 1985).

If the steadiness operationally defined in its ideal state as a parameter that can help the three constituents of higher education to communicate to each other without ambiguity or say on a same frequency is very close in its constitution to the factor of “similarity” or “likeness”. Ample psychological studies are available to prove that “similarities” help group cohesion, improve performance and social relations etc. For example, “researches has yielded a number of possible reasons for being attracted to similar people” (Papalia & Olds, 1985).

So an assumption can be coined that the presence of like-mindedness or “similarity” or “steadiness” in a given human interaction in the field of higher education has the potential to decrease the amount of stress and to increase the productivity or outcome (successful policies, objective assessments, scholars, research, utility, etc). “If others have similar feelings we feel rewarded because we presume that they like us in return” (Myers, 1993), “a great deal of research underscores this power of attitudinal similarity in bringing people together” (Myers, 1993) for “smart birds flock together. So do rich birds, protestant birds, tall birds, pretty birds?” (Myers 2004). What to talk about human being researches indicate “figures similar to each other we group together. We see the triangles and circles as vertical columns of similar shapes, not as horizontal rows of dissimilar shapes” (Myers, 2004). “We tend not to like dissimilar people” (Myers, 2004).

Moreover, “the more alike the people are, the more their liking endures”, “Similarity breeds content”, “those who flock together perceive themselves to be of a feather. Voters overestimate the extent to which their candidates share their views” (Myers, 2004). “Man who feel romantically inclined towards a women overestimate the similarity of her ideas and interests to their own” (Myers, 1993). The evidence proves that the factor of similarity is beyond cross-cultural limitation and many studies are available for example Myer (2004) mentions such studies, “Other research teams—David Johnson and Rogers Johanson 1987, 1989 at the University of Minnesota, Elizabeth Cohen 1980 at Standford University, Shlomo Sharan and Yael Sharan 1976 at Tel Aviv University, and Stuart Cook found the impact of similarity on different groups”. So far the similarity and “issues” are concerned study indicates that “similarity matters more on important issues, we like people who share our ideals” (Myers, 1993). So far the variety and similarity is concerned, “in different experiments, Donn Byrne 1971 and his colleagues captured the essence of Laura’s experiences over and again, they found that the more similar someone’s attitudes are to your own, the likable you will find the person. This likeness leads to liking relationship holds true not only for college students but also for children and elderly, people of various occupations, and those in various nations (Myers, 1993). What matters is not only the number of similar attitudes expressed by the other person Kaplan and Anderson (1973) say. “Discovering someone’s similarities to us also makes the person seem more attractive” (Myers, 1993). Moreover, “among married couples, the greater the similarity between husband and wife, the happier they are, the less likely they are to divorce, and the more unchanging are their personalities” (Myers, 1993).

As cited researches prove that “similarity” plays an important role in human interaction, if so, how its positive aspects could be used in higher education? Can this help improve policy, assessment, implementation and other allied issues, and what is the probability of its utility in higher education in Pakistan, and does this already exist, and if so in what form? As per the opinion of scholars, “an ideology of education may be defined as the set of ideas and beliefs held by a group of people about the formal arrangements for education specially schooling, and often, by extensions of by implications also about informal aspects of education, e.g., learning at home (Meighan & Harber, 2007), whereas “similarities in personality are also a basis of attraction” (Papalia & Olds, 1985).

Apparently some relationship appears to exist, suppose “similarity” is affective to improve the “higher education” but is this scientific to study, such aspects related to attitudes or emotions in the field of education, the answer of this problems is available in this statement. “Traditionally researchers have analyzed emotions found in a variety of paradigms appropriate to studying for example neurophysiology, psychology, anthropology and sociology” (Osley & Jenkins, 1996). Within the discipline of education however, the study of emotions relatively unexplored. Blakemore (1993, p. 16) states that “emotion is neglected in the leadership literature and has only recently been introduced into the (educational) change literature”. Hargreaves (1998, p. 2) concerns that within a context of educational reform the emotional lives of teachers are becoming in studies of schooling” (Schmidt, 2002). Probabilities of exploring “similarity” in the field of education are bright and surprisingly the force of similarity already exists in the field of higher education although as per a few informal observations that opposes productivity an under print biography reflects. “If I was of a...(caste) or my mother tongue was...(language) then getting a reputed and respectable job in education and achieving national and international reputation for my achievements was very easy...then my innocent children never suffer unnecessary tension and social disgust if I use to admire all those who admire India and Indians more then Pakistan and Pakistani people in the field of higher education” (Anonymous, 2008). The statement indicates that different forms of “similarity groups” do exist in the field of higher education and revolve around language, caste or class. But the presence of such groups in the field of higher education can be harmful for the country and education although these exist in minority as (Anonymous, 2008) writes, “I was satisfied when my case was brought before the civil judge by my lawyer who told the civil judge that his client was not given his due right to get a government job, although he is the only candidate with required qualification and government unnecessarily trying to create hurdles for such job for the governor (Chancellor) of the province did not want my client to enter into a government organization and chairman higher education commission daily coins some law to restraint my client to enter in the field of higher education and so the vice chancellor...” But when after some days my sources told me that vice chancellor, governor and chairman higher education commission throwing the orders of the civil judge those he wrote in my favor in the dust bin have said, “post the judge”, I thought that it was better to learn a skill instead of earning a Ph.D. studies indicate that, if minority viewpoints were always important, history would be static (Anonymous, 2008). In experiments, a minority is most influential when consistent and persistent in its views, when its actions convey self-confidence, and when it begins to elicit some defections from majority (Myers, 1993). Now the question is that can “similarity” be introduced in its positive form in the field of education as a “value” etc. and if so, how it would be beneficial for higher education? The answer is “yes”! Christopher Hodgkinson is empathetic when telling us that “values, morals and ethics are the very stuff of leadership and administrative life, yet we have no comprehensive theory about them and often in the literature they receive very short shrift” (1991, p. 11). The authors also discussed, “Thinking through moral values, putting boundaries to work within the field of education management” (Samier & Mihaileva, 2003).

Now the need is to establish a possibility to find a “generalize” or agreed upon “similarity”. That possesses the potential to become an agreed upon point for all those who are associated with the field of higher education as constituents. The policy makers or government, the executors or faculty and the recipients or the students or scholars and how that is possible, the analytical contemplations answer is yes, that is there and that is “the love for Pakistan” the only value capable of bearing the burden of the colossal task. Myers (2004) found, “Merely being from the same country is enough to breed mutual warmth when one is a foreign student or tourist. In Scottish town, I resided while writing this Americans who had little in common in the United States often greeted one another like old friends” (Myers, 2004).

Everybody knows that interview plays a vital role for the selection of all the three constituents of higher education, and the social psychological technique of “phantom other” can be used to determine the proposed similarity. Donn Byrne (1961; 1971) proved that the “phantom other” procedure are the chances that the closer the phantom’s answers are to your own, the more you will like that person (Papalia & Olds, 1985).

So far the development of similarity among the people already in the business of higher education is concerned, the technique of persuasion can be utilized to inculcate the similarity to persuade that are sometimes diabolical, sometimes salutary, sometimes effective, sometimes futile. Persuasion is neither inherently good nor bad. The bad we call propaganda the good we call education (Samier & Mihaileva, 2003). True education is more factually based and less coercive than mere propaganda. Generally, we call it education when we believe it propaganda when we do not (Myers, 1993). So it is feasible to use “love for Pakistan” the major similarity among the constituents, the policy makers or government, the executors or faculty and the recipients or the students or scholars, but we can determine “love for Pakistan”, Anonymous (2008) writes, “When I started thinking for my country, I received the reports that my teachers said that he would get the Ph.D. but that shall be of no use for him, so he cannot write a single word without our consent in his thesis, ...he was difficulty when merely he was a liberal officer now he possesses Ph.D. a sword against our designs so let him go home said my officers.... I do not know why you are unable to improve your economy without negating two nations theory I often thought.... Certainly Kashmiri people love Pakistan as I do then why a Kashmiri general was not given the right to rise to the top rank in last revolt against the elected government and why Kashmiri people neglected to the limits for last many years?... MQM is against Pakistan but... migrants from East Pakistan are Pakistani but... Sindhis, Punjabis Pathans and Baluchees love Pakistan and Islam but.... Why only those people are Punjabi who are more inclined towards Amratsir then Lahore... who makes Pakistani to criticize Jerusalem and New York more then New Dehli and Christians and Jews more then Hindus and Shiks against the teachings of Scripture..., I can only get a job if I have a resemblance with some Indian media face or my name resembles with the names the people of disgruntle religious group prefer”. One of the catching sentences is the top of country and higher education love Pakistan as I do and like the people of Kashmir Pakistan that must be like paradise and a just society and nobody could stop me to produce many Ph.D. in my discipline” (Anonymous, 2008). The description as the writer claims is 100% true and he claims the possession of solid proves for that, indicate a very serious situation present in our society especially in the higher education such state of society (a group) and in higher education (another group) is close to, “Analysis of the decisions that led to several international fiascoes indicates that a group’s desire for harmony can overrides its realistic appraisal of contrary views. This is especially true when group members strongly desire unity, when they are isolated from opposing ideas, and when they leader signals what he of she wants from the group. Symptomatic of this overriding concern for harmony, labeled groupthink, are: (1) an illusion of invulnerability, (2) rationalization, (3) unquestioned belief in the group’s morality, (4) stereotyped views of

opposition, (5) pressure to conform, (6) self-censorship off misgivings, (7) an illusion of unanimity, and (8) mindguards who protect the groups from unpleasant information (Myers, 1993). When high levels of social arousal combine with diffused responsibility, people may abandon their normal restraints and lose their sense of individuality. Such “deindividuation” is especially likely when after being aroused and distracted, people feel anonymity while in large groups or wearing indistinct garb. The result is diminished self awareness and self restraint and increased responsiveness to immediate situation, be it negative or positive (Myers, 1993), assess MQM in Karachi.

So beginning the similarity in the system of higher education would not only breed the, “national character” but also would help to improve the quality assessment etc.. But are we not attracted to the people who are in some ways different from ourselves different in ways that complement our own characteristics? Researchers have explored this question by comparing not only the attitudes and beliefs of friends and spouses but also their age, religion, race, smoking behavior, economic level, education, height, intelligence, and appearance. In all these ways and more, similarity still prevails (Myers, 1993). Moreover, “people who have a low opinion of themselves are not attracted to others who remind them of themselves”. Leonard 1975 states, “Only the high-self-esteem subjects were attracted to people who were like them; the reverse obtained for those who thought little of themselves” (Papalia & Olds, 1985). And it is not very difficult if properly handled and managed for “similarity” is very powerful for, Even the attraction that arises from mere exposure to photographs of certain faces is enough to trigger the perception that those likable people are similar to oneself (Myers, 1993). Such perceptions may reinforce one’s liking for a person. Strangers made to think they are similar (whether they are or not) will talk as intimately as friends, which may in turn lead to their actually becoming friends (Myers, 1993). For “similarity” itself is a reward, “if others have similar feelings we feel rewarded because we presume that they like us in return (Myers, 1993). But of course, there are a few limitations as well for example, similarity sometimes divide people—when they are competing for scarce payoffs, such as jobs or grades in curve graded class—the type of similarity makes a difference Myers (1993). So similar communications are more effective on matters of value and preference than on judgment of fact (Myers, 1993). Is similarity more important than credibility? Sometimes yes, sometimes no Myers (1993). Moreover, studies indicate that, the international barriers to bringing about change can be new more complex and difficult to surmount. Institutions by virtue of their adherence to tradition have a tendency to maintain the status quo. This tendency may be true of educational institutions. Studies undertaken by National Council for the Accreditation of teachers education suggest that although a growing number of educational institutions perform to address issue of cultural diversity very few actually do so (Cushner, McClelland & Saffordl, 2003).

However in case of “love for Pakistan”, we find, “I was having everything but I was ordinary now I have nothing but I am a proud Pakistani who can tell his children, look I am living for some cause, you are suffering for something supreme.... Stress is most unwanted thing but it is blessing if it is for Pakistan ..., I am devoid of justice but I am sure I shall get it and all those who devoid the organization and individuals to share knowledge and experience with me shall be punished..., I feel happy when I see a shoulder in Uniform I feel that is me... I hate sin for I am a Pakistani.... When I talk about restoration and independence of judiciary of Pakistan and freedom of Kashmir I feel proud.... Although it was criminal to be Pakistani in Pakistan but I foresee a change.... I pointed out that something serious is likely to take place in Swat 9-years earlier but since I was a Pakistani so.... The people of Kashmir most of the time are right but since the love Pakistan” (Anonymous, 2008).

The analysis of expressions reveals the probability that strong commitment with Pakistan, or in other words

“love for Pakistan” by choice or persuasion, is capable of improving morality, personality, self-confidence, stress tolerance, patriotism etc thus can help the individuals associated with higher education in any capacity, the policy makers or government, the executors or faculty or the recipients or the students or scholars to improve their efficiency, judgment or assessment. Thus leading to the overall improved quality of the functions of higher education. As the pilot study of a biography in that context reflects that the studies related to the exploration of “similarity” (love for Pakistan) in higher education are testable and possess the potential to help the country to produce better scholars, enable the government to improve its economy, help the country to produce a strong next generation and country, can positively contribute to strengthen the social institutions and society and above all can bring a positive change in education that has been falsely and merely claimed for last many years. It is recommended that the proposed social psychological studies may be explored in the field of higher education to help the government to formulate and execute policies based on social psychological evidence to enable the executors to best utilize their potential to help the recipients and learners to grow as per their full potential.

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