



Unity in Diversity: The case of FCC

CUSROW J. DUBASH, UMAIR JAMAL *

¹ Department of Education, Forman Christian College, Lahore, Pakistan

² Department of History, Forman Christian College, Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract

Aim: This paper aims to shed light on the question, "How did FC College's missionary college status present a unique challenge for the institution between 1973 and 2002, and how did the institute recover its enduring legacy of national unity?" In addition, the study intends to provide a high-level overview of how FC College has attempted to accomplish all this by referencing specific cases involving two or more racial/ethnic student groups that are well-known for their contentious interactions on campus.

Method: The research methodology employed in this study is primarily descriptive and analytical in nature, covering topics such as the institute's history, the radical changes brought about by several state policies, and the various efforts put forth by the university's administration to restore the institute to its former academic glory.

Findings: The case of the FCC demonstrates that there is still a functional mechanism to involve the wide range of competing interests and identities that permeate modern society and the institutional milieu in which academia operates. The politicisation of universities can be avoided if a method is introduced that firmly emphasises the liberal and progressive side of all competing interests.

Implications/Novel Contribution: This research is significant because it sheds light on a promising approach taken by some educational institutions, namely that fostering a welcoming and inclusive learning environment that encourages students to explore their passions and develop their talents can also help reduce tensions between different groups based on race and ideology. While this is just one example, identity-based tensions persist at all Pakistani universities.

Keywords: Unity, Diversity, Educational Institution

Received: 28 March 2018 / **Accepted:** 19 April 2018 / **Published:** 18 June 2018

INTRODUCTION

Forman Christian College has come a long way from its humble beginnings as a Presbyterian missionary school to become a great centre of learning and scholarship and earn its status as a chartered university. The college's original name, Lahore Mission College, dates back to its founding in 1864. But in 1894, the college's name was changed to FCC to honour its founder, Dr Charles W Forman. "When the college was founded, it had just over 100 students and a single building; by 1917, it had over 800 students, a large campus, and an outstanding faculty and reputation," writes Anderson (1999) in his book "Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions." At its peak in the late 1960s, FCC enrolled more than 1500 students. There are now more than 3,000 students enrolled in the university track.

Christian missionaries are often credited with introducing modern education to the subcontinent. In general, educational institutions that date back to the colonial era are still considered among the best in the world. FCC was founded as one of the first schools in Pakistan (then part of India) to offer instruction in English. In the early 1970s, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government nationalised almost all missionary-run educational institutes, including FCC. The college's prestige as a pioneer in educational innovation, a symbol of national and cultural unity, and a bastion of academic freedom vanished in the following years. An obvious tragedy of the nationalisation era was the open support for methods and perspectives that ran counter to the values of cultural, social, and ideological diversity that had previously served as the institute's guiding principles. Since Haroon (2003) reports the FCC, "until the 1970s, this institution enjoyed a sterling reputation among academics and students alike. But after it was nationalised, the

* Corresponding author: Umair Jamal

† Email: umairjamal@fcccollege.edu.pk

institute declined dramatically as it fell prey to "bureaucratic inefficiency" and gradually lost its competitive edge over time." From 1972 until 2002, when the institute was nationalised, it shifted its focus from providing quality education to encouraging exclusivist tendencies and a narrow view of diversity.

The college's nationalisation in the early 1970s and the rise of Islamic communal politics in the late 1990s posed significant threats to the institute's stated mission and motto of promoting high levels of communal harmony and peace. The college had somewhat lost its legacy as a place of learning and communal assortment before its denationalisation in 2002 when control of the institute was returned to the missionary community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Pakistan, a number of studies have been carried out that solely focus on the state's policies and interventions to improve higher education in Pakistan. Moreover, a number of such studies, by and large, focus on institutional efforts which are mainly dictated by the state's higher education authorities rather than institutes themselves to overcome looming on-campus crisis ranging from bad academic environment to violent competitions among various identities (Cohen, 2011; Hoodbhoy, 1998; Kahraman, 2016; Le, 2016; Isani & Virk, 2005; Yildiz & Kayili, 2015). One set of scholars covering Pakistan's higher education argue that it's the state itself is responsible for the bad academic environment on the country's higher educational institutes (Bahadur, 1998; Malik, 2004; Nahal, 1993; Warwick & Reimers, 1994; Siddiqui, 2007). Scholars making this point argue that it's the state's policies which have actually disrupted the whole educational structure of the country and educational institutes now have become a breeding ground of hatred and political conflicts rather than places that offer quality academic milieu. On the other hand, the other group of scholars argues that universities in Pakistan continue to struggle when it comes to the quality academic environment because the former's management's remain vulnerable to outside political, tribal and other pressures (Arockiyasamy, Surendheran, & Bullard, 2016; Farooq, 1990; Maderazo, 2016; Murray & Kosnik, 2011; Reza, Rusidah, & Forasidah, 2017; Riaz, 2008). This paper is novel in a way that it addresses and highlights an effort of an institute which has worked on an excellent approach to address outside pressures and the state's limitations. Recently, a similar study in Bangladesh was carried out to understand individual efforts of historical academic institutes to push back on existing pressures on the sector. In Pakistan, there is not any work which deals with the effort of an institute as a case study which can be replicated on a broader level to address the country's looming educational crisis where campuses have virtually turned into hotbeds of violence (Goel, 2004; Rahman, 2003). The study is significant because it offers a blueprint which can be followed at the state level to introduce much-needed reforms to turn educational institutes into true academic institutes.

Objectives of the Study

This study is important because it highlights an important methodology on the part of the institution where an excellent set of learning oriented, progressive and liberal academic environment cannot only help students in realizing their true potential but also helps in bridging competing ethnic and ideological gaps in society. While this is one case in point, a majority of the higher educational institutes in Pakistan remain infested in clashes that stem from various competing identities. In the presence of such environment, a majority of the educational institutes remain focused on ensuring their day to day functionalities rather than working on creating an academic environment which can create a learned, smart and progressive generation. This article has actually outlined the struggle of an institute which not only should be followed by all public sector educational institutes in Pakistan but can also be consulted by various other higher educational institutes in South Asia which remain a victim of such struggles.

How Cultural, Religious and Political Interests and Identities have Affected Education

Pakistan is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. While this ethnic diversity has been one of the country's paramount assets, since partition, political leadership in Pakistan have failed to develop policies that focus on the promotion of national unity by bringing together a range of political, social and cultural identities. On the other hand, however, destruction of cultural unity and diversity has been implemented to attain unity at all levels (Haroan, 2003). This approach has had consequences: the overall divisive and confrontational nature of Pakistan's

politics has ended up fragmenting these identities, rather than promoting a sense of acceptance and inclusiveness among them.

While this approach has had implications on a national level, the country's education system has been a direct victim of this general culture that exists outside college and university walls. This is one of the primary reasons that majority of the educational institutes in Pakistan remain weak structurally and continue to lack academic freedom (Nahal, 1993; Naviwala, 2016). For this reason, it wouldn't be illogical to contend that the vast majority of colleges and universities in Pakistan, work to cater different political, cultural and religious interests and identities (Haroon, 2003). In such an environment, a mere thought of diversity, inclusiveness, multiculturalism, academic freedom and quality education, appear as a far-fetched dream. When all of these competing ideological and cultural identities operate inside the premises of an educational institute, it's comprehensible that the result would be confrontation, violence, and conflict unless the institute pushes back with an approach that rejects such divisiveness and exclusivity (Mansouri, 2017; Rashid, 2015).

How FCC has Survived the Country's Ideological Polarization and Stands as a Symbol of Cultural Unity

In this regard, FCC is among one of the few institutes in the country that has attempted to achieve this goal by staying true to its mission of fostering cultural diversity to promote tolerance and national unity. Certainly, the ideological polarization that has taken place within the country has had its toll on the institute. For instance, the last two decades of the twentieth century were a challenge that not many educational institutes have been able to recover from. Arguably, had it not been for the unwavering commitment and resolve of the missionary community, that devoted vast resources, braved violence and grave threats and worked tirelessly to bring back and unite FCC's alumni structure, the institute may have never recovered from the state of decay into which it had fallen during the nationalization era. Since its establishment, the college's evolution has revolved around sustaining its liberal and progressive academic outlook and values that do not abide by any particular ethnic or ideological sect. Generally, it's because of this reason that students which join the college every year from all regions of the country do not feel subjugated to any particular cultural, ethnic, social or ideological environment. The idea is to maintain cultural unity by allowing cultural diversity and identity. Particularly, during the early years of the denationalization period, there was a strong focus on employing different educational methods and approaches to promote intercultural and interreligious harmony among students to promote tolerance and understanding. Such approaches and methods have been successful in eradicating different prejudices that arise due to cultural and ideological differences.

At the college, research centers and departments have been set up to promote interfaith harmony, peace, and dialogue. In this regard, a variety of initiatives have been launched (Mary, 2012). For instance, the Centre for Dialogue and Action (CD&A) was set up at the college which offers peacebuilding classes, organizes dialogue sessions among students of different cultural and religious backgrounds in order to encourage and promote acceptability towards cultural and religious differences. A variety of courses and topics, such as "The Dignity of Difference" and "Knowledge and Respect for Humanity," are taught to advance peacebuilding efforts.

Moreover, during the early weeks and months of the denationalization days, the institute's aim to attain cultural and religious diversity became a major challenge, for the previous two decades had only focused on supporting different political and cultural interests which had entrenched the culture of identity politics at the campus. For instance, the overall enrolment of students from minority religious and ethnic communities had dropped to significant levels. To reverse this deep-rooted structure, the college's new administration firmly rejected the notion that education should fortify and uphold any one particular idea of national unity or support one particular ethnic or religious community over the other. Previously, it was the resurgence of student groups of different political parties that had come to dominate the college's academic priorities and policies. Shortly after taking control of FCC, the new administration completely banned student unions that had political, ethnic and religious orientations. Instead, in order to improve intercultural, social and religious understanding and connectivity, FCC introduced the idea of student clubs and societies. The injection of 'student-led and faculty-guided' clubs and societies on campus have not only offered students a supportive campus life, which is pivotal for students to harness their academic and nonacademic skills but have also helped them in attaining a greater understanding of the importance of cultural and religious diversity. Currently, FCC has more than 30 societies that operate on

campus and deal with subjects and issues ranging from women rights, religion, music, environment, cultural issues and more. Student clubs such as the 'Women Empowerment Club,' 'Leadership Forum,' 'Forman Music Society,' 'Earth Watch Club,' 'Christian Life Program,' 'Islamic Society,' 'The Art Junction' and 'Character Building Club' underpin the college administration's firm commitment to promote tolerance and respect for diversity (Mary, 2012).

Moreover, on college's part, much of this has been achieved by employing an approach of detachment and far greater use of an element of neutrality in terms of disallowing any one particular ethnic, cultural, social or religious belief to proliferate at the expense of others. If the years of the nationalization period are any guide, the rise of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)'s student wing at FCC, which rekindled certain religious and cultural conservative attitudes, virtually decimated the institution's liberal and progressive outlook that had for many decades sustained peace, equality and cultural and religious diversity (Riaz, 2008).

Peeda James, the head of the Protestant Education Board in Pakistan played a key role in negotiating the college's denationalization process with the government. "Denationalization has been a tough job but it is far from over," she recalls. While evoking some tough experiences, she says that "most of the time the teachers induced by the government would attack us. They had gotten too used to loitering around, not coming to college and not teaching. A lot of times they would also brainwash the students telling them we want to teach them about Christianity and take them away from Islamic teachings and students would then join the protesting teachers." For instance, at the beginning of the denationalization period, the college's Rector, Dr. Peter H. Armacost, who had replaced the previous government appointed rector, was openly beleaguered by students of different political and religious organizations. To contain scuffles and violence, a police station was set up at the campus and Dr. Armacost's commutes from home to his office and vice versa were escorted by the police (Mary, 2012).

In order to reduce the long-established ideological fragmentation of the institute, a number of steps were taken. Clashes between Muslim and Christian students that had become a common place were reduced with the proper use of 'interfaith counseling.' Faculty members of Christian and Muslim studies departments were involved in broadening students understanding towards faith and cultural diversity and how this diversity should be welcomed rather than rejected. Moreover, the college's chapel that had been isolated for a long time was revived with the appointment of a Dean. The appointment of the Chapel's dean has not only played a significant role in reducing tensions between Christian and Muslim students but has also been pivotal in terms of arranging events and activities as diverse as a dialogue between Muslim and Christian scholars to encourage Interfaith harmony. Moreover, there has been a continuous effort to broaden the role of Christian and Islamic Studies programs. For this, the institute has actively sought to employ excellent quality faculty and staff to promote the mission of harmony, peace, and tolerance.

Table 1 below shows the decline in numbers of regional, ethnic and religious disputes on campus since de-nationalization of FCC due to the above measures and approaches. It's been a consistent struggle but the results of harmony and peace make it worthwhile. Today, it is very seldom that an incident of such type takes place on campus. But our counseling and proactive sessions continue.

Table 1: Decline in number of incidents

Years	Interfaith Incidents	Interethnic Incidents	Inter Regional Incidents
2002-2006	81	92	44
2006-2010	53	62	36
2010-2014	21	22	10
2014-2017	3	2	0

METHODOLOGY

The research design of this study covers two major historical time periods to highlight the institute's struggle and broad efforts to restore it to its academic glory. The research design used in this study deals with descriptive and analytical methods of various factors, ranging from taking into account the history of the institute, to radical changes which a number of state policies created to finally analyzing various efforts which the university's management put in place to restore the institute to its academic magnificence. In this study, two major time periods are explained

with an analytical approach to understand and highlight the context and significance of the period under discussion. To make an argument about how the institute has been able to overcome various competing political, ethnic and ideological interests, in all sections of analysis, the paper also covers and sheds light on existing and entrenched identities while making a case for FCC's struggle (Mary, 2012; Liubov & Michail, 2007; Rahman, 2003). Overall, the paper relies on qualitative research methodology as a framework to make a case in this study. The reason for the use of qualitative methodology is the commitment of this approach to offer a framework for the analysis and observation of data sets. In this study, the history and various policy interventions offer a broad empirical field which can be studied through such an approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The case study of the FCC shows that there remains a workable mechanism to engage various competing interests and identities which exist in society and are also part of any institute's academic setting. If an approach which highlights progressive and liberal side of all competing interests, is introduced with firmness, the politicization of educational institutes can be prevented. FC remains an excellent example in this regard: the institute faces a number of pressures, not only because it's a Christian institute in a country whose majority population is Muslim, but also because it has made significant gains when it comes to cleaning the institute from looming ethnic, political and ideological pressures inside the campus. The government in Pakistan and various other countries in the South Asian region need to study FC's approach when it comes to introducing a quality academic environment in the midst of politicization and various other cultural and social pressures.

Already, the government of Pakistan is considering to handover two other missionary institutes to FC college. The two other colleges which will soon become part of the FC college are Murray College and Gordon College which are known for their exemplary academic history but have become a victim of general neglect which reflects in terms of the state's focus on higher education and educational institutes. A number of well-known educationists which are part of FC college community including Dr. C.J. Dubash, who is the co-author of this paper, have been offering their services to train teachers across Pakistan and assist the government in espousing FC's structure which has been termed a success story. However, another important learning outcome which this paper has been able to grasp is that while FC presents a success story and is a lesson for various new and old educational institutes, the overwhelming religious conservatism that prevails in the country, remains a primary hurdle when it comes to reforming Pakistan's education system which remains a victim of growing radicalism in Pakistan (Cox, 2002; Spolsky, 2009). For instance, various public and private universities in Pakistan treat ethnic and religious communities with prejudice and promote an idea of higher education that is not inclusive and progressive. This has cost Pakistan a great deal in terms of the country losing to radical voices through structural channels which Pakistan's educational institutes promote and accept. FC is one of the few institutions that is trying to change this practice which has become an unfortunate reality in Pakistan. The study which focuses on how FC has transpired itself from a victim of same practice to an embodiment of inclusiveness and quality education is something which should be replicated across Pakistan.

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

As Liubov and Michail (2007) argue that "Education should promote mutual understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all peoples, racial and religious groups, as well as promoting the activity of Mankind for the sake of universal peace." In Pakistan, while FCC stands as a symbol of learning and scholarship, the institution is also the torchbearer when it comes to setting precedents and playing a leadership role to achieve peace and cultural unity. While challenges in this regard continue to grow, it's the institution's decades old tradition and steadfast commitment to its founding principles to promote equality and achieve peace and harmony that keep it ahead of impending cultural, academic and other ordeals. There have been a number of efforts to ensure that the country's higher educational institutes follow an independent and progressive vision but the country's political realities have become a hindrance (Lodhi, 2011; Isani & Virk, 2005). Pakistan is a country that remains divided into religious, ethnic and sectarian lines (Muborakshoeva, 2012). There are different divisive visions when it comes to reforming Pakistan's education system. The resistance and public debate in this regard focus more on what's best for one community or the other rather than what's best for the country's youth and the country's future (Hoodbhoy, 1998;

Shami, 2005). It's virtually a miracle which has been made possible by the efforts of the FCC's leadership that the college continues to make progress to offer a vision to the state that with perseverance and hard work, Pakistan's education sector can be reformed and improved.

It's high time that other educational institutes in Pakistan follow suit to achieve cultural and religious unity, for the looming social instability in the country can only be tackled with the provision of quality education that promotes harmony rather than divisions.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, G. H. (1999). Biographical dictionary of christian missions. *Missiology*, 27(1), 41-45. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/009182969902700109>
- Arockiyasamy, G., Surenderan, K., & Bullard, S. K. (2016). The influence of playing video games on academic performance among graduates of Karunya university. *Journal of Advances in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(3), 119-132. doi:<https://doi.org/10.20474/jahss-2.3.1>
- Bahadur, K. (1998). *Democracy in Pakistan: Crises and conflicts*. New Delhi, India: Har-Anand Publications.
- Cohen, S. P. (2011). *The future of Pakistan*. Washington, D.C: WA: Brookings Institution Press.
- Cox, J. (2002). *Imperial fault lines: Christianity and colonial power in India, 1818-1940*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Farooq, A. R. (1990). *A survey of the problems and prospects of teacher education in Pakistan*. Islamabad, Pakistan: Academy of Educational Planning and Management, Ministry of Education.
- Goel, A. (2004). *Education and socio-economic perspectives of women development and empowerment*. New Dehli, India: Deep and Deep Publications.
- Haroon, K. (2003). *A white trail: A journey into the heart of Pakistans religious minorites*. New Dehli, India: Westland Limited.
- Hoodbhoy, P. (1998). *Education and the state: Fifty years of Pakistan*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, USA.
- Isani, U. A., & Virk, M. L. (2005). *Higher education in Pakistan: A historical and futuristic perspective*. Islamabad, Pakistan: National Book Foundation.
- Kahraman, C. (2016). Role of geography in environmental education. *International Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, 2(4), 121-125. doi:<https://doi.org/10.20469/ijhss.2.20001-4>
- Le, Q. A. (2016). The impact of globalisation on the reform of higher education in Vietnam. *International Journal of Business and Economic Affairs*, 1(1), 29-35. doi:<https://doi.org/10.24088/ijbea-2016-11005>
- Liubov, G., & Michail, L. (2007). *Noospheric ethical/ecological constitution of mankind*. Moscow, Russia: Inter Press.
- Lodhi, M. (2011). *Pakistan: Beyond the "Crisis State"*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Maderazo, M. A. (2016). The change management in an academic institution: An organizational perspective. *Journal of Advances in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(6), 310-320. doi:<https://doi.org/10.20474/jahss-2.6.3>
- Malik, A. (2004). *The champions of change: The institutional development and the change management in education sector: The role of teacher*. Islamabad, Pakistan: Pangrahics.
- Mansouri, F. (2017). *Interculturalism at the crossroads: Comparative perspectives on concepts, policies and practices*. Paris, France: UNESCO Publishing.
- Mary, A. (2012). *Forman christian college: (A chartered university) 2002-2012: The armacost years*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2Jqhz8W> (accessed on 13 June 2017)
- Muborakshoeva, M. (2012). *Islam and higher education: Concepts, challenges and opportunities*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Murray, J., & Kosnik, C. (2011). Academic work and identities in teacher education. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 37(3), 243-246. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2011.587982>
- Nahal, C. (1993). *The slat of life: The ghandhi quartet*. Ahmedabad, India: Allied Publishers Limited.

- Naviwala, N. (2016). *Pakistan's education crisis: The real story*. Washington DC: WA: Woodrow Wilson International Center.
- Rahman, A. (2003). *Higher education science and technology in Pakistan: A matter of national survival*. Karachi, Pakistan: Karachi Printing Press.
- Rashid, A. (2015). *Educational crisis and reform: Perspectives from South Asia*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Reza, F., Rusidah, S., & Forasidah. (2017). The influence of interpersonal communication and organizational culture on job satisfaction of Academics University Achmad Yani Banjarmasin. *International Journal of Business and Economic Affairs*, 2(5), 310-316. doi:<https://doi.org/10.24088/ijbea-2017-25005>
- Riaz, A. (2008). *Faithful education: Madrassahs in South Asia*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Shami, P. (2005). *Education in Pakistan: Policies and policy formulation*. Karachi, Pakistan: National Book Foundation, Ministry of Education.
- Siddiqui, S. (2007). *Rethinking education in Pakistan: Perceptions, practices and possibilities*. Karachi, Pakistan: Paramount Publishing Enterprise.
- Spolsky, B. (2009). *Language management*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Warwick, D. P., & Reimers, F. (1994). *Hope or despair? Learning in Pakistans primary schools*. London, UK: Praeger.
- Yildiz, F. U., & Kayili, G. (2015). Examining the effects of computer-assisted preschool educational activities on childrens intuitive mathematical ability. *Journal of Advances in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(1), 1-8. doi:<https://doi.org/10.20474/jahss1.1.1>