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A Comparative Study of Higher Education in Afghanistan & Malaysia to Develop Job
Skills of Afghan Graduates

بررسی مقایسوی نهاد های تحصیلات عالی افغانستان و
مالیزیا جهت توسعه مهارت های کاری فارغ التحصیلان
افغان

Afganistanlı Mezunların İş Sahasındaki Donanımları İçin Afganistan ve Malezya Eğitim
Kurumlarının Karşılaştırmalı Değerlendirmesi

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چکیده

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بعد از سالهای طولانی جنگ و نا امنی ها، افغانستان برای نخستین بار تلاش دارد تا خود را در مطابقت با معیار های بازار آزاد برابر سازد که ضرورت است تمام نهادها همگام با این طرح در مطابقت باشند. متأسفانه وزارت تحصیلات عالی توانایی تربیه نیروی متخصص کار را بر بر مبنای طرح فوق بنا بر بعضی از معضلات از قبیل متمرکز بودن نظام تحصیلی، نصاب غیر معیاری، استراتژی های نا متوازن و بودجه ناکافی نداشته که باعث بلند رفتن میزان بیکاری فارغان این نهاد گردیده است. این مقاله بر مبنای یک تحقیق کیفی نظام تحصیلی افغانستان را مورد بررسی قرار داده و مودلی را جهت اصلاحات در نظام تحصیلی افغانستان پیشنهاد مینماید؛ تا از یک طرف وزارت تحصیلات بتواند جوابگوی نیاز بازار کار باشد و از جانب دیگر در رشد و توسعه اقتصادی سهمیه شده میزان بیکاری را کاهش دهد. در بخش از پیشنهاد ها این مقاله تاکید دارد که دانشگاه های افغانستان نیاز مند استقلالیت اند تا بر مبنای نصاب تحصیلی سنجیده شده و پالیسی های غیر متمرکز نیاز های زون که برای آن نیروی کار تربیت مینمایند را فراهم سازند. مقاله هذا در قدم نخست میکنازیم فعالیت نظام تحصیلی افغانستان را با نصاب تحصیلی ارایه شده از جانب نهاد های تحصیلی به معرفی گرفته، چهار چوب کاری وزارت تحصیلات عالی مشخص نموده، سهم وزارت تحصیلات عالی و منطق موجوده جهت توجیه این نظام را توضیح میدهد. متعاقباً نارسایی ها و معضلات موجوده فرا راه فارغان را که میخواهند وارد بازار کار گردند با شناسایی ناتوانی های مهارتی لازم که باید فارغان با آن مسلح شوند و تقاضای بازار کار را بررسی نموده، راهکار لازم ارائه می کند. در اخیر یک راهکاری را که از جانب نظام تحصیلی مالیزیا تطبیق شده و نتیجه مثبت هم داشته، با اندکی تغییرات پیشنهاد مینماید. در نتیجه این راهکار مودل سودمندی برای کارایی پایدار نظام تحصیلی افغانستان میتواند باشد و بطور نمونه یک پالیسی تحصیلی جدیدی که بتواند روابط مستدامی را میان نظام های تحصیلی و استخدام کنندگان برقرار کند تا باعث توسعه اقتصادی افغانستان گردیده و میزان بیکاری را تا حد ممکن تقلیل بخشد.

Keywords:

Ministry of Higher Education, Afghanistan, Malaysia, Graduates, unemployment, autonomy, curriculum.

Abstract

After long time conflict and efforts for adjustment to an incipient free market economy, higher education in Afghanistan is facing the challenges of centralization, outdated curricula, inefficient strategies and inadequate budget which causes high unemployment rate for its graduates. This paper examines higher education in Afghanistan based on qualitative research to purpose a model for its educational reform to respond to market demands and help Afghanistan meet its own development goals, including economic growth and eradication of unemployment. As part of this change, Afghan universities should have the autonomy to train students in light of the needs of the region they serve by implementing market based curriculum and decentralized educational policy. The article begins by describing the current structure and curriculum offered by institutions of higher education in Afghanistan, including the structure and role of the Ministry of Education and the past rationalizations for the current system. Next it discusses the shortcoming and challenges faced by graduates attempting to enter the workforce, identifying the need for training competency based employees and graduates that can meet the market demands. Next it provides a model implemented by Malaysian educational system. From there, it explains how that system provides useful ideas for a viable approach in Afghanistan, a new educational policy that enables collaboration with industry and enhances economic development.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Yükseköğretim Kurumu, Afganistan, Malezya, Mezunlar, İşsizlik, Bağımsızlık, Eğitim Müfredatı.

Özet

Afganistan yıllar süren savaş ve kargaşadan sonra, ilk defa serbest pazarın standartlarını yakalamaya gayret ediyor. Bütün kurumların bu konuda uyumlu olması gerekmektedir. Maalesef yükseköğretim kurumu eğitim sisteminin merkezîyetçi olmasından, standart ile uyumlu olmayan müfredat, dengesiz stratejiler ve yetersiz bütçe sorunları yüzünden eğitilmiş ve yetişmiş kişilere iş imkânı oluşturamamakta olup mezunların işsizlik oranının yükselmesine sebep olmuştur. Bu makale serbest bir araştırma ile Afganistan eğitim sistemini değerlendirmeye alarak eksikliklerin giderilmesi için bir model ve metot önermektedir. Bu vesileyle yükseköğretim kurumu bir taraftan serbest pazarın ihtiyaçlarına cevap bulabilsin, diğer taraftan da ekonominin gelişmesine katkı sunarak işsizlik oranının düşmesinde bir payı olsun. Bu makalenin önerilerinde üniversitelerin bağımsız olmaları ve merkezîyetçi eğitim anlayışından soyutlanarak bölgelerin ihtiyaçları dikkate alınarak bağımsız ve iyice hazırlanmış eğitim müfredatına ihtiyacı vardır. Söz konusu bu makale ilk başta eğitim kurumları tarafından hazırlanmış olup halen Afganistan eğitim müfredatının tanıtımını yapmakta, Yüksek Eğitim Bakanlığının çalışanlar çerçevesini çizmekte, ardından da Yüksek Eğitim Bakanlığının halen yürürlükte olan eğitim sisteminin gelişmesindeki katkılarını açıklamaktadır. İkinci olarak mezun olmuş olanların serbest piyasaya girmeleri ve bu konudaki yetersizlikleri açıklayarak piyasanın aradığı özelliklerde donanımlı olmaları için gereken yolları göstermektedir. Son olarak da Malezya eğitim sistemi tarafından denenmiş olup başarılı bulunan bir modeli önermektedir. Sonuçta bu model Afganistan eğitim sistemin sürekliliği için faydalı bir model olabilir. Mesela bu yeni model ile birlikte eğitim kurumları ile işverenler arasında sürekli bir iletişim kanalını açık tutarak Afganistan ekonomisinin gelişmesinde yararı olsun ve mümkün mertebe işsizlik oranını da aşağıya çekmiş olsun.

Updating Curriculum and Linking Institutions of Higher Education with Industry to Create Employment Opportunities for Afghan Graduates

I. INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan is overdue for reform of its higher education system to prepare graduates for full participation in the economy and support the country's development goals. Today most Afghan youth study in universities that train them in majors under a unitary curriculum in medicine, engineering, economy, law, public administration, and other concentrations. Only a small percentage of these graduates find jobs, while others remain unemployed due to lack of job market skills. This predicament continues because the current system of higher education is not responding to the needs of industries and other institutions, failing to train students in fields like economic development and technology to serve the demands of the market in manufacturing, reconstruction, community and social services, and administrative institutions. As a result, public and private institutions have been hiring from talent pools outside of Afghanistan, from countries like Pakistan, Iran, India and others.

This paper recommends that Afghanistan reform its policies on higher education to respond to market demands and help Afghanistan meet its own development goals, including economic growth and reduction of unemployment. As part of this change, Afghan universities should have the autonomy to train students in light of the needs of the region they serve. Modeling this reform after lessons learned from Malaysia, this paper recommends specific steps to initiate reform and support its implementation, including market based curriculum and decentralized educational policy.

The article begins by explaining the relation of higher education and economic development mentioning the ideas and statements of experts in this field. Next, it describes the condition of higher education in Afghanistan narrating the history and its four distinct phases from 1970s to the current situation. In this section, the paper digs deep in describing the current structure and curriculum offered by institutions of higher education in Afghanistan, including the structure and role of the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) and the past rationalizations for the current system. Next it discusses the shortcoming and challenges faced by graduates attempting to enter the workforce, identifying the need for training competency-based employees and graduates that can meet today's market demands.

In the next section, the paper presents a model implemented by the Malaysian educational system, which provides autonomy to the universities to make changes to university curricula to respond to the demands of the labor market. It also describes how Malaysian link their educational system to industries to provide practical field experiences and understandings to their graduates. Furthermore, the paper demonstrates the impact of reforming higher education on Malaysia's economic development. From there, it concludes by explaining how that system provides useful ideas for a similar approach that Afghanistan could adopt, a new educational policy that how autonomy for universities will enable them to respond to the

development needs in a society; how researched based curricula will train graduate the skills they require; how educational institutions are enabled to collaboration with industry; and how universities can set goals in the spirit of Sustainable Development to increase Afghan employment in the market economy, and enhance economic development, in general.

II. EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Education has been considered as an important sector in all nations. For long-term productivity and growth in micro and macro levels, states invest on human capital. High economic development and strong human capital accumulation are deeply intertwined.¹ No country has attained sustained economic development without prioritizing to invest in human capital.² Human capital is the fundamental element of financial growth and probably the only way to attain shared growth when the demand for skills increases by rapidly changing technology.³ Generally, Education is used to develop human beings and shape its behavior by teaching. "Education is what each generation gives to its younger ones which makes them develop attitudes, abilities, skills and other behaviors which are the positive values to the society in which they live."⁴ Education encourages productivity by empowering people to notice the innovative capacities, skill, and technique for doing specific tasks which increases the effectiveness of their individual and social efforts. it's also stated, for development of a society, the educational institutions should produce enough capable labor force with understanding of the needs to increase the growth of the country.⁵ Similarly, education enables an inhabitant to be beneficial in the community by providing the needs of the community for sustainable development. It clarifies that the value of a country's education illustrates the level of its general development.

Education is our great hope for a sustainable future. By taking on the important task of implementing Education for Sustainable Development, we bring the possibility of a more sustainable future to our communities and country. It's crucial to have educated population to plan for the sustainability of the country since, high illiteracy and unqualified labor force in a country limits its development opportunities. Such nations are usually consumers. They don't have other choices except importing their products from other countries. While they also need to extract their natural resources, or increase agricultural activities to collect enough currency for importing products.⁶ When the country is not industrialized enough to produce its needs due to lack of qualified labor force, low level of education or other factors, economies are limited to

¹ Michael Crawford, How do we achieve sustained growth Through human capital, and East Asia and the Pacific proves it, The World Bank, 22, March 2017

² Roman Lopez Et all, The Distribution of Education and Economic Reform, The World Bank Economic Development Institute, (1998) <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/405041468757211292/pdf/multi-page.pdf>

³ Michael Crawford, *supra* note 1, at 1

⁴ Dr. Kingdom Et all, the role of education in national development, 9, EUROPEAN SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL, 312, 313(2013)

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Rosalyn McKeown, Education for Sustainable Development Toolkit, Waste Management Research and Education Institution, 10, version 2, (2002) <http://www.esdtoolkit.org>

resource extraction and agriculture.⁷ Therefore, we need to reform our higher education policy to be able to train qualified labor force, create job opportunities, establish industries and shift from only agricultural economy to industrial economy to increase our development options and plans for a sustainable future. An effective education system should promote both higher education and industry-specific technical trainings.

Understanding all these about Education and its benefits, the next section continues with chronological narrative about introduction and history of higher education in Afghanistan describing the challenges and explaining the four distinct phases of higher education from 1970s to the current situation. In addition, this section will continue describing Legal Commitment to Quality Education; Afghanistan's Obligations Under International Law; and How the Ministry Regulates Higher Education. Furthermore, the Current Fields of Study & Curriculum; Proficiency and Placement Exams; Scholarships for higher education are discussed in detail to provide a general understanding regarding the condition of today's higher education. Finally, this section concludes explaining lack of readiness of afghan graduates for job market and the foreign talent pool filling the void due to shortage of qualified graduates.

III. HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN: A MATTER FOR THE MINISTRY

Afghan universities are not currently capable of helping students develop the skills they need to compete on the job market; as such, the current rates of unemployment among Afghan university graduates are high, employees from other countries are being hired for most high paying jobs in market, and shortages of innovative ideas for establishing new businesses. The universities are currently contributing little to addressing this critical problem. Enthusiasm and optimism for research is low. Professors are not involved in the current and evolving knowledge in their fields. The university curriculums are outdated as a whole, and there is only a small connection between what universities produce and what the market needs. In addition to the above, corruption, mismanagement and high level of centralization are killing efforts to bring change.

As a result of these shortcomings, Afghan university graduates experience a high rate of unemployment, struggling to compete with highly trained candidates from other countries. At the same time, Afghan graduates tend to lack the skills necessary to innovate new companies and businesses on their own. There are reasons for this lack of modern skill and innovation. The highly-centralized design of the Afghan higher educational system is restrictive, with little flexibility or autonomy for universities, preventing consideration of the demands of the evolving economy, the contemporary needs of the country, or the changing world. As a result, students are neither equipped with updated knowledge or soft skills to enter into desirable jobs in the marketplace, nor do they have entrepreneurship skills to create job opportunities by lunching new ideas, businesses, or agencies.

⁷ *Id.* At 11.

To overcome this situation, there is an urgent need for developing a new higher education law with decentralized mandates giving more autonomy to universities for developing contemporary needs curricula considering the demand of the market and communities, and at the same time providing for standards and mechanisms to hold universities accountable for meeting those needs. This paper recommends that Afghanistan work with the Ministry of Education to implement various educational reforms aimed at modernizing higher education practicing and educating students to be leaders in the business and economic sectors. Among these reforms, this paper suggests that Afghan universities adopt a bottom-up approach that (1) fosters skill building for current lecturers to educate them according to international standards; (2) promotes a research-based curriculum; (3) offers a variety of specialties; (4) allocates sufficient resources to support university innovations; (5) links universities and industries to share information and enable relationships between students and potential employers; and finally; (6) implement an apprentice entrepreneurship development model that would channel students into positions of leadership in the national economy. To understand the ways of implementation of this reform, we should have a general idea about the history of higher education in the country; the current condition of it and model to follow.

a. A Short History of Afghan Higher Education

After World War II, many countries around the world took steps toward sustainable development.⁸ Similarly, Removing British invasion, Afghanistan made efforts to stabilize and develop. The situation of higher education in Afghanistan is understood through four distinct phases in terms of its ups and downs that characterizes much of the country's recent history. The stability phase(1970s), the disruption phase (USSR invasion), the civil war phase and post 2001 phase. Each of these periods has impact the educational system with irretrievable losses as well as advantages. Here, we briefly describe them as follows.

Afghanistan had a stable higher educational system during 60s and 70s. The condition of higher education was getting better by educating people and encouraging discussion and debate,⁹ but even in the 1970s, Afghanistan needed to refashion its educational system to enable it to produce graduates with the skill required by the evolving economy.¹⁰ The politicians had been influenced by developing countries accomplishments and the security was better, opening space for new ideas and approaches. The government had designed strategies to persuade student study in technical fields since there was shortage of industrial workers.¹¹ To train qualified workers, Kabul University was equipped well and it was providing education in an acceptable international standard. These incentives and plans were not limited to the capital but there were master plans designed for all major provinces and fundamental infrastructures like rail roads, electricity power

⁸ Francis X. Hezel, SJ, *Recent Theories of the Relationship between Education and Development*, MICSEM.ORG (1974) <http://www.micsem.org/pubs/articles/education/frames/rectheorfr.htm>

⁹ Giustozzi, A., *Between Patronage and Rebellion*, AFGHANISTAN RESEARCH AND EVALUATION UNIT. p 1 (2010)

¹⁰ RICHARD S. NEWELL, *THE POLITICS OF AFGHANISTAN*, p 152 (1974)

¹¹ *Id.*

stations, cotton industries. Unfortunately, the situation did not last longer and it was interrupted by the invasion of the USSR.¹²

After the communist coup and invasion of Soviet Union in 1979, the education sector suffered the most. Schools were burned, teachers were killed, and the remaining scholars escaped from the country¹³ which over all had damaging effects. Later, during the control of communists, great efforts were made to develop the educational system in major cities. The polytechnics were established in different provinces providing technical education which were effective in human capital development. The education was expanded into rural areas, women had the opportunity for education and a massive number of scholarships in different professional fields were provided in Soviet Union countries for training experts in various sectors.¹⁴ In fact, Russian, somehow reconstituted the system.

The condition was getting better but unfortunately all the accomplishments were destroyed again during the civil war and the Taliban conquest.¹⁵ The majority of professionals trained during communist regime were dismissed from their positions. It was the second time that the elites were leaving the country. Not only the qualified work force was scattered but also all the infrastructures were demolished. In 1996, Afghanistan had the highest illiteracy rate in Asia for men and women and only 3% of girls received primary education.¹⁶ During Taliban power women were prevented from education. The home schools for women were operating secretly with high risk.¹⁷ All development sectors suffered severely for ten continuous years.

After the attack of the US on the Taliban Government, there was a commitment for rebuilding an infrastructure for Higher education in Afghanistan which was in a unique situation.¹⁸ Afghanistan needed to start again. Brain Drain or lack of trained personnels, limited capacity of universities, limited specialties, destroyed infrastructure, poorly educated secondary graduate, absence of statistics for strategic plans, insufficient funds were all barriers to self-sufficiency.

Till here, the history of higher education was briefly explained. Now, it's time to have a glimpse at the current situation of HE in Afghanistan. The current situation has these four characteristics: The centralized system; the unitary curricula; the academic and financial dependency of universities; and recruitment, dismissal and promotion barriers. Due to these four barriers, higher education is failing to serve the Afghan people and economy because the unemployment rate is increasing, the graduates lack the skills required by the market, the

¹² Craig M. Karp, *The War in Afghanistan*, FOREIGN AFFAIRS 65 (Dec 1986).

¹³ David J. Roof, Day-By-Day: Higher Education in Afghanistan, 1 U.B.A. L. Rev. 65 (2014) citing, Sau, R., Reconstruction of Afghanistan into a Modern Nation, Economic and Political Weekly, Feb 2002, at 118.

¹⁴ Sam Bennett and Jackie Van Daalen, Education in Afghanistan (1980-2001) 2 Dec 2014

¹⁵ *Id.* At 3.

¹⁶ *Id.* at 7.

¹⁷ *Id.* at 25.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 28.

employers complain and there are fewer entrepreneurship establishments or potential student entrepreneur.¹⁹

Undoubtedly, the long-term war has devastated many of Afghan's systems, but the efforts of the government and international communities to developing an educational system have not been effective.²⁰ The only progress in educational field has been the increase of enrolment. However, the quality assurance strategy, the strategic plans for higher education and the other efforts are not effective because they built on a system and theories that have already proven to be less effective. The centralized educational system, the unitary curricula, the academic and financial dependence of universities, the lack of proper funding and control of the ministry over recruitment, dismissal, and promotion are the barriers within the educational system. The existing challenges and shortcoming requires commitment, expertise, efforts, funds and political will to build the system based on contemporary needs of the country as we can learn from other developed and developing countries in reforming their educational systems. Since we discussed about the history and current situation, now we are moving to explain the constitutional mandate and legal obligation of Afghanistan under international agreement.

i. A Legal Commitment to Quality Education

Under Articles 43 and 46 of the Constitution of Afghanistan, the government must provide a free, effective, quality education through licensure (a bachelor's level).²¹ Education is free at the primary and secondary levels under a unified curriculum. Establishment and operation of "higher, general and vocational institutions" is the responsibility of the government.²² The Constitution also calls for the development of education programs that are "effective" and "balanced."²³

The Constitution of Afghanistan mandates that the Government "establish and administer higher, general, and specialized education institutions."²⁴ Article 45 which calls for a unified educational curriculum concerns only primary and secondary education. Higher education is not included; however, currently all higher education institutions do follow a centralized unified curriculum as well. To support opportunities and competition, the constitution does not only permit private institutions but also mandates programs to support "promotion of science, culture, literature and art."²⁵

¹⁹ Mujib Mashal, *Young Afghans Flock to Higher Education, but Jobs Remain Scarce*, Time (2013) <http://world.time.com/2013/06/28/young-afghans-flock-to-higher-education-but-jobs-remain-scarce/>

²⁰ Bahwodin Baha, *The Present State of Higher Education in Afghanistan*, Discourse Afghanistan (2014) <http://discourse.apn.af/present-state-higher-education-afghanistan/>

²¹ QĀNOON-I ASSĀSI-YE JAMHŪRI-YE ISLĀMI-YE AFGHANISTAN [CONSTITUTION OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN], art. 43, JAREEDA-YE RASMI [OFFICIAL GAZETTE] NO. 818, 1382 [2004] [herein after AFGHANISTAN CONSTITUTION]

²² *Id.* art. 46.

²³ *Id.* art. 47.

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

In addition to these constitutional provisions, the Afghanistan National Development Strategy also emphasizes the importance of a “quality education” for all Afghans.²⁶ This Plan supports a raise in the quality and autonomy of the Higher Education system from its priority policies.²⁷ To address the issue of balanced and effective higher education, the Ministry of Higher Education has established Quality Assurance and Accreditation entity to address and improve the quality of higher education.²⁸

The MoHE understands quality improvement and quality assurance to be of high importance and has included this objective in the five-year strategic plan.²⁹ The regulations are planned for quality assurance and accreditation of higher education institutions and universities under the third and fourth items of Article 3 of the Higher Education Institutions' Law. Under this law, the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Directorate is responsible for quality assurance and accreditation of public and private higher education institutions to encourage quality improvement. This entity functions like an independent entity within the Ministry of Higher Education. The Agency has an autonomous Council made up of seven to nine members selected from among the lists of faculty members to administer the Agency and take decisions. In here, we are shifting from national legal obligation to international agreements.

ii. Afghanistan's Obligations Under International Law

Afghanistan has been showing its commitment to developing higher education in the country by actively adopting international treaties with provisions aimed at improving and setting standards for higher education. To this end, it has signed various treaties with international organizations in order to develop higher education. For example, UNESCO concluded a treaty with Afghanistan on providing technical support on Strategic Planning and Capacity Development for Higher Education of Afghanistan in August 2014.³⁰ Under this treaty, UNESCO provides technical, advisory and financial support on capacity building of policy analysis and planning.³¹ Under this treaty, Afghanistan has committed to developing a strategic plan that considers the recommendations of World Bank and UNESCO. UNESCO will also support the ministry in designing projects based on NHESP as well as monitoring and assisting its implementation.³²

²⁶ Afghanistan, G. o. (2008). Afghanistan National Development Strategy 2008 – 2013. In A. N. Development (Ed.), A Strategy for Security, Governance, Economic Growth & Poverty Reduction. Kabul, Afghanistan: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. at. 114.

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ Afghanistan, G. o. (2011). Bye Laws for Quality Assurance and Accreditation. Kabul, Afghanistan: Ministry of Higher Education. At. 1

²⁹ Prof. Mohammad Osman Babury and Fred M. Hayward, Concept Paper: Establishing a Quality Assurance and Improvement Program in Afghanistan, 28 April 2009.

³⁰ *Strategic Planning and Capacity Development for Higher Education in Afghanistan*, UNISCO AFGHANISTAN (AUGUST 2014), <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/kabul/education/strategic-planning-and-capacity-development-for-higher-education-in-afghanistan/>

³¹ *Id.*

³² *Id.*

Afghanistan has also signed the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development (CAPD) with the European Union.³³ This agreement focuses on management of development support and improving state capacities to deliver civic services.³⁴ Furthermore, the ten National Priority Programs (NPPs) of the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANDPF) also were under consideration.³⁵ The resources provided by the European Union should be spent on these priority development programs which includes education.³⁶ This partnership principally contained a section on promotion of economic growth, jobs and reduction of poverty.³⁷

Afghanistan also joined the World Bank treaty on Strengthening Higher Education Programs, which was concluded in May 2005.³⁸ The goal of this treaty was to focus on Strengthening Higher Education Program (SHEP) for developing the operational progress of the key universities on capacity building and reform.³⁹ It also was focused on building infrastructures for universities such as developing Higher Education Information Management System (HEMIS), installation of lab facilities and management trainings for MoHE staff.⁴⁰

Finally, Afghanistan has participated in a long-term corporative relationship with Germany to promote political stability in the area higher education.⁴¹ Article 3 of this bilateral cooperation emphasizes the development of cooperation among Germany and Afghanistan including formal basic and vocational education.⁴² For the complement of long-term development, the Federal Republic of Germany will support Afghanistan to promote political stability in four areas together with Higher Education.⁴³ The academic collaboration will concentrate on higher education institutions administration, academic research, as well as trainings and establishment of libraries and archives.⁴⁴ Under this agreement, Afghanistan is responsible to facilitate, promote and maintain these facilities to the best of its ability.⁴⁵

³³ *The European Union and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan sign Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development*, EU DELEGATION TO AFGHANISTAN, (FEBRUARY 2017) https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/afghanistan/20834/european-union-and-afghanistan-sign-cooperation-agreement-partnership-and-development_en

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ *Implementation Completion Report (ICR) Review - Afghanistan: Strengthening Higher Education Program*, INDEPENDENT EVALUATION GROUP (MAY 2014), <http://lnweb90.worldbank.org/oed/oeddoclib.nsf/DocUNIDViewForJavaSearch/8525682E0068603785257C4D006EF4B0?opendocument>

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ *Bilateral Cooperation, Afghanistan Germany, Dec. 5, 2011*. <http://afghanistan-un.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Afghanistan-and-Germany-partnership.pdf>

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ *Id.*

Today, GTZ is working directly with the ministries of Education and Higher education. As a result of these efforts, they have programs such as general and vocational schools, institutions for teacher trainings, academic organization, and research institutions. After understanding the international agreements, let's have an overview of regulatory procedures within the Ministry.

iii. How the Ministry Regulates Higher Education

Afghanistan is a highly-centralized country. Currently, all procedures in the provinces are controlled by the central Government.⁴⁶ There have been several efforts by the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) to propose to the Parliament a new higher educational law that encourages decentralization; however, after 14 years and several revisions, this proposed legislation is still pending.⁴⁷ Instead, a presidential decree regulates higher educational system. Article 13 of the presidential decree, gives the Supreme Council of the Ministry all the authority and limits the autonomy of the Universities.⁴⁸ As a result, there is substantial political interference in the appointment of chancellors of the universities, deans of faculties, and even professors.⁴⁹

With this somewhat rigid structure where the ministry must approve all changes, universities have limited power to manage academic issues or design or amend a new curriculum.⁵⁰ Hiring Professors, conducting research, promotions of lecturers, and other major issues currently need the approval of the Academic Council of the MoHE, slows decision-making.⁵¹

The government has rationalized this structure because it does not want universities to be taken over by local politicians since, it was experienced once in Kabul and Nangarhar Universities before the invasion of Russia.⁵² Further, the government claims that universities are not able to administer their activities with accountability⁵³ arguing that giving autonomy to the

⁴⁶ Ahmad Murid Partaw, The Costs of Political Centralization in Afghanistan, FOREIGN POLICY JOURNAL, Nov, 4 2015, <https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2015/11/04/the-costs-of-political-centralization-in-afghanistan/>

⁴⁷ Yahia Baiza, Education in Afghanistan: Developments, Influences and Legacies Since 1901, 236 (2013)

⁴⁸ Decree No. 19 of the president of republic of Afghanistan, Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, Official Gazette, No. 1195 (2015) [hereinafter PRESIDENTIAL DECREE]

⁴⁹ David J. Roof, *supra* note 13, at 73.

⁵⁰ PRESIDENTIAL DECREE, *supra* note 48, art.6.

⁵¹ *Id.* art.6. sec. 6.

⁵² Farid Saydee, A deplorable higher education system, UNIVERSITY WORLD NEW, 4 (Jan 2015)

⁵³ Mohammad Zahir Akbari, Root of all Challenges, DAILY OUTLOOK AFGHANISTAN, Nov 22, 2016 http://outlookafghanistan.net/topics.php?post_id=16732

universities provides opportunities for corruption.⁵⁴ Therefore, all educational, financial, promotional and development decisions are taken by the MoHE.⁵⁵

Notably, since 2001, nearly all ministers have been selected due to political connections, not their knowledge of administration, and in this way, the MoHE has become highly politicized. Other higher level administrative positions, like deputy ministers, the general director, and directors and managers are filled by university instructors under the bylaws within the ministry.⁵⁶ In fact, the only requirements for occupying a higher position in the ministry is the experience of having been an academic member of one of the universities.⁵⁷

The academic council's composition is specified under section 2, Article 5 of the Public Higher Education Law.⁵⁸ This council includes, the Minister of Higher Education, deputies, Finance Deputy of Minister of Finance, Deputy of Ministry of Education, Deputy Minister of Economy, Chancellors of Higher Education Institutions in capital, one professor from the higher education institutions in capital, two chancellors of higher education institutions from provinces, one professor from provincial institutions, one female professor from institutions of the capital, two chancellors of private higher education institutions and the head of the academic council as a secretary.⁵⁹ This council has monthly meetings and decides major issues of the ministry.⁶⁰ After reading about the regulation and procedures in Ministry, we are going to evaluate the curriculum and professional fields trained in the system.

iv. Current Fields of Study & Curriculum

The ministry has a special board that designs a unified curriculum for all universities in the state.⁶¹ For instance, all law faculties teach the same curriculum around the country.⁶² Almost 90% of the subjects taught in law faculty of Balkh University is similar to the subjects in Qandahar University.⁶³ The lecturers do not have autonomy on designing their syllabi because their syllabi must be based on the curriculum established by the ministry; however, the curriculum is less effective in training the students meet the demand of market and ongoing challenges in Afghanistan.⁶⁴

Universities in Afghanistan train students in most standard professional fields of study. In general, there are science and social science faculties, each with their own associated department.

⁵⁴ Frank McNernery, "Policy Options to Finance Public Higher Education in Afghanistan", University of Massachusetts, 76 (2009).

⁵⁵ *Id.* at 108.

⁵⁶ Ahmad Jawed Samsor, Higher Education Reforms in Afghanistan, DAILY OUTLOOK AFGHANISTAN, (July 18, 20016) http://outlookafghanistan.net/topics.php?post_id=15756

⁵⁷ *Id.*

⁵⁸ Misbah Abdulbaqi, *Higher Education in Afghanistan*, 6 Pluto Journals, 99, 107, (2009)

⁵⁹ PRESIDENTIAL DECREE, *supra* note 48. Art 6.

⁶⁰ *Id.*

⁶¹ Frank McNernery, *supra* note 54. at 108.

⁶² *Id.*

⁶³ *Id.*

⁶⁴ Bahwodin Baha, *supra* note 20, at 1.

Some of the main Universities have 15 to 20 faculties,⁶⁵ while others have far fewer.⁶⁶ But despite these offerings, each faculty trains students with only general knowledge about the field of study, and the departments within those faculties are not sufficiently specialized. For example, there are faculties of medicine, but there is no department of medical diagnostic and treatment technology, which is the current need in medical field and job market. Therefore, the job market demands for medical diagnostic and treatment technology cannot be filled by Afghan graduates, so talents from outside the country are hired in these positions. This phenomenon is a concern in every faculty in Afghan universities. In addition, faculties are missing whole departments that train students for important fields of study like manufacturing and processing, communication, and services.⁶⁷ As we apprised ourselves from curricula and identified professional fields, the next step is to be familiarize with the admission procedure to higher education.

v. Proficiency and Placement Exams

After obtaining a 12th grade Certificate, students are required to pass an Examination (Kankore) to enter a specialization degree program in higher education.⁶⁸ The Kankore exam is used by the MOHE to sort students into faculties. Students list their top 5 choices in order of preference and are allocated to faculties based on their grades.⁶⁹ In fact, the majors that students choose for higher education are not usually based on their interest but on the grade they achieve in Kankore exam.⁷⁰ The MoHE, assigns one third of the applicants receiving the highest grades to the universities, while the remaining students either join private universities (which do not have strict entrance examination requirements), the labor market, or wait to re-take exams again the following year.⁷¹ This second chance contributes significantly to the increasing number of high school graduates every year.

From the two thirds of the remaining graduates who did not had chance to attend higher education institutions, some will apply to Kankore exam for the second time and join the increasing number of new graduates. The joint participation of these two collectives raises the number of applicants dramatically, which has been a challenge for the ministry every year.

Women was not allowed to attend schools or universities during Taliban regime. Therefore, strategies were implemented to ease the admission procedures for girls and

⁶⁵ The concept of “faculty” in this system is similar to “schools” or colleges in the U.S. system, like a University’s School of Arts and Sciences, for example, which would house an English department, a biological sciences department, etc.

⁶⁶ <http://ku.edu.af/en/page/753>

⁶⁷ *Id. these information’s are obtained from the home page of universities website.*

⁶⁸ Abdul Ahad Bahrami, Kankor and the Challenges of Afghanistan’s Higher Education, DAILY OUTLOOK AFGHANISTAN, (April 06, 2016) http://outlookafghanistan.net/topics.php?post_id=14913#ixzz4gXvD4Mpu

⁶⁹ Abdul Rahman Sherzad, Using Descriptive Analytics for the Improvement of National University Entrance Exam: A case study in the Context of Kankor in Afghanistan, CORNELL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, (Dec 2016). <https://arxiv.org/abs/1612.01378>

⁷⁰ *Id.*

⁷¹ *Id.*

reintroduce them into the system. Now the number of university applicants from both genders greatly exceeds the capacity of higher education institutions. In some key universities where security is not a concern, the percentage of women participants is higher than it is for men. Demand for higher education is growing beyond the state's ability to provide quality services, and total student enrollment has increased from 7, 800 students in 2001 to 174,425 in 2015.⁷² Universities are resisting larger enrollment requests because of concerns with quality and facilities.⁷³

The most admired faculties in the highest demand are in medicine, engineering, and economics followed by the general sciences and social sciences.⁷⁴ It's not only true inside Afghanistan but students also prefer these fields when the go abroad through scholarships for higher education.

vi. Scholarships

Every year, thousands of scholarships are offered to Afghans by different countries. India, Iran and Pakistan offer about 90% of the scholarships received by Afghan students⁷⁵ followed by Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Japan and some western countries.⁷⁶ Studying in countries with better education systems is helpful for individual Afghans and has the potential to develop capacity for building additional faculties Afghanistan, but the MoE and the MoHE has little influence over who gets sent and what specialties are needed in Afghanistan.⁷⁷ However, when abroad, Afghan students generally choose to study in the same fields that are offered in Afghan universities because those degrees from other countries are appreciated and then those graduates are given priority while hiring compared to students with the same type of degree from Afghanistan.⁷⁸

Under Article 6 of the Regulation on Scholarships, the educational fields of the scholarships should be in accordance to the professional fields needed in the country and there are shortages in medical diagnostic and treatment technology, information technology, industrial technicians and other technical fields.

The MoHE and even the Ministry of Foreign Affairs do not have regular contact with students studying abroad. Some students have a chosen field of study, but poorly educated background, unfamiliarity with new specialties, lack of guidance and information about the demand of the society are the problems challenging the students. According to the Regulations on Scholarships, the ministry of foreign affairs has responsibility to be closely involved with

⁷² <https://www.usaid.gov/afghanistan/education>

⁷³ <http://wenr.wes.org/2016/09/education-afghanistan>

⁷⁴ *Id.*

⁷⁵ 1000 Scholarships from India for Afghan students, WADSAM AFGHAN BUSINESS NEWS PORTAL, (Sep 2016) <http://wadsam.com/afghan-business-news/1000-scholarships-india-afghan-students-academic-year-2017-18/>

⁷⁶ EDUCATION SYSTEM PROFILES, Education in Afghanistan, WENR, (2016).

<http://wenr.wes.org/2016/09/education-afghanistan>

⁷⁷ *Id.*

⁷⁸ *Id.*

ministry of higher education and the host country providing the scholarship but unfortunately, they are not feeling responsible about it.

The other challenge for scholarships is Iran and Pakistan who are offering the scholarships for particular ethnical groups due to political influences in future.⁷⁹ In fact, these countries are not training graduates for the purpose of Afghanistan's future development. Their aims are to implement their future's foreign plans through them in Afghanistan. The reason these two countries have more influence over these ethnic group is that one group share tribal relations with the citizens of Pakistan and the other group share specific religious thoughts with government of Iran. As a result, these scholarships have been ineffective at training graduates in the skills that Afghanistan needs for its economic development.

b. Lack of Readiness for the Needs of Society

An examination of the Afghan labor market is difficult because of a lack of available data, but its future, in terms of development and sustainability, is undoubtedly directly related to better employment opportunities.⁸⁰ Most challenging is the education gaps in some important fields like, manufacturing, construction, agriculture, commerce and mining.⁸¹

Graduate employability and unemployment are challenges that have not been considered in policy implications for higher education in Afghanistan. The employability of higher education graduates is related to different factors like graduates' skills, labor market and educational institutions.⁸² Graduates with higher education and skills are presumably more adaptive, more motivative and have greater learning abilities.⁸³

The current skills of the graduates are not compatible with the demand of the market and sustainable growth of Afghanistan.⁸⁴ The mismatch between the knowledge and skills imparted to Afghanistan's job market is not what is required by employers.⁸⁵ despite the oversupply of graduates, there are jobs that private sector employers have not been able to fill because of the mismatch between industry needs and graduates' qualifications.⁸⁶ The curricula and teaching approaches in educational institutions tend to neglect the improvement of soft skills like critical-thinking and problem-solving which will enable employees to easily adjust to fluctuating

⁷⁹ Ameen Amjad Khan, Pakistan and India offer scholarship olive branch, UNIVERSITY WORLD NEWS, July 2012. <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=2012070318064742>

⁸⁰ *Id.* at. 7.

⁸¹ *Id.* at. 4.

⁸² Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, *Graduate Employability in Asia*. 23 (2012).

⁸³ *Id.*

⁸⁴ Chahrchoube sulhe Wa Enkeshafee Milli Afghanistan [Afghanistan national Peace and development Framework. (ANPDF)] 25, Kabul 1395 [2017- 2021]

⁸⁵ Mujib Mashal, *supra* note 19

⁸⁶ Afghanistan a new destination for skilled Labor, DAWN, Feb 26, 2011, <https://www.dawn.com/news/609190>

demands in the labor market.⁸⁷ For reducing the human capital disadvantage of the graduates, higher risk of unemployment, underemployment and vulnerability in employment, the government, NGOs and businesses train their employees the skill they need in workplace or labor market.⁸⁸ The educational sector provides in-service training to upgrade the skills of teachers, enterprises facilitate business skills training to their employees to supported and enhance their enterprise development productivity and NGOs implement work force development programs to address mismatching skills.⁸⁹

In addition, as explained above, Afghanistan has the highest unemployment rate in the world. The estimated unemployment rate almost tripled in the period from 2011-12 to 2013-14, reaching 22.6 percent of the labor force. The Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey found that the unemployment rate stood at 22.6 percent and the underemployment rate stood at 16.4 percent working less than 35 hours per week. The labor market provides enough good quality jobs to meet the increasing demand of new graduates but the graduates are not qualified enough to attain those jobs. The labor market requires more science and technical graduates. Also, new science and technical graduates do not meet industry needs owing to their lack of crucial communication, technical skills and knowledge. No educational institution in Afghanistan is currently able to equip graduates with sufficient skills according to the demand of service, construction, industry sectors, because the curricula in educational institutions cover general knowledge about the subject while the market requirement is specialized practical skills.

IV. Foreign Talent Pools Filling the Void

Because of the limited local availability of a skilled labor, NGOs, industries, construction companies, hotels, and even governmental offices often hire highly trained foreigners.⁹⁰ According to the First Secretary at the Afghan Consulate, over 100,000 Pakistan citizens are working in professional fields as engineers, doctors, bankers and IT experts and every day, they issue 200 visas only from one consulate.⁹¹ These are the statistics for only Pakistani workers, while the statistics from other countries are unknown because the majority of the worker do not register with the ministry of labor therefore, so we do not have the exact statistics.

Foreign candidates are equipped with subject matter specialties, higher education, and work experience in the field. They are graduated of well-known universities with better

⁸⁷ Bahwodin Baha, *supra* note 20

⁸⁸ AFGHANISTAN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT, The World Bank 11, Report No: T7709-AF (2004).

⁸⁹ Afghanistan: In-service training means teaching basic skills, GTZ, <https://www.giz.de/entwicklungsdienst/en/html/2284.html>

⁹⁰ Hedayatullah Sahel, Out of work in Afghanistan, Afghan Zariza, <http://www.afghanzariza.com/magazine/2014/12/11/out-of-work-in-afghanistan-october-2014>

⁹¹ Afghanistan a new destination for skilled Labor, *supra* note 87.

understanding of the subject. Foreigner candidates are selected through competition and they are qualified enough to match the employers demand. Some analysts believe that “[i]t is important to have foreign experts, advisors and trainers who can help Afghans develop skills and capacity”.⁹² Based on Afghanistan’s labor laws, the priority should be given to Afghans by the employers but the employers always complain about the skills afghan workers lack.⁹³ The greatest skill demands in Afghanistan is the managerial and technical expertise.⁹⁴ Therefore, there are lots of workers in professional fields as managers, engineers, doctors, bankers and IT experts from other countries.

Based on the statistics and estimation of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, around 120,000 employees are working in Afghanistan from other countries from which 20,000 have gotten work permit while the remaining 100,000 are working illegally.⁹⁵ The number of foreign employees are not very high but it is an indication that Afghans are not qualified enough for employers that they hire their employees from foreign talent pools or the international NGOs working in Afghanistan are preferring foreign employees. On the other hand, the majority of employees of Afghani companies outside Afghanistan is also foreigners and international market is not a good competition place for even well qualified Afghans.

We have discussed in details the history, condition of higher education and job market of Afghanistan. from here, this paper going to describe an overview of our model country Malaysia. Additionally, it presents a model implemented by the Malaysian educational system which provides autonomy to the universities to make changes to university curricula to respond to the demands of the labor market. It also describes how Malaysian link their educational system to industries to provide practical field experiences and understandings to their graduates. Similarly, the paper demonstrates the impact of reforming higher education on Malaysia’s economic development. To summarize, this section ends by explaining comparative lessons learned from Malaysia.

V. LEARNING FROM MALAYSIA’S APPROACH TO HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM

After its Independence in 1957, Malaysia was facing educational problems similar to Afghanistan. The majority of the population had no formal schooling, 6% of children had been educated to secondary level and just 1% to the postsecondary level.⁹⁶ While now the enrolment rate is 94%, the primary level education is 87% and there is great progress in other sections.⁹⁷

⁹² Hedayatullah Sahel, *supra* note 91.

⁹³ *Id.*

⁹⁴ International Monetary Fund, Afghanistan national development strategy, an Interim Strategy for Security, Governance, Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction, IMF Country Report No. 06/194, (May 2006).

⁹⁵ Hedayatullah Sahel, *supra* note 91.

⁹⁶ STRUCTURAL POLICY COUNTRY NOTES, MALAYSIA, 3 (2014). <https://www.oecd.org/dev/asia-pacific/Malaysia.pdf> [hereinafter COUNTRY NOTE]

⁹⁷ *Id.*

Despite this progress in educational outcomes, Malaysia has struggled with graduate employability in the last decade.⁹⁸ Policy makers designed the National Educational Strategic Plan, which was launched in 2007 to address unemployment and improve overall quality of education to provide skilled graduates to the market.⁹⁹ While the unemployment rate is growing now in Malaysia, this is due primarily to other reasons like urbanization and youth population growth. To train market-based graduates, the Malaysian government devised some approaches, that could serve as useful models for Afghanistan. These approaches are discussed in detail in section Higher Education in Today's Malaysia below.

Modeling Malaysia is not mainly based on its similarities or differences with Afghanistan. In fact, Malaysia has considered some specific international standards in reforming its educational system like, teacher trainings, curricula, link with industry, entrepreneurship programs and decentralized education. According to the literature, these factors are crucial in reforming educational system for the purpose of economic development. In addition, Afghanistan lacks the above-mentioned criteria and has been facing challenges due to their shortages. On the other hand, Malaysia has also established international Islamic University, and invited some other international universities branches which are serving for higher education there. These last to options are not practical due to security and economic situation in Afghanistan although, there is a branch of American University. In the final analyzes, Malaysia is selected as model for Afghanistan to learn from and specific steps are recommended to initiate reform and support its implementation.

a. Higher Education in Today's Malaysia

The Malaysian Constitution is the main source of law for higher education,¹⁰⁰ describing the fundamentals of higher education. The educational system is further defined and described through the Education Act 1996 (Act 550), the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act, 1996 (amended 2009), the National Council of Higher Education Act, 1996 and Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act.¹⁰¹ The Education Act enables the Council to plan, formulate and determine national policies and strategies for the development of higher education on the areas or courses of study to be undertaken by higher educational institutions.¹⁰² Chapter 7, Section 2 of

⁹⁸ ENHANCEMENT OF GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT, MALAYSIA COUNTRY REPORTS, 9 (2009). <http://www.kln.ac.lk/uokr/ASAIHL/Malayasia.pdf> [hereinafter COUNTRY REPORT]

⁹⁹ *Id.* at. 1

¹⁰⁰ Charles J. Russo, Handbook of Comparative Higher Education Law, ROMAN & LITTLE FIELD EDUCATION, 178 (2013)

¹⁰¹ The Malaysian Higher Education System, STUDYMALAYSIA.COM, March 14, 2015, <https://www.studymalaysia.com/education/higher-education-in-malaysia/the-malaysian-higher-education-system-an-overview>

¹⁰² *Id.*

the Education Act 1996 supports skill training, specialized training related to specific jobs, and training for the upgrading of existing skills.¹⁰³

For raising educational quality and competing with developed nations in training high skilled graduates, Malaysia started to train high quality instructors who could handle the complex educational and social needs.¹⁰⁴ The Ministry achieved this by expanding the extant teacher-training curriculum to bring a balance between pedagogical content knowledge and teaching skills related to development in the 21st century.¹⁰⁵ This approach also distinguished between teacher quality and teaching quality.¹⁰⁶ The main goal was to improve the quality of instructors and to advance their academic credentials. There was also a focus on better teaching standards. Efforts were made to persuade training graduates who admired the profession and really like to teach.¹⁰⁷ They also implemented a performance-based contractual employment system, which served to eliminate teachers with deficient performance.¹⁰⁸

One of the main ways that the government in Malaysia overcame the unemployment problem was by modifying its curriculum to match the requirement of current labor market.¹⁰⁹ The Malaysian Qualifications Agency came up with Malaysian Qualification framework, which was accountable for quality assurance of higher education.¹¹⁰ This entity reviewed the curriculum of all of the programs of study in Malaysia to confirm the structure of the program and the number of credits.¹¹¹ The emphasis was on learning outcomes. As part of this analysis, they calculated the student learning time. This process has helped Malaysian Universities increase enrollment, confirm the process of ongoing improvement, and increase employability among the graduates.¹¹²

In addition, by providing greater autonomy to universities in curriculum delivery and learning methods, the Malaysian government has enabled learning methods with a better flexibility in their work to improve student performance through creative, innovative education practices.¹¹³ This political will has been key to the success of this shift.

¹⁰³ LAWS OF MALAYSIA, EDUCATION ACT 1996 (act 550), Incorporating all amendments up to 1 January 2006 chap, 7 Sec, 2 at. 5.

¹⁰⁴ COUNTRY NOTE, *supra* note 97. at 6.

¹⁰⁵ COUNTRY REPORT, *supra* note 99. At. 12.

¹⁰⁶ COUNTRY NOTE, *supra* note 97. at 6.

¹⁰⁷ *Id.*

¹⁰⁸ *Id.*

¹⁰⁹ Nooriah Yusofl, Zakiah Jamaluddin, *Graduate employability and preparedness: A case study of University of Malaysia Perlis*, Malaysian Journal of Society and Space, Issue 11, 131 (129-143) (2015).

¹¹⁰ COUNTRY REPORT, *supra* note 99. At. 9.

¹¹¹ *Id.*

¹¹² *Id.*

¹¹³ COUNTRY NOTE, *supra* note 97. at 6.

b. Linkage between educational and economic institutions

Malaysian Universities have also established close relationships with economic institutions. For training potential employees, familiar with the business practices, products, and services, universities equip graduates with soft skills; industry-based experiential learning programs, and an on-line platform to link graduates with potential employers.¹¹⁴

In addition, Malaysia offers an Online Practicum Student Placement program that enables companies to post their positions and the required qualifications and then select potential students accordingly.¹¹⁵ [Related to this online program, a reality show is designed to allow graduates to compete with other students and illustrate their talent to the employers for being selected.¹¹⁶

Another program, Pribumi Investment Camp, is designed for practical business based experimental approach to develop soft skills of the graduates.¹¹⁷ The partner industries support this experimental training in three stages.¹¹⁸ Investment and trading competition; leadership and personal skill developments; and three-month practical trainings with investment houses and corporate bodies.¹¹⁹ This model was introduced to Malaysia by a group of entrepreneurship researchers from Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Laos.¹²⁰ This approach has three phases: Self Development; Business Exposure; and Industrial practical training.¹²¹ The program goals are to train and expose student on a continuous basis; to collaborate with a pre-identified business entity to develop potential student entrepreneur; to take entrepreneurship as an alternative career choice for the student; and to assist the country in developing more entrepreneurs among the graduates.¹²²

c. The impact of Higher Educational Reform on Malaysian's Development

The mechanism of educational reform in Malaysia was based on international standards and modern theories applied in other countries. Its early to expect substantial changes on economy of Malaysia since it has only been ten years that Malaysia took its first step toward educational reformation but still there are impressive data released by World Bank about Malaysian development.

The World Bank envisages that by 2050, the human capital upgrades in Malaysia will enable them to reach the income level of high income economies.¹²³ This finding of the World

¹¹⁴ COUNTRY REPORT, *supra* note 99. At. 13.

¹¹⁵ *Id.*

¹¹⁶ *Id.*

¹¹⁷ *Id.*

¹¹⁸ *Id.* at 14.

¹¹⁹ *Id.*

¹²⁰ *Id.*

¹²¹ *Id.* at 15.

¹²² *Id.*

¹²³ Raising Productivity Growth Essential for Malaysia's Progress towards High-Income Economy Status, THE WORLD BANK, (19 Dec 2016). <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2016/12/19/raising-productivity-growth-essential-for-malaysias-progress>

Bank illustrates that the educational reform for developing human capital in Malaysia has been effective which is training qualified labor force that will make Malaysia a high-income country. An Enterprise survey has found that Malaysia is doing well in some areas and education has been one of the main potential driver for productivity.¹²⁴ Beside proving education a factor for productivity, it also indicates that the educational reform is successful. The existence of qualified labor force has improved private sector which reduced unemployment and enhanced governmental income tax.¹²⁵ Living condition of Malaysian has an overall improvement with Less than 1 percent living in extreme poverty. Now the government focus is on the bottom 40%.¹²⁶ Income inequality is gradually declining. In between 2009 and 2014, there is a real average growth on household incomes of the bottom 40 by 11.9 percent per year which is 7.9 percent for the total population of Malaysia.¹²⁷ It indicates a gradual improvement toward income equality.

d. Comparative Perspective: Lessons Learned from the Malaysian Experience

The Malaysian approach could be very valuable to Afghanistan as it seeks ways to improve its response to the needs of higher education and the economy. First, the political will in Malaysia has been critical to its success, an area upon which Afghanistan could improve. While in Malaysia politicians and authorities have enacted laws supporting higher educational reform and also approved sufficient funding for better improvement of the system, in Afghanistan, they have assigned insufficient budget but also most the authorities are not in favor new reforms and changes. Afghanistan could benefit from this same kind of emphasis in its own programs.

In addition, the speed with which the Malaysian legislature has been able to respond to the problem of higher education can be instructive. In Malaysia, enacting new laws for supporting the ministries of education has not taken long time as it is in Afghanistan. The politicians in Afghanistan just say that improving the educational system is the government's priority but only approving the law for the ministry of higher education is taking them 14 years.¹²⁸ Political power in Afghanistan is centralized and difficult to change.¹²⁹ One of the most reformist law was proposed by a minister in 2003 to synchronize the system with democratic

¹²⁴ *Id.*

¹²⁵ Malaysia Economic Monitor December 2016: The Quest for Productivity Growth, THE WORLD BANK, (2016) <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/malaysia/publication/malaysia-economic-monitor-december-2016>

¹²⁶ Malaysia country overview, THE WORLD BANK, APR 2017 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/malaysia/overview>

¹²⁷ *Id.*

¹²⁸ Claudio Franco ET Al, The long history of enmity between parliament and government, AFGHAN ANALYSTS NETWORK, July 2013, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/tit-for-tat-and-worse-the-long-history-of-enmity-between-parliament-and-government/>

¹²⁹ Frank McNernery, *supra* note 54.at 66.

developments in country and provide institutions autonomy with ensuring accountability.¹³⁰ His proposal was never accepted.

Politicians believe that it is hard to transform the culture in Afghanistan, arguing that the system is Soviet-like and centralized. They are skeptical about westerners who want to implement ideas like democracy, decentralization, and a market-based economy, all at once for the country, when there is little capacity to accept and apply these concepts in practice.¹³¹ In Malaysia and other countries, however, decentralization and providing autonomy for educational institutions had enabled them to respond to the needs of the society and helped them toward development.¹³²

The funding model of Educational system in Malaysia also has been approved to the need based model¹³³ which allows the Education institutions to facilitate their institutions according to the needs of the current development necessities.¹³⁴ The economic situation of Afghanistan does not allow unlimited fund for the educational system but it is worth investing. On the other hand, all public universities in Afghanistan also do not have the capability of being autonomous. Therefore, the recommendation for Afghan government specially to the ministry of higher education is to purpose some fundamental change in educational system.

First, regarding the budget, the government claims that higher education is a priority, but we cannot observe it from funding higher education. In 2010, \$ 552 budget per capita basis was granted while it dropped to \$ 443 in the last years.¹³⁵ Moreover, Afghan government under Afghanistan National development strategy has committed to advance the skills of the Afghan labor force to be more productive and compete more effectively.¹³⁶ If it in the strategy plan, there is budget for it. The only institution which can achieve this goal is the ministry of higher education. Therefore, the budget needs to be increased. The government always complain about limited resources but the budget in other sectors are wasted and not administered properly.¹³⁷

The government can minimize the budget for some other sectors to increase in educational system instead. It refers to the political will. There also should be a mechanism on the expenditure of the funds spend directly by donors for the development of the educational

¹³⁰ *Id.* at. 104.

¹³¹ *Id.* at. 66.

¹³² Chen Li, The Changing Landscape of Higher Education in Malaysia and China, INSTITUTE OF MALAYSIAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA, 14 (Sep 2016).

¹³³ COUNTRY NOTE, *supra* note 97. at 7.

¹³⁴ The World Bank, Financing Higher Education, chap. 4, 113.

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EASTASIA/PACIFIC/EXT/Resources/226300-1279680449418/7267211-1318449387306/EAP_higher_education_chapter4.pdf

¹³⁵ Fred M. Hayward and Mohammad O. Babury, The Struggle to Rebuild and Transform Higher Education in Afghanistan, INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION, No 81, (2015)

¹³⁶ THE WORLD BANK, HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN "AN EMERGING MOUNTAINS CAPE." (2013)

¹³⁷ Jacob Siegel, The Afghan Money Pit: How Millions of Dollars Were Wasted, The daily beast. Oct 2013, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/the-hero-project/articles/2013/10/30/the-afghan-money-pit-how-millions-of-dollars-were-wasted.html>

system. The funds spend by international donor are outside the domination of the ministry.¹³⁸ It is a fact that the corrupt system of the government is the main cause that donors implement their project out of the reach of the ministry but it has been less effective. Therefore, every project should at least be under the supervision of the ministry focusing the educational strategy goals and its maintenance in future.

The other issue is that the majority of university instructors in Afghanistan do not have pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills because they did not ever had chance to attain the training through standard mechanism.¹³⁹ The system is designed that any new lecturer should spend few years under the supervision of experienced professors to be directed and supervised to obtain teaching skills, but this not happens all the time due high load of classes and minimum number of instructors.¹⁴⁰ Most of the lecturers join the class lectures from day one of their career without any pedagogical knowledge and try to find a better teaching methodology during their teaching period, which takes long and makes the system less effective.

Similar to Afghan professors, Malaysian professors once were not qualified to train highly skilled graduates. The ministry of education in Malaysia expanded the teacher training curriculum and tried to bring a balance between pedagogical content knowledge and teaching skills related to development.¹⁴¹ Doing so, they just improved the quality of their teachers. We cannot take this method because all of our university instructors are not graduates of teacher training institutions but it is a need for Afghanistan's higher educational system to implement a compulsory teaching skill training for all instructors in public and private universities to bring a balance between pedagogical content knowledge and teaching skills related to development in the 21st century and to qualify instructors for advancing their academic credentials. In between semester, in summer and winter breaks, the lecturers are able to participate in workshops and seminars. The ministry of higher education needs to arrange teaching skill training workshops and seminars in every regional university. Doing so, the lecturers will not only be able to obtain pedagogical knowledge but they also will have the opportunity to share their ideas and thoughts with each other. It's also stated in article 11 section 9 of the higher education law that the ministry should run short and long term programs for capacity building academic professionals of the universities.

As Laurel Terry, in her article, International Initiatives that Facilitate Global Mobility in Higher Education states, teacher and staff exchanges, joint courses, collaborative summer programs, and thematic networks among departments and faculties of the universities is one of

¹³⁸ Michael Igoe, SIGAR looks into 10 years of US aid to Afghanistan, DEVEX, Jan 2014, <https://www.devex.com/news/sigar-looks-into-10-years-of-us-aid-to-afghanistan-82734>

¹³⁹ Rahima Baharustani, Comprehensive Study of Higher Education in Afghanistan, AFGHANISTAN INVESTMENT SUPPORT AGENCY, Research & Planning Department, 14 (2012)

¹⁴⁰ *Id.*

¹⁴¹ Bismillah Khatoon Binti Abdul Kader, Malaysia's Experience in Training Teachers to Use ICT, ITC IN TEACHERS EDUCATION, P, 8 http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ict/e-books/Teacher_Education_Case_Studies/Malaysia_s_Experience_in_Training_Teachers_to_Use_ICT.pdf

the practical approaches for better teaching skill trainings.¹⁴² furthermore, Afghanistan should implement performance-based contractual employment to eliminated the teachers with poor performance as they did in Malaysia.¹⁴³

Currently, when a lecturer is employed in public universities of Afghanistan, there is no practical procedure of elimination when there is a weak performance. The current procedure is ineffective because when there is a lecturer who has a bad attitude or poor academic performance, the faculty should advise him, the next step is warning, then a warning letter from the faculty academic council, next the university academic council needs to be informed and finally it is referred to the ministry academic council and they will decide to transfer him/her from one university to the other which is a long procedure and happens very rare. On the other hand, transferring an unqualified lecturer from one place to other place is not the solution. Its stated that the lecturers with poor qualification and academic background were employed by the people in power due to political or ideological affiliation during the war and the government were not able Replace them due to lack of a clear and transparent elimination procedure.¹⁴⁴

The unemployment of the majority of the graduates, the complaints of the employers and the shortage of entrepreneurship establishments by the graduates indicates that the curriculum of the higher education in Afghanistan is not training the students according to the spirit of sustainable development or the demand of the market economy. It is the similar situation once Malaysia was suffering from. So, the law of higher education of Malaysia obliged the ministry to update the curriculum according to the requirement of the 21st century. The ministry decided to try another approach rather than designing a unitary curriculum.

Considering the fact that the curriculum should be based on the requirement of the society the higher education serve, it should be researched based and needs to evolve as the time pass, the ministry handed over this responsibility and autonomy for the universities to establish their curricula and refashion it as needed. Having this responsibility and autonomy, the universities studied about the demand of the market and the knowledge and skills employers, enterprises and economy requires. Finding that, the universities tried to respond to the demands and tried to update the curricula accordingly to support the economic development of the society.

Learning from Malaysia and other countries approaches, the ministry in Afghanistan can also retract the unitary central based curriculum and persuade the universities to reshape their curriculum to support the graduates with soft skills and abilities that could help them be more active, effective and self -sufficient. It is agreed that universities are currently not capable of fulfilling this responsibility at the beginning, but they can start under the supervision of the ministry and gradually they will gain experience and become more self-reliant. The universities

¹⁴² Laurel Terry, INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES THAT FACILITATE GLOBAL MOBILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION, Michigan State University College of Law, Mich. St. L. Rev. 305 (2011)

¹⁴³ COUNTRY NOTE, *supra* note 97. at 6.

¹⁴⁴ Farid Saydee, *supra* not 52. At. 4.

can easily reach their surroundings to do research using their available resources for understanding the societies demand and focus on them while designing their curriculum to response the needs of the economic market. Decentralization, especially in educational sectors will allow the universities to be more creative and innovative.

While designing the curriculum, practical sessions are a must to teach the students the work field practices to not to put them in a hard time when they wanted to enter the market. Similarly, the employers also struggle to find the right employee meeting their requirement. To solve these issues, the universities in Malaysia have established a relationship with the enterprises. This linkage had allowed the universities to reform their curriculum accordingly for teaching graduates the exact skills and knowledge essential for the enterprises. Likewise, Malaysia, Afghan graduates also lack soft skill and are unfamiliar with work field practices. Therefore, the relationship of educational and economic institutions is crucial for both to decrease the unemployment rate of the graduates and provide the right potential employees for the businesses. The online practicum student placement, the reality shows, the training camp or something similar can help afghan graduate meet the demand of the employers.

Developing entrepreneurship programs for starting small and medium enterprises had been helpful in decreasing the graduate unemployment rate in Malaysia. Equipping graduates with entrepreneurship skills does not only fills the vacancies but it has the potential to create new jobs and carry the country toward development. Industrial based projects are very rare in Afghanistan due to several reasons. One of the reasons is the scarce of potential capabilities of self-employment. Only 3.7% of the workforce is hired by the industries. Some people do have the credit or the banks and other entities provide loans for small and medium businesses but the obstacle in front of them is the knowledge of starting a new business. Some are afraid of investing while others lose their investment due to poor administration. So, entrepreneurship approach is also one of the ways to train skillful graduates for the economy market. The continuous collaboration among pre-identified business entities and educational institutions will pave the way to obtain the knowledge and experience of being a potential entrepreneur. It promotes self-development, business exposures and industrial practical training.

Till here, the paper described all its analyzes by studying afghan higher education, model country and lessons learned from it. Now, it concludes with recommendations by explaining how that system provides useful ideas for a similar approach that Afghanistan could adopt a new educational policy by explaining how autonomy for universities will enable them to respond to the development needs in a society; how researched based curricula will train graduate the skills they require; how educational institutions will be enabled to collaboration with industry; and how universities can set goals in the spirit of Sustainable Development to increase Afghan employment in the market economy, and enhance economic development, in general.

VI. RECOMMENDATION FOR REFORMS WITHIN THE MINISTRIES

a. Autonomy for Universities

The centralized governmental system of Afghanistan has only been beneficial for the handful number politicians who wants to govern the country. The claims that it is hard to change and the system is Soviet like and centralized, are excuses they make to keep themselves in power. Decentralization, especially in educational sectors will allow the universities to be creative and innovative. It is a fact that these achievements are not going to happen in a glance but it has been proven in Malaysia and other developing countries that this model has enabled the universities to compete and try reach the developed countries by applying their strategy plans with changes as needed. On the other hand, independence of the universities will enable them to respond for the need of the society and provide them opportunities to be ranked among international universities.

Currently, the ministry of higher education is in favor of providing only financial autonomy for universities similarly, the purposed law of Higher Education has not still been passed by the parliament. It's at the position of presidential decree. As stated earlier, the political support in Malaysia, by enacting new laws and approving sufficient budgets has been effective. It has enabled the higher education institutions with full autonomy to response the economic needs of the country. Learning from Malaysia, the Ministry of Higher Education in Afghanistan can include the autonomy idea of some major universities and convince the legislators to approve it.

Currently, the public universities in Afghanistan do not have the capability to be autonomous. Therefore, this paper recommends first focusing on only on few of the major universities. Kabul University, Kabul Medical University, Kabul Polytechnic University, Balkh University, Nangarhar University and Herat University are the key public universities of Afghanistan. If they are given autonomy in administration, human resources, financial and academic management and student intake, there will be an atmosphere of competition among these universities. Which encourages the incentive for being excellent among local institutions of higher learning.

By providing autonomy for these universities, the ministry can have a close monitoring stand for few years to confirm its effectiveness. The ministry can also develop a mechanism for transparency and accountability of these universities. It's obvious that extra funding is crucial for conducting researches and establishment of new infrastructures. While, there are some other opportunities for these universities to invite more income. One way is to charge for services. Conducting research for governmental and private organizations are a good way of increasing universities income. On the other hand, students who are pursuing their higher education in private universities are preferring these public universities. Besides the students who are coming through the Kankore Exam and taught for free based on the constitution of the country, the universities can establish some extra classes during the day or night sessions to welcome students who are paying to study. They pay for private universities anyway but they prefer public universities than private once. Currently, there are some night shift schools in these universities which are charging the students but they are limited to few educational fields, limited number of

students, and the charges are less than a hundred dollars per semester which much lower than private universities charge.

Some may argue that if there are opportunities for admission of more students in these universities, why are two thirds of Kankore participants are not accepted by them. The answer could be that these night shifts are established to invite funds for universities and from this budget, the universities can pay the professors and other expenses needed for the university. Others may also ask that there are already nightshift schools. Yes, there are but very limited students and it's not opened for all students like private institutions. For instance, from 17 faculties of Balkh University, only 6 of them have nightshift while the other remaining can also establish it since they all have the resources like teachers and space. Private higher educational institutions are now good business in Afghanistan. once the universities gain their autonomy, they can use privileges and opportunities for financial benefits which allows them not to wait for directions and guidance of the ministry for implementation of new necessary project or for reformation needed in university.

Certainly, there are top officials within the ministry, the president office or in the parliament as mentioned above who are against decentralization of higher education but unfortunately, beside the unrest and war, centralized mechanism has prevented universities, specially the key once to be innovative, self-sufficient, and productive to respond the development needs of the country.

b. Research based curriculum

Even the ministry authorities know that the current unitary curriculum of the higher education is not meeting the demands of the country. The only possible way is to update it according to the requirement of the 21st century. Even if the new law does not support autonomy of the universities for designing their curriculum, the ministry of higher education can argue that the unified centralized curriculum is only for primary and secondary education while the higher education does not come under article 44 to have unitary curriculum. The Constitution starts discussing about higher education at article 45 and never emphasis on unitary curricula but it clearly describes that the curriculum should be "effective" and "balanced." So, it is the responsibility of the ministry to refashion the curriculum based on researches on the developing market.

The ministry currently has an entity that reviews the unitary curriculum but some major universities of the capital have complete domination on that entity to design the curriculum according to their specialties. The curriculum committee of the ministry is comprised of experienced professors from central universities. It is believed that these are the only authentic individuals with best understandings from the culture, environment and needs of the country to prescribe an effective curriculum for the system.

In fact, they are well experienced but there are two concerns. First, they are old enough to be familiar with current technology and development of the world to study about other countries

approaches in reforming their curriculum. Secondly, the curriculum is influenced by their specialties obtained decades ago which is definitely far from the current needs of the society. Therefore, designing the curriculum must be researched based and should emphasis on the learning out comes and the effectiveness of learned knowledge for developing the society as Malaysians did.

As its discussed in autonomy section above, if these key universities gained their independence, they can develop their curricula. It's also mentioned that basically these universities well be assigned the research based status and the funding will be provided to them and they also well have income from the services they provide or the aids they receive from NGOs supporting higher education. Once they had the authority to design their curricula, every faculty can conduct researches for developing their curricula. The faculties understand that they train student for which field or professional areas. They can study what type of skills are required for their graduates in work field. Faculties can do interviews or surveys of graduate, the employers, economists, governmental or private institutions about the skills they require or the knowledge the graduates lack. Understanding the requirements, the faculties can adjust their curricula in accordance to the needs and develop it with practical cessions to equip graduates with understandings they need in work field.

c. Collaboration with Industry

Employers in Afghanistan has always complained about the skills and practical abilities of the graduates. The Ministry of higher education is in need of applying the same or similar approach that Malaysia and other countries have taken to address the matter of employers complain. The linkage between universities and economic institutions is crucial. The issue of soft skills and unfamiliarity of the work field practices can be resolved through practical work by support of the industries under the supervision of the university. Therefore, it is a better idea to mimic this model and design the system accordingly to train potential employees. The online practicum student placement, the reality shows, the training camp or something similar can help afghan graduate to meet the demand of the employers.

In fact, these ideas are clearly explained above that how Malaysian implemented them and connected their educational institutions with industries. Unfortunately, we are not in the same situation as Malaysia was. Its stated earlier that due to insecurity, lack of experts, domination of neighbor countries, lack of entrepreneurship understandings and political will, there are insufficient industries in the country. The culture of professional businesses based on research, technology and innovation is also not appreciated. Mostly, the businesses are in traditional ways which do not invest on researches for their promotion or do not support the universities with the facilities of training the students in their work filed. Donations for public service organizations are also not common. First, the universities can develop ideas to encourage industries to break traditional approaches and appreciate researches and innovation as well as donations or public interest services. Second, the faculties can also design a work field atmosphere with advices from the employers, GOs, NGOs and private sectors to train students the exact skills required for them

after graduation. The programs like online practicum student placement or the reality shows as explained above are also effective in connecting graduates with potential employers.

d. Setting goals in the spirit of Sustainable Development.

Entrepreneurship, self-employment and starting small and medium enterprises are the best ways of reducing youth unemployment. The latest statistics about Afghanistan shows that only 3.7% of the labor force is hired by construction and industries, 5.2% is in service sector while the remaining is either in agriculture sector or unemployed. It means that the high unemployment rate is not only due to lack of skills and experience of the graduate but the major issue is the shortage of job opportunities. The apprentice entrepreneurship model of Malaysia is the best approach for addressing this problem. It is the relationship of the universities and businesses that provide the environment of self-development, business exposures and industrial practical training. The universities must develop program and train students on a continuous basis to collaborate with a pre-identified business entities for obtaining the knowledge and experience of being a potential entrepreneur which enables them to open more job opportunities. Establishing small and medium business can distribute the wealth, eradicate poverty and sustains the future development of the country.

VII. CONCLUSION

In fact, it took very long for developed countries to reach where they are now. The developing countries were less fortunate on that time to catch them but they are fortunate now. As it was experienced by Germany, Germany catch England and united states in a shorter period of time than they themselves reached there. The only strong reason behind Germanies success was using the developed countries researches, approaches and methods in developing their countries. The failing possibilities for Germans were very low, because Germans had chosen proved methods while England itself had tried different ways which took longer time. Similarly, Afghanistan can also experience the development methods of other countries in reforming its educational system for training potential employees for the market and decreasing the unemployment rate. Therefore, renewing the higher educational law supporting development programs, improving quality of the instructors, designing researched based curricula, decentralizing the higher educational system, establishing link between universities and enterprises, applying the need based fund system and implementing the apprentice entrepreneurship development model are the ways that Malaysia had come up and promoted it is educational system. Afghanistan sharing similarities with the past situation of Malaysia can follow this model to address employability of the graduates and sustain its economic development.

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