

# **Private Universities and their Role in Community Development**

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## **Abstract**

A well-developed community construction is a realchallenging but necessary for many nations. An ideal community should realize all economic, social, material and spiritual needs of each and every one of its members. With the increasing impact of globalization, community development has also come under the purview of universities. As nations race towards creating knowledge-based economies, it has become even more important to equip people with higher education for further improvementthe quality of human capital. Furthermore, universities have had to evolve with the needs of the community – through programs, infrastructures, delivery methods, technologies and philosophies that can reflect the community’s demands and attitudes.

The private universities and institutions need to "think global and act local" in order to enhance internationalization, while taking regional needs and differences into consideration. The findings of this study are valuable in inspiring professionals and policy-makers to further formulate effective educational policy in this country.

# 1. Introduction

Building a well-developed community is a formidable but necessary challenge for many nations. An ideal community should fulfill all economic, social, material and spiritual needs of each and every one of its members; and meeting this end requires educated, skilled and competent people. From this angle, it is clear that education is an essential instrument in any community development strategy.

With the increasing impact of globalization, community development has also come under the purview of universities. As nations race towards creating knowledge-based economies, it has become even more important to equip people with higher education as a means to further enhance the quality of human capital. Consequently, universities have had to evolve with the needs of the community – through programs, infrastructures, delivery methods, technologies and philosophies that can reflect the community's demands and attitudes.

Universities play a crucial role in generating new ideas, and in accumulating and transmitting knowledge, yet they have remained

peripheral to development concerns. Although no longer the sole generators of knowledge needed for development, through their research.

and teaching they help to produce expertise, manage development, social transformation, and preserve social values and cultural ethos.

The mere presence of a university is of major importance for an Iraqi economy. Universities directly and indirectly provide jobs and infuse purchasing power into the local economy. Moreover, the presence of a university also attracts new firms. But many universities in Iraq want to assume a more active role in furthering the socio-economic fate of the Iraqi community.

The notion of development suggests more than just growth (Cavaye, *ibid.*). When we speak of growth, we may mean more jobs, more schools and more infrastructures. However, the term development indicates an actual improvement in conditions, e.g. better healthcare, less environmental damage, better living conditions and better investment for the good of the community. This, I believe, is an important thing to

understand: that the idea of community development means that the community engages itself in a process to improve its own economic, social and environmental status.

Central to this effort is the need for human capital – people with the right frame of mind, the right attitude and most importantly, people with the ability to use education and knowledge to create this public good. Even in its most basic form, education (or rather the lack of it) influences people’s ability to understand and communicate; it creates barriers where there should not be and it can seriously impinge on a country’s ability to participate in a global economy. Illustrating the importance of educating people, Professor Sen chose to quote Japan’s Fundamental Code of Education:

*“No community with an illiterate family, nor a family with an illiterate person.” (p.111)*

This Code, issued in 1872, is a remarkable declaration of the importance of educating a community, and indeed, an entire nation. Not only is this vital for Japan, but also making education, the foundation for a

community development strategy, should be a target for every single country.

Today, communities need universities and higher education more than ever before. Universities serve the people; they help develop skills, create knowledge and train leaders. They are at the center of crucial research, through which a country can stimulate innovations as well as attract foreign investments and engage in scholarly and scientific commerce. When universities are given the opportunity to thrive, they can also help to promote an open, modern, civil, tolerant and democratic community – for it is only through higher education that deeper ethical and moral values can be inculcated.

In essence, the role of private universities in community development is to create a sense of equity for all individuals within that community. In the long run, it will prove vital for every single member of the community to have the opportunity to seek education and gainful employment, just as it is important to ensure that the community has access to basic social needs like housing, healthcare and nutrition. The private universities and institutions need to "think global and act local" in

order to enhance internationalization, while taking regional needs and differences into consideration.

## **2. The aim of the research**

This paper will examine the role of private universities in community development as well as explore the contribution in enriching the community's knowledge potential by creating an equitable, flexible and democratized access to higher education. And how private universities in education contribute to the community development process and will also explain the role of private universities in fostering development and enriching the community's knowledge potential, particularly in today's knowledge-driven, globalized and borderless world. The establishment of private universities; and how can leverage on technology, including e-sources. The importance of lifelong learning as a pillar for human capital development is also examined.

## **3. Literature Review**

There are a large number of reports and theoretical works on quality from the perspective of quality assurance and quality improvement. In many of them, research scholars have identified different views on the

issue of quality education and its determining factors. However, a very limited amount of empirical work is available on this particular issue in the case of Iraq private higher educational organizations. Andaleeb (2003) analyzed seven issues crucial for effectively fostering higher education namely, teaching quality, method, content, peer quality, direct facilities, indirect facilities and political climate (p.2).

Sabur (2004) compared private and public educations on the basis of quality assurance. He discussed several points of debate rather than prescribing any solutions to problems regarding the quality of education associated with the two different platforms. Spanbauer (1992) discussed the need for educational institutions to institute quality policies. Lamanga (2002) highlighted three different aspects involved in measuring quality education in private universities: the quality of teaching and research, responsiveness to the demands of the labour market, and equity. Dhali (1999) emphasized techniques related to student evaluation procedures, which he classifies as either formative or summative.

In Lamanga's (2006) report on quality assurance in tertiary education, he recommended several initiatives that can ultimately ensure a quality education system for the higher learning institutions in the country. Aminuzzaman (2007) noted that most departments of universities do not have a long-term national vision, but that such a vision is crucial to quality education. According to Aminuzzaman (2007):

Quality education in universities will be achieved through changing the method of teaching and learning as well as assessment methods, renewing the curriculum continually, updating and upgrading professional knowledge and skills and improving the broader educational, administrative and resource environments.

Actually, the student/lecturer interface is important in determining quality, and it is appropriate to seek to monitor this quality through appropriate quality assurance processes. Though this is a superficial approach, the real challenge is the enhancement of quality. Different institutions have started to investigate approaches to quality enhancement (Rowley, 1996, p.13). A paper by the Further Education Unit (1991) offers six criteria for a quality model: (1) it seeks to improve the quality of teaching and learning strategies, (2) it is flexible, (3) it harnesses the

commitment of all staff, (4) the learner should be involved, (5) there must be enhanced working relationships associated with all functions of the organization, and (6) requirements can be measured and progress can be demonstrated.

Hart and Shoolbred (1993) seek to emphasize the relationship between quality and culture; it is relevant to mention that quality management is after all related to how people act, and that this element of action is manifested in an organization's work atmosphere and culture. If further and higher education institutions are proceeding to make serious moves towards effective quality assurance, they need to be aware of how much the culture may have to change. This may be highly uncomfortable for senior management and for the entire workforce of the institution.

With respect to the cost of private university education, Kotler (2003) is right to mention that cost is a foregoing measure or an exchange price or sacrifice made to secure a benefit. Hence, the cost of education, according to Kotler, means the sacrifice made or price paid by the beneficiaries (students) so that they can achieve the specific objective of learning.

Private colleges might be more cost efficient than public universities. For instance in Malaysia, cost per student in public universities for Information Technology is six times higher than in private, three times higher in Arts and Social Sciences and Medicine and Dentistry, and twice as high in Engineering and Technology subjects. Low per student expenditure might be technically (cost) efficient while failing to satisfy student requirements precisely or maintaining high teaching quality. On contrary, higher per student expenditure might indicate superiority in teaching quality as well as the intention to provide a wider and more socially desirable curriculum.

The concept of economic efficiency takes account not only of the level of average unit cost but also of whether demand is fully satisfied and resources allocated precisely to the satisfaction of demand. Thus economic efficiency is achieved when consumer demands are satisfied precisely at minimum costs. It might be interesting to explore how far this is the case through further examination of other relevant indicators.

Comparisons of student–staff ratios between and within institutions can be used as indicators of efficiency and quality of the education provision

(Fuller 1986; Johnes and Taylor 1990; UNESCO 1999; World Bank 2000). So, we can compare faculties within an institution and also faculties across institutions to give a guide to academic efficiency and possibly quality. The ratios could also be compared with world standards; for instance in Britain, the average student–staff ratio amongst its 100 top universities is 17.37. Ratios in Social Sciences are even higher, up to 20 students per teacher. Thus, a comparison by faculty would be safer. This gap might demonstrate the different degree of efficiency in terms of economies of scale, and also quality in both types of institutions. The higher student–staff ratio in private colleges might indicate, as mentioned above, that these colleges are more efficient than the public universities, on the other hand, it might also indicate that these colleges are offering an inferior quality of education.

#### **4. The development of higher education around the world**

The argument that private higher education reduces the financial burdens of governments is a possibility rather than a reality. In many countries, private sector education receives substantial funding and grants from the State. For example, Tilak (1991, p.227) discovered that

in most developed countries, State subsidies cover more than 90% of the recurrent expenditure of private institutions and that, in Sweden and Canada, the government provided the capital needs for private institutions. Levy (1986, p. 173) revealed that implicit subsidies or indirect government support is an important source of funding for private universities in the USA. He quoted that, roughly 85–90% of scholarship money in California goes to students in private universities, while private enrolments form only 10 to 12% of the total. In Belgium and the Netherlands, the private and public universities received equal funding from the State (World Bank 1994). In Japan, some 21% of private higher education expenditure is covered by State subsidies. Geiger (1987) argued that State subsidization in Japan originated from the desire to maintain many private institutions that had failed financially and faced closure. Similarly, in Thailand, where only 30% of the students attend private institutions, the ratio of government to private expenditure on higher education is 93:3, (Malakul, 1985). In Uttar Pradesh in India, Muzamil (1989, p. 247) discovered that 77% of the government budget on higher education takes the form of aid to private colleges.

These findings raise doubts about some of the claims made in favor of the expansion of private sector provision. The issue is much more complex than might be thought at first sight and the national context is obviously crucial. In particular, it is questionable whether private sector higher education is economically efficient or it offers better quality of degree programs than the public sector. While it is impossible to present general definitive answers, we shall present some new evidence for Iraq on these issues.

## **5. The role of private sector higher education**

The debates on the role and potential benefits of privately provided higher education range from the broadly social to the narrowly financial and reflect the wider debate on the role of the private sector in the modern economy. The most frequently advanced economic arguments in favor of greater private provision are that it improves efficiency, giving greater accountability and increased diversity of choice and access from the increased resources flowing into education. (Patrinos, 1990; World Bank, 1995; Sanyal, 1998). From the financial point of view, the burden on government expenditure and resources is reduced.

Patrinos (1990) and Balan (1990) for instance, have argued that the major advantage of private sector higher education has been responding more quickly or efficiently to market demands. By providing the type of education most in demand, the private sector responds to the needs of the economy and society, and graduates typically experience lower unemployment rates, and get better-paid jobs (Jimenez and Tan 1987; Patrinos 1990).

The objectives of privatization and corporation of higher education were to reduce the financial burden of the State in the provision of higher education and to increase the access to higher education to fulfill the ever-increasing demand for tertiary education, to improve the efficiency of the organizations and to ensure the relevance of the courses to national labour requirements (Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2004,p.17). They should also increase their links with the industry and orientate their courses to meet the manpower needs of the economy.

The corporate culture of management is not confined to the corporatized universities alone but are being adopted by all the public and private tertiary education institutions in the country. The benefits resulting from

the adoption of business management techniques in administering academic institutions in terms of efficiency, cost, quality of teaching and learning, research output and the morale of the staff are as yet unknown.

The rapid growth and expansion of the private educational sector was in response to the demands of a knowledge economy brought about by globalization and to fulfill the increasing social demand for higher education in the country. The liberalization of the private higher educational sector was legitimized by the enactment of six educational instructions in the mid 1990s. Another factor that contributed to rapid development of this sector was the failure of the public universities to respond to the changing needs of the globalized environment.

This process of democratization of the higher educational sector has given rise to a dual system of education with different distinguishing characteristics. These dual systems have grown separately, with little interaction between them.

On the other hand the private higher educational sector's growth has been market-driven. It pioneered the transnational model of higher

education where degree courses from foreign universities were delivered locally. It introduced a variety of new innovative courses in keeping with the changing demand of a knowledge economy. Business corporations entered the private higher educational sector, developing it as an industry, and co-modifying education. The big players also displaced the small colleges run by the educationists.

## **6. Conclusion**

Previous findings have reported results that are based on purely theoretical considerations. Given the circumstances, the present study takes the initiative to conduct an empirical investigation based on a new approach that evaluates the quality as well as the cost of education in the private sector of Iraq. The findings from this study are valuable in guiding professionals and policy-makers to further formulate effective educational policy in this country.

In order to test whether private colleges concentrate only on courses that are most profitable, we first examined student enrolments. Demand may be expected to be higher for technical and vocational courses that offer a reasonable return within a short-term period so that private colleges may be expected to concentrate on Engineering, Information Technology and Business Studies.

It can be seen that Education and Applied and Pure Sciences are not offered by the private sector. This is likely to result from a lack of demand for these kinds of course because first, sufficient places have been supplied by public universities, and second, their relatively low

rates of return to the student compared to other degree programs.

As assumed that the aim of the private sector is to maximize profit, it might be expected that private colleges would have a higher student–staff ratio and would employ substantial numbers of juniors and presumably less qualified academic staff in attempt to reduce their cost. In contrast, public universities in spite of minimizing the costs of provision need to maintain a minimum level of quality in an attempt to increase the number of graduates. Consequently, public universities would be expected to have lower student–staff ratios and possibly to employ substantial numbers of senior academic staff with relatively better qualifications compared to those in the private sector.

## دور الكليات الاهلية في تطور المجتمعات

لينا فتحي صديق

مدرس مساعد

قسم اللغة الانجليزية

كلية التراث الجامعة

### المستخلص

ان بناء هيكلية المجتمع المتطور هو موضوع صعب و يعتبر من الضروريات للامم .ان المجتمع النموذجي يجب ان يشخص الاقتصاد المناسب و الحاجات المادية و المعنوية لكل شخص .ومع تصاعد تاثير العولمة على المجتمعات فان التطور الاجتماعي اصبح من اختصاصات الجامعات .ان سباقات الامم باتجاه الاقتصاد المبني على المعرفة و التكنولوجيا الحديثة اصبح اكثر ضرورة لبناء المجتمع المتطور من خلال التعليم العالي و هنا يظهر دور الجامعات لتوفير الحاجات الاجتماعية من خلال البرامج و الاساليب التكنولوجية و الفلسفية التي تعكس المتطلبات الاجتماعية و اتجاهاتها .يهدف هذا البحث اظهار دور الجامعات الاهلية في توفير المتطلبات التكنولوجية و الكوادر الاجتماعية التي تخدم المجتمع .

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