

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



March 04, 2015

## Increasing Number of Substandard Private Universities!

It is almost more than a year that Higher Education Commission started issuing authority to large number of Institutes of Higher Education to use the title of 'University'. Before this, only state universities were using the name of university while private sector could only use 'Institute of Higher Education.' These private institutes were offering diploma and certificate programs and also a number of Bachelor's programs but after getting the title of a university, they started offering Masters Programs as well and now, a number of these universities are offering MBA, MSC and MA in Social Sciences. Evidently, it seems to be a progress in the level of our private sector institutes that they upgraded their standards and became universities, but in fact, no change was brought except to change the name of the institute and call it a university instead of an institute. According to unofficial sources, almost all these institutes got this special permission by giving a handsome amount of money to the officials of Ministry of Higher Education and all the set standards and requirements were bypassed in the acquisition of this new status. According to international standards, many things are needed to establish a university. It needs a faculty having PhD degrees, earned from the recognized and prestigious universities of the world. Similarly, a university must be built on a big area containing all the standard requirements of a university like libraries, separate departments, their well-equipped labs, a separate and well-organized administrative block, cafeterias and even gardens. It means that a university must be established on a big piece of land with a heavy investment on infrastructure. In case of Afghanistan, these conditions are met only by a limited number of state-owned universities. Kabul University is one of them and we are all aware that it is established on vast area with all the necessary requirements.

On the other hand, none of the private, so-called universities meet the required standards. Majority of them have been established in small bungalows and they don't have almost any of the above mentioned facilities. They usually have a very small library where there is not present the standard system of library management. Majority of them don't have standard laboratories and it is the reason why, hardly any practical work is carried out in these universities. Majority of their teachers are themselves university graduates or are the teachers with a Master's Degree from Pakistan. It must be made clear here that in Pakistan and in some universities of India, a Master's degree can be acquired after 16 years of education while internationally, it must be equivalent to 18 years of education. However, there are also reports that many teachers are working on fake degrees that can be easily obtained from Pakistan and some parts of India. In the same way, the online degree holders are discouraged to teach in universities while there are many teachers in our so-called universities who have obtained their degrees online. Similarly, the system of examinations in these universities is not valid and trustable. The examinations are conducted by the staff members of the university and as they charge heavy fees from students so usually, no one gets failed in these exams and are given the university degree without checking the level of their knowledge. Cheating, plagiarism, copying from other sources and assignments and all the ill-practices are the permanent part of the system of evaluation of these universities. In the same way, the standard of making final thesis and assignments is questionable and their poor standard is a question mark for the authorities of universities and Ministry of Higher Education. These universities charge heavy fees from students but thanks to large number of these universities being opened in almost every street of major cities, the fees are now decided upon by the market competition. As a matter of fact, these universities have been established with sole intention of making money and almost no university has the professional dedication expected of such prestigious institutes. In this case, parents and students have been left on the mercy of these so-called universities and authorities of concerned ministry make no interference as long as they also keep receiving their share in the lot.

These universities are also notoriously famous for the lack of attendance and if students keep paying their fee on time, it becomes the responsibility of university administration to show full attendance of the student. Once again, concerned authorities make no interference in this regard. Due to these and a number of other factors, our so-called private universities are generating like a machine thousands of university graduates with poor academic level. Majority of them lack proper knowledge of their field and they cannot be compared to the university graduates of any country. It is the reason why, our local and international businesses, organizations, NGOs and even the same universities don't trust our graduates and they try to hire foreigners. It is the reason why, large numbers of professionals from neighboring Pakistan, India and many other countries of the world are working in Afghanistan while we have a big lot of unemployed university graduates. In the same way, degrees issued by our so-called universities are not accepted outside Afghanistan and it doesn't help them at all. Due to these harsh realities, we are producing a large group of young, frustrated people who have a degree in hand but no actual knowledge and they are hardly accepted anywhere. This trend of higher education is really dangerous for the future of the country and concerned authorities need to take serious notice of this.



## Disregarding Education has Made us Suffer!

By Asmatyari

To me, nothing is more inspirational than seeing the innocent smiles of my students around the school. They come to school every day to learn a single letter or digit with excitement. Just as these individual characters contribute to making a perfect student, the often trivial contributions of billions of people throughout the history has made the world that we live in. Similarly, it inspires me to believe that my work, even if small, has contributed to the betterment of my community", said the Azizullah better known as Aziz Ruyesh, the chairperson of Merefat High School on the eve of award winning ceremony of Global Teacher Prize. This is indeed a great win by an individual who earned us fame and cognition, and is worthy of grand deal of appreciation. Passing through severe ups and down since its creation, Merefat High School, always tried outperforming other schools in every aspect of human learning that helped establishing its very recognition far and wide equally in the country and abroad. In 2014 Merefat High School had 4000 students, 44% of which were girls. Of its 450 graduates, 148 pursued their studies in high schools and universities abroad that year. The school is registered as a tax-exempt, nonprofit educational institution and provides financial aid to over 400 of its students each year. This is the right time we transform an individual's effort into collective goal in the pursuit of excellence. Undoubtedly, education inflicts enormous impact on overall progress of a nation. The nation's development is anchored on the foundation of skilled based education that never falls behind in the hunt for collective advancement. Sound economy provides firm basis for vibrant success, pulled off through countless efforts exercised to educate the masses. This is affirmed by renowned economist and Nobel Laureate Robert Solow who described the growth of national income as having three sources: increases in the stock of physical capital (machines and buildings that are used to produce goods and services), increases in the size of the labor force, and a residual representing all other factors. This residual contributed considerably more to per capita growth than the increase in the capital stock. This is called "neoclassical" or "exogenous growth". It describes the immediate impact of increasing the amount of education per worker by 10 percent would be to increase GDP by only about 4 to 5 percent. Also, in the type of model used in those studies an increase in the rate of investment leads to an increase in the level of GDP. Education is one of the necessities of the humans and, therefore, a prime responsibility and obligation of the states and governments to impose it without any regional or class discrimination. Many states like that of ours, myopically perceive the fate of nation guided by foreign investments or donations which is unarguable fallacy. It is the right time, to realize, education economy can duly carry us along the avenues of long-lasting success. Without giving education first priority we can't keep pace with technological, innovative and scientific advancement the world has attained. The education itself is a proof to the progressiveness and development of the nations. The most developed nations in the worlds have most developed and best education systems while, the underdeveloped, struggling ones and one with the bad economy and global ranks have the bad education systems when compared

to the developed ones. Pearson recently, released their global report on education. This report takes a look at major factors in education, such as expenditure per student, GDP, graduation rates, etc. The finding of report asserts, East Asian nations continue to outperform others. South Korea tops the rankings, followed by Japan (2nd) etc. All these countries' education systems prize effort above inherited 'smartness', have clear learning outcomes and goalposts, and have a strong culture of accountability and engagement among a broad community of stakeholders.

It's indeed surprising to know that the children in South Korea attend school often seven-day a week and handsome sum of budget is allocated for education. The national education budget estimated last year was \$11,300,000,000. The literacy rate is total 97.9% out of which males are sharing 99.2% and 96.6% of females. Korea is one of potential economy of the world and is the member of Organization of Economic Co-operation Development (OECD) and the G-20 major economy. Korea's economic development and prosperity is a proof to its development and innovation in education.

Japan, despite investing in childhood education is compromised in rankings stands second. Japan is the member of G-8 giant economies and is estimated to be 3rd largest economy. The Japanese have dominated in the world from the last three-quarters. The technology-based educational structure has provided the nation with some great figures in the knowledge and insight. The strong education has made the country rank in top numbers among the world's strongest economies. The aforesaid two states did their best to bring true the real dream of their success. On the contrary, the state of education is aggravated in this piece of land. By 2013 there were 10.5 million out of 27.5 million population attending schools in Afghanistan. About 35% of its population is unemployed and 36% live below the national poverty line, suffering from shortages of housing, clean drinking water, and electricity. On United Nations' Human Development Index Afghanistan ranks 175th with nation's GDP stands at about \$34 billion. This is far less than Japan's spending on education. According to data available on site of ministry of education; over 5000 schools are without usable buildings, boundary walls, safe drinking water or sanitation facilities; 90% of qualified female teachers are located in the nine major urban centers (Kabul, Herat, Nangrahar, Mazar, Badakhshan, Takhar, Baghlan, Jozjan and Faryab); no female students enrolled in grades 10-12 in 200 of 412 urban and rural districts; 453 schools are still closed or have been damaged in the past two years, resulting in 300,000 students deprived of schooling; and, some 11 million adults remain illiterate.

The worries do not end here, in fact the teacher equally worst affected by dysfunctional education. The information available confirms, 73% of teachers lack the minimum required qualification of grade 14 graduation and are in need of professional development; over 5,000 of Educational Institutions do not have usable buildings which has a direct impact on quality of education. This is the worst state of affairs when the incumbent government is silent on the declining effectiveness of educational system and its immediate negative effect on the holistic rise of a nation. We need our government turn Azizullah to avert the disgruntled fate of afghan nation

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## Afghan Girls - The Victim of Violence

By Hujjatullah Zia

The women in the long-term shelter try to cheat sleep by huddling together in the dark, their voices a way to ward off nightmares. The torments they endured at the hands of their families are written on their bodies. Knife scars traverse their faces and necks. Beatings with chains mark their backs. Some limp from broken bones that were never properly set. Several have faces eroded by acid, a favorite weapon here. Daily life is an endless effort to escape the haunted precincts of memory; images of pummeling hands, the thumping sound of wood hitting their legs, of their bodies falling to the floor, the taste of blood in their mouths." According to a recent report, Gul Meena, a 16-year-old woman, survived a brutal attack by her brother after she fled an older husband, who had beaten her, and eloped with another man. She had been just 8 or 9 in her home in Kunar Province on the Pakistan border when a man in the next village offered money to her unemployed father for her. In her innocence, she was thrilled to be given a white dress and makeup for the wedding ceremony. "I was thinking, this is the future, my husband would be buying me new clothes every day," she is quoted to say. In the car on the bumpy ride to her new home she remembers addressing her new husband as "uncle." "Uncle, please take care of me. I'm afraid I will fall," she said as she bounced on his knee in the car. From the moment she arrived in his house, she was a servant. The only grace was that he was not allowed to have sex with her before she had her first period. Two years after they wed, the moment came and he forced himself on her. "I was like a thing and they sold me," she said. "He was beating me with everything near to him. With his glasses, with his mobile phone, with wood, with stones, and with his hands." Lonely and bewildered, she tried at least twice to return to her father's house, but the family sent her back to her husband and finally she went to a neighbor's home. The husband of the family ran away with her to Nangrahar Province in eastern Afghanistan. When her brother caught up with them, he slit the man's throat and slashed Gul Meena 15 times with an ax, nearly blinding her and leaving her for dead. When she woke up in the hospital, she looked in the mirror. "I was very damaged," she said. "Before, I was beautiful and young." Although she does not see herself that way, she is still a stunning young woman. She has never gone to school but speaks with a simple eloquence. Now she fears that she is ugly and no one will marry

her. "Men are always interested in the beauty of a woman," she said. "They are never interested in the heart." In the patriarchal society of Afghanistan, women are the invertebrate victim of violence. They suffer fractious attitudes, honor killings, physical tortures, etc. in one way or another. Women confront unsavory problems in their domestic and social life. The connubial strife, forced marriage, restrictive measures, which root in tradition and stereotypical frames of mind, and so on galvanize Afghan girls and women to seek sojourn in shelters - founded by Western financial aids.

However, taking refuge in shelter, which is against Afghan culture and moral values, provoke anger from parents and family members. A girl, who seeks haven in Western-founded shelters, will be deemed to have besmirched her parents' character and violated the cultural taboo. Hence, since her family members pursue her like a shadow, her freedom will be curtailed and her life in great jeopardy. She would live a worrisome life - fraught with terrible nightmares of hirsute killer stabbing her to death - and unable to breathe a sigh of relief. To put it succinctly, her life would change into burning hell. Those who are caught or wheedled to return home are killed in a fit of pique for being considered a scandal to her family.

Women's social life is also threatened by Taliban militants. For instance, in the Taliban-dominated areas, the girls' schools are razed to the ground and they are threatened to death in case of attending schools. Moreover, women are urged to come out with especial clothing - they mostly present in public with burqa.

Additionally, the women involved in political issues have to be highly wary of their life-safety. A number of Afghan women representatives survived terrorist acts and some lost their family members in ambushes. According to Taliban's ideology, women are born to live within the four walls of domestic life, engaged with household chores. Going into politics will be construed as violating religious taboos. As if women are born merely to satiate men's carnal desires and to be fully subjugated to them - it is what the religious fundamentalists believe. Ill-fatedly, women are yet considered inferior by the traditional frames of mind. Some innocent girls are sold in exchange for money - despite their strong sense of antipathy towards this business. Succumbing to a large amount of money, fathers coerce their daughters into marrying old men. In such a case, the girls either have to yield to their fathers' order or choose to elope or take refuge to the shelters. So, to preclude girls from eloping or seeking haven to shelters, parents have to stop imposing their ideas on their daughters and give up treating her cruelly.

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