

# The Role of Private Sector in Higher Education; From Quantity and Quality to Access and Social Justice

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In current issue of the Journal of Medical Education, Dashti and Yazadni in their comprehensive article “Factors Encouraging the private section to invest in Higher Education of Iran” proposed the main indicators which could facilitate the investment in higher education by variety of private sectors. They conclude that there are several different groups that can bring their financial resources to the higher education system to promote its quantity and quality. And also they claim that Iranian Laws and regulation in higher education will entitle these investments. They also proposed that the higher education system should facilitate this process and to encourage the private sector should reduce the risk of investment and try to reshape the culture of educational systems to accept this investment.

It is obviously undeniable that there is an agreement about private financial investment in higher education all around the world. The private sector can remove a financial burden from the state and can help to generate skilled and competent graduates. The private sector involvement in higher education could be in many different ways, as the provider of infrastructure, support services, educational materials and software, to becoming a deliverer of education. And the last one is the crucial point that needs more attention. Although delivering higher education is often happen with the full approval and endorsement of the public sector, but it seems that it could blur the old principles and also boundaries and this may result in some concerns.

Therefore it is instructive that in the advent of the private sector in higher education, the perspectives of all key stakeholders should be mentioned, as each of them may have and will have different views particularly in regards the financial impact.

Governments’ attitudes are not all related to finance and they may welcome the willingness of the private providers to extend the higher education but the private sectors will find it hard to meet any political criteria of equity and easy access, because their fees will usually not be affordable by all levels of society.

In addition, the private sectors usually support disciplines that are favored by the market; therefore Governments often face a conflict between their pleasure for increasing the private sector’s role in higher education and the implications of it for national developmental goals and equitable access policies.

In conclusion we can say that in terms of equitable access to higher education and also mentioning the national developmental goals, balancing between the private sector motives and the social justice standards could be difficult. *Ipsa facto*, searching for encouraging factors for private sectors investment in higher education without placing some strong and firm grounds to guarantee the fair access of all socioeconomic subgroups of society and establishing an evaluation system to direct the private sectors investment in concordance by the national goals and perspectives is

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not complete and justifiable.

The Journal of Medical Education welcomes the opinions and also experiences in this regard, especially in the field of medical higher education.