



Privatization of Medical Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran; Main Policies According to the Packages for Reform and Innovation in Medical Education

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Dear Editor,

Nowadays, higher education not only plays an essential role in the economic growth and development of countries, but also is the road to wealth creation. Recently, medical education has attracted growing attention, and the past two decades have witnessed increasing global contribution of the private sector in medical education (1). Privatization of medical education refers to a process or tendency of colleges and universities (both public and private) to take up the characteristics of, or operational norms associated with, private enterprises to achieve maximum efficiency, productivity, and revenue (2).

Privatization is focused on maximizing the autonomy of universities in decision making, promoting scientific independence, developing new financial resources, and minimizing governmental involvement. Factors that lead to the growing popularity of the privatization of medical education include the growing importance of a knowledge-based economy, demographic changes, altered public attitudes toward education and increasing demand, the emergence of new technologies, the lack of financial resources, and the inability of governments to pay all educational costs (3). Most countries face increasing demand of admittance to colleges and universities, while lacking financial resources for the development of medical education through public financing. Therefore, taking into account

the challenges and opportunities of a partnership with the private sector, it is possible that the gap between high demand and low supply can be addressed with proper planning and policy making. However, a clear-cut model that provides appropriate guarantees for investors is essential to realize the partnership and advancement of investment.

Given Iran's significant progress in the fields of health and medical sciences, there is a unique opportunity for investment in this area. At this time, the Islamic Republic of Iran is experiencing a reform of medical education (4). The deputy of education in the ministry of health and Medical education provides the essential requirements to facilitate and promote investment in this sector through developing evolution and innovation packages in medical education (5). This is an appropriate opportunity for domestic and foreign investors. One of the main initiatives to demonstrate the educational capabilities of Iranian universities in the field of medical sciences is the launch of a comprehensive website entitled "www.educationiran.com." Currently, over 1400 programs for various degrees and majors have been introduced to the website to begin admitting students (3).

To promote a private sector partnership in medical education, all necessary actions and requirements should be taken and specified. Undoubtedly, intersectoral and intra-sectoral collaborations (especially with the banking sys-

tem) are vital to progress in these partnerships. The preliminary tasks include anticipating new channels of revenue, guaranteeing capital, and creating a safe and stable investment environment. Also, the fundamental principles and policies for the privatization of medical education in Iran are as follows: international collaboration, meeting the national needs, procedural (step by step) partnership, fixed price, integration of health services in medical education, students' participation in paying tuition fees, as well as identifying noble methods of wealth creation. In order to translate these policies into action, important steps have been taken: a, establishing private institutions with an emphasis on collaboration among the world's prestigious universities; b, fulfilling the country's demands for regional spatial planning regions through the outsourcing of educational services; c, partial outsourcing of educational services to private hospitals; d, private sector partnership in holding clinical fellowship courses; and e, outsourcing other processes, such as accreditation, planning, the revision of curriculum, and educational management of the schools and universities.

In all the stages of partnership attraction, the ministry

of health and Medical education, as the custodian of medical education, is committed to effectively playing its supervisory role.

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