Chapter 4 Higher Education Reforms

4.0 Introduction
Owing to the demand-supply mismatch, this chapter will discuss about the reformation of the higher education policy towards the changing condition and challenging labor market. Following are some suggestions for higher education reforms.

4.1 Creating Structures to Implement Policy Reforms
Higher education systems are the products of successive, often un-articulated government and private initiatives over a fairly long period of time. Higher education planning is a relatively recent policy innovation, coinciding in most developed and developing countries with the application of human capital development theory to educational investments and the assertion of state responsibility for the higher education sub-sector. The co-ordination of government investments in degree and diploma granting institutions, in public and private institutions, in fundamental and applied scientific training and research, poses complex issues for policy makers to address. Which investments should have the highest priority? What criteria should be used to allocate resources among the competing demands of the institutions and programs that comprise the sub-sector? How should public and private costs be distributed?

There is a need for the government to have effective policy making structures to co-ordinate and plan higher education investments, control growth, foster new initiatives and influence the behavior of students and institutions.
4.2 Enhance Quality

As public demand for higher quality graduates increase, education policy for higher institution should gear towards the quality control. Higher education institutions should introduce a system for supervising or assessing quality as a result of both external and internal forces. Quality of graduates should be improved so as to match national manpower requirements.

Turtle (1994) suggests that the most acute external pressure facing public colleges and universities is a reduction in the public funds received. There is fewer taxpayers today support to fund the higher education system then in the past. In addition, there has been a rapid and enormous expansion of the university sector. The dramatic increase in the student population has not been matched by the increase in appropriate funding which is vital to safeguard quality. It is generally acknowledged that quality will suffer when resources diminish. Allegations that quality and standards are falling tend to produce the reaction that checks and controls are needed (Pearce, 1995). As a result, people have become more critical of authority (Pearce, 1995) and are no longer willing to place total confidence in the ‘ivory tower’ image (Craft, 1992) of tertiary institutions. On the other hand, they expect evidence that higher education is providing good quality and value for money. This has been coupled with increasing demands from government for accountability in the expenditure of public funds in an environment where greater accountability and openness on the part of the professions have become the norm (Pearce, 1995).

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Another external pressure for quality comes from business and industry. In industry, in commerce, in government circles and now in higher education, the world 'quality' is on everyone's lips: quality controls, quality circles, total quality management, quality assurance, and so on (Frazer, 1992). The maintenance and enhancement of quality, and attempts to define and measure quality, are now major issues for higher education in many countries.

To deal with these external challenges, the internal structure and environment of higher education need to change accordingly to keep pace with the unprecedented demand for quality. However, it is not uncommon for higher education to find that its management structure and culture make change very difficult. Existing management systems are outmoded and can no longer ensure success in an increasingly competitive world (Turtle, 1994).

As the demand for graduates' quality increase, higher education's challenge is to maintain or achieve a high level of standards in order to meet the market demand for education as well as to meet labor market demand for its output. Thus, quality and accountability is the principal themes in higher education policy debate. Issues such as maintaining academic standards and financial accountability to the government will attract much attention as competition between private and public institution for students become more severe. Higher learning institutions are subject to increasing pressure for greater cost effectiveness, and even cost reductions, as well as maintaining and improving quality.
Higher education today should improve the quality of graduate training by encouraging creativity in graduate learning by offering students the possibility of choice of subjects and involving them in research and individual work from the first years of higher education. This will enhance their skills and employment opportunity.

4.3 Offer Relevant Course

Course offered by local public universities should become increasingly relevant, as new information and technologies related to national progress is developed. As the development of MSC will be the thrust of economic growth and many related jobs are created, new courses should be designed to meet the market demand. University graduates should be much equipped with both the knowledge and skills required for participation in accelerated national development. Besides this, faculty must increasingly teach from a basic of understanding derived both from a study of efforts of others (past and present) and from experience gained through involvement in meeting real needs of the region and people served by the university. Nor should the study of the humanities and social values be ignored, for these are determinants of the ways knowledge and skills will be used. New courses such industrial micro-biology, bio-mechanical engineering, manufacturing technology engineering, bio-medicine, e-commerce and so on should be introduced to produce appropriate and adequate supply of professionals particularly in high-technology industry and service sectors.

4.4 Increase Private Costs

The government should shift much of the burden of costs of higher education to those receive it through a system of tuition and loans. This will reduce the social costs and increase the private costs of higher education. The demand for higher education will gear towards labor market demand. Scholarship reduces private costs of education. It serves as an incentive for students to strive for academic excellence and enhance their skills and competence. In line with this, students' higher education loan should be turned to scholarships provided that they are excel in academic and are highly skilled. This kind of good quality graduate is highly sought by the labor market.

4.5 Produce Graduates with Multiple Skills

Technology is the foundation for development of new products and processes. It leads to more effective utilization of capital, human and natural resources. Consequently, resulting in high productivity and improve competitiveness. In line with this, market demand for graduates with technical knowledge and skills also increase. Higher institutions today should reform the courses structure to train student with multiple skills in order to meet the market demand in this information technology age.

4.6 Promote IT Industry

The role of IT in improving efficiency and effectiveness as well as enhancing competitiveness in business, public sector and among the citizens is now an integral part of the country's development strategy. IT use has accelerated in the last few years in communication, information, recreation and business activities. Multimedia Super
Corridor (MSC) is the most important milestone of the IT development programme. The MSC will provide the catalyst for the synergistic of related IT industries and products and create the enabling environment for orderly development of IT in the country. The MSC has led to the emergence of new service-based industry clusters, including software development, telecommunications, animation, production and broadcasting, provision of on-line services, education and training, R&D and networks and broadband applications. The development of MSC will generate more job opportunities and increase graduate’s demand in the field of IT-related skills, knowledge and expertise as well as high-tech areas.

4.7 Tax Exemption

The government should give incentive such as tax exemption and pioneer status to foreign and private institutions to encourage them to offer courses in engineering, medicine, information technology, and emerging technology that have wide market demand. With these incentives, the Ministry of Education will have to make sure facilities provided are up to the international standard and are compatible with those provided at the parent institutions.

4.8 Increase Capacity

Increasing the existing capacity of higher institutions and establishing new ones, particularly in science, engineering and technical fields will help to produce adequate supply of skilled and quality workforce to meet the manpower demand. This will also produce citizens who are disciplined and posses high moral values and good work ethics. In line with this, private sector investment in education and training in professionals and
technical field to complement the inadequacy of public higher institutions are strongly encouraged.

4.9 Greater Role for Private Sector

To cope with the nation’s changing demands and expectations, higher education system should be reformed. The reformation should emphasize institutional restructuring and formulations of regulatory measures to enable greater private participation. Incentives should be given to encourage private sector to provide tertiary education. This includes the mechanism for improving coordination and ensuring the quality of education offered by the private sector. Private higher education learning institutions, which have been accorded to the Multimedia Super Corridor status should be given more tax relief and the flexibility to choose their teaching staff. These will enable them to offer engineering, medical, information communication, and technology courses to produce more graduates in those fields to meet the demand of the skilled workforce.

4.10 Emphasize on General Skill and Flexibility

Graduates should acquire general competencies as well as cultivate social and communicative skills. They should be prepared for entrepreneurship and should be flexible. Today, the expectation of employers for graduates can be summarized as below: Firstly, Graduates are expected to be flexible, be able and willing to contribute to innovation and be creative. Secondly, graduates are expected to be able to cope with uncertainties as well as be interested in and prepared for life-long learning. Thirdly, employers expected graduates to acquire social sensitivity and communicative skills as well as be able to work in teams. Fourthly, graduates are expected to be willing to take on
responsibilities, become entrepreneurial, and prepare themselves for the internationalization of the labor market through an understanding of various cultures. And finally, graduates are also been expected to be versatile in generic skills which cut across different discipline, and be literate in areas of knowledge which form the basis for various professional skills, for example in new technologies.

4.11 Recommendations for Improving the Relationship between Higher Education and Employment in the Future

There are some recommendations for improving the relationship between higher education and employment in the future as below:

1. Higher education should become more flexible to reallocate resources and to regroup its potential in order to adapt to areas in high demand, such as those related to the growth areas of new technologies, for example, biotechnology, ecology etc.

2. Individual higher educational institutions and departments should be given more freedom in choosing profiles within disciplines. There should be less standardization of curricula whether by governments, academic associations or professional bodies. Measures to stimulate student exchange and to establish common European curricula. Increased awareness should be encouraged of the fact that curricula are much less determined by disciplinary logic or the nature of job tasks than is commonly supposed.
3. Higher education should aim for a foundation on which to build rather than on a specified corpus of knowledge. There is a well-developed consensus that it should prepare students for lifetime but less agreement about how much direct professional preparation should be given. There are also doubts whether higher education institutions are suitable for providing continuing education.

4. Higher education should aim for a lesser extent for a provision of a certain body of knowledge. There is an obvious consensus across industrial societies that higher education should play a more important role in preparing students for lifelong learning. There is a lesser degree of consensus, though, regarding the extent to which pre-career higher education should only lay foundations and refrain from any direct professional preparation. Consensus is even shakier when one discusses the areas in which higher education institutions should provide continuing education for a college-trained workforce.

6. Higher education should play a bigger role in shaping personality. Graduates are expected to be more loyal to their employing organization, more entrepreneurial, better prepared for co-operation and to accept also the less demanding job roles, to be motivated towards problem solving and to be able to cope with unexpected demands.

In conclusion, graduates unemployment due to demand-supply mismatch problems can be reduce if the manpower policy is flexible and respond quickly to the changing condition and challenging demand of the labor.