



# Institutional Autonomy In Private Higher Education Of Afghanistan

<sup>1</sup>Akhlaqi. Liaqat Ali, <sup>2</sup>Shams. Mansour, <sup>3</sup>Taheri. Mohammad Hassan,

<sup>4</sup>Haidary. Abdul Hakim and <sup>5</sup>Bahrangi. Mohammad Bashir

<sup>1</sup> University lecturer, Department of Accounting and Management, Economics faculty of Taj Higher education institute, Afghanistan.

<sup>2</sup> Co-Founder of Taj institute of higher education, Afghanistan.

<sup>3</sup> University lecturer, Department of Accounting and Management, Economics faculty, Afghanistan.

<sup>4</sup> University lecturer, Department of Business Administration, Economics faculty, Afghanistan.

<sup>5</sup> University lecturer, Department of Business Administration, Economics faculty, Afghanistan.

**Abstract:** The study is providing an overview of the present condition of university autonomy in private higher education in Afghanistan following the Taliban's takeover of power in August 2021. Staff, student affairs, curriculum and teaching, academic standards, research and publications, university governance, and administration/finance are the seven main fields of activities of higher education that are reviewed and surveyed by approximately 88 scholars and academic associations of higher education throughout Afghanistan. Sub indicators have been utilized to measure the level of autonomy of private higher education in the country for each of the seven categories, for a total of 44 sub indicators.

As overall, combined feedback of the respondents showed that the "academic standards" category has a higher level of government interference, whereas the other six categories have lower or equivalent levels of government interference. In sub indicators analysis, the most affected factor by government interference were "exam methods" with a score of 3.78 out of five, "teaching method" and "quality accreditation" with a score of 3.59 out of five, and "discipline and coverage of students" with a score of 3.51 out of five.

**Key words:** University, Institutional autonomy, university performance, private sector of higher education

## 1- INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Towards the philosophy of the existence of universities, which is the spreading of knowledge and research activities, and throughout history, since the twelfth century, from the time universities became known, learning classes have often debated ethical and social issues that have often conflicted with public opinion, the state, and even the churches, learning classes have often debated ethical and social issues that have often conflicted with public opinion, the state, and even the churches. Universities, by their existence as institutions that carry and impart knowledge, compelled their members to consider their shared concepts and everyday values. Academic freedom and institutional independence are a late historical development related to the emergence of a revolutionary intellectual ethic that elevates research as the ultimate purpose of a university (Rothblatt 2006).

In the 1990s, the United Nations Cultural, Scientific, and Educational Organization set a goal for its members to provide "education for all." The goal was to give everyone access to basic education. Although many governments passed the law, insufficient resources prevented them from achieving their goals. Also, some countries, even if they could provide this access to citizens, due to limited resources, suffered a lot in the quality of education (Chandani, Neeraja, and Sreedevi 2007). In this context, privatization was seen as a potential tool in some areas to provide education for all (Caddell and Ashley 2006).

Higher education is becoming increasingly vital in people's lives (Bladh 2007), and the data above demonstrate the relevance of the higher education system, policies, and practices in leveraging the country's enormous economic and social potential. Besides this, the quality of the higher education system and upgrading the system are the main challenges of higher education in Afghanistan and the private sector can boost this process faster.

Privatization, according to Belfield and Levine, is the transfer of administration, obligations, and assessments from public institutions to private enterprises (Belfield and Levin 2002). The world needs technical efforts and improvements, which puts pressure on governments to progress, yet governments' limited resources prevent this from occurring. As an alternate answer, the globalization process encourages governments to restructure their policies and reform their administration through privatization (Mok 2005). Since 2006, the Afghan government has implemented the Private Higher Education Act, which allows the private sector to establish universities and private higher education institutions alongside the state sector to expand student enrolment capacity. According to the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education, private higher education institutions are now authorized to offer undergraduate and graduate courses.

The higher education system in Afghanistan is heavily dependent on the government because "higher education" is widely regarded as a "public service," making universities reliant on the government in areas such as entrance exams and student selection, budgeting, student evaluation procedures, and even curriculum development. In addition, in the absence of traditional international channels, non-governmental institutions in Afghanistan have depended largely on tuition fees.

As a result, in both public and private sector universities and institutions, "cost reductions" have replaced "infrastructure growth," a trend that has also confused academic staff and university professors. All of this inspired the researcher to research the "Needs of institutional autonomy in private universities" in Afghanistan.

### **1-1- Significance of the study**

Alemu believes that defining higher education and the university is not an easy task due to the goals, national and institutional diversifications. He mentioned that higher education covers a wider range of learning (Alemu 2018). Countries are attempting to evaluate the role of education, particularly higher education, in national development and the advancement of knowledge and technology in the new era and the battle of competition between societies. As a result, it is safe to say that the involvement of higher education in a country's growth is inescapable.

The level of effective and creative human resources, which in turn depends on the level of knowledge, education, and research of societies, is the major factor determining the advancement and development of society in the present dynamic changes of the globe. A country's superiority is determined more by how much it benefits from science and technology as a consequence of scientific advancement, as well as the dynamism of its higher education system than by its natural resources or current industrial capacity (Ahmadi 2017).

Nowadays, it should be noted that universities are one of the most valuable resources that societies have because in both developed and developing countries, the university and its educated people have solved problems and determined macro strategies at the national level, and in a country where higher education is provided in modern and higher quality ways, the pace of progress and development has been faster.

Higher education in Afghanistan has been revitalized and many changes have been made in various fields over the last decade, but it has not been enough to meet the demands of society; because the country's education system was in desperate need of fundamental work, extensive reforms, and serious change. As a consequence, Kabul University in Afghanistan was established in 1961 as the country's first institution of higher education to strengthen the human resources of the Afghan society in terms of professionalism and according to the needs of the Afghan society, as well as to map a clear path for the country and serve as the core of national development. Other universities and institutes of higher education, in addition to Kabul University, are working in the field of higher education today. Higher education in Afghanistan has faced various challenges over the past decades, but with the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, attention to the country's education system has doubled and significant activities have been done on how to fundamentally transform the country's education system. After the Taliban regained power in August 2021, only a few months later, most of Afghanistan's higher education achievements, including institutional autonomy of these universities and academic freedom of its academic staff, may change due to the new rules and standards of the Taliban regime.

As a result, considering the importance of higher education in national development, the relationship between the quality of higher education and institutional autonomy is an interesting subject for scholars and researchers. Europe I and II (Scorecard) reports are an example of these efforts to analyze the role of institutional autonomy in universities. University autonomy in advanced societies lays the foundation for the efficiency and effectiveness of the system and always has an important role in university development. This is doubled the importance of higher education than the other sectors, because the higher education system, as a leading and policy-making system, can influence other fields to provide the ground for development in social, cultural, and human dimensions.

### 1-2- *Research questions*

The introduction part of the research is showing that institutional autonomy plays a very important role in delivering the duty of the universities and the below question is structured to study institutional autonomy in the private sector.

“How autonomous are Afghanistan's higher education in non-governmental universities and institutes?”

According to Anderson and Johnson (1998), the following questions might be generated based on the research's main question to identify and assess the institutional autonomy of private sector universities in Afghanistan (Anderson and Johnson 1998).

**Sub question 1:** How do universities' leadership and governance act in Afghanistan's non-government higher education system (councils, academic boards, student associations)?

**Sub question 2:** How do the teaching & Curriculum development practices have done in Afghanistan's non-government higher education system (teaching methods, assessment and examinations, course content, textbooks Teaching and curriculum issues, namely teaching methods, assessment and examinations, course content, and choice of textbooks)?

**Sub question 3:** How do the Academic standards apply in private universities of Afghanistan (degree standards, quality audits, accreditations)?

**Sub question 4:** How are research and publications, postgraduate supervision and teaching, research priorities, and freedom observed at Afghanistan's private universities?

**Sub question 5:** How are the students' affairs practices (admissions, progress & discipline)?

**Sub question 6:** How are staffing procedures such as employment conditions, appointments, promotions, and the status of academic and administrative staff considered?

**Sub question 7:** How are finance and administration processes and systems such as institutional financing; operational grants, capital and equipment grants, one-off tasks, non-government funding, and accountability mechanisms in Afghanistan's private universities?

## 2- LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section of the study, the researchers are attempting to identify and construct a theoretical framework for the research, as well as a review of previous researchers on the situation of university autonomy in Afghanistan, and finally, produce a conceptual model of the research. Building a research conceptual model requires gathering and reviewing other researchers' definitions, structures, models, and prior researchers' experiences to avoid repeating the study and expanding the new window of opportunities and constraints.

Accordingly, this chapter has four main parts:

- 1- Review and describe the scientific terms, principles, and history of the research.
- 2- The definitions of research variables and associated theories are included in the description of theories.
- 3- Conducting a review and summarization of prior research and studies.
- 4- Creating a research conceptual model based on research literature and research background.

## 2-1- *Research background of university autonomy*

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, autonomy means the right to self-government or a self-governing society, as well as individual freedom. Academic freedom, as defined by the right to self-government, has grown in recent decades. Academic autonomy refers to how to teach and research, having freedom and not complying with government bureaucratic rules regarding the internal organization of the university, its management, the internal distribution of financial resources, earning income from non-public sources, staff recruitment, educational conditions, and enjoying freedom (Zakir Salehi 2009).

Governments interfere in the affairs of universities in different ways. A common practice is to use legal authority. Another method that is more common in Europe and the United States is to use their financial authority and the financial dependence of universities on them. Another method is an explicit intervention which is more common in Asian countries. Western colleges have survived for almost a century, thanks mostly to the financial support of churches, businesses, and philanthropists. However, colleges were government-sponsored beginning with World War II. Government financial support expanded universities, and governments became interested in interfering in their internal affairs, but universities widely opposed their administration, similar to the administration of public high schools or public services, with government-selected performance targets and standards. While universities demand more autonomy, there are no autonomous universities in the world, and governments frequently intervene in their affairs (Anderson and Johnson 1998).

Higher education systems adopt procedures for determining university principal leadership that is not usually applied in other government organizations. One of these approaches is the establishment of a specialized buffer body and the transfer of authority to it by the government. The benefit of having a specialized buffer body is that all partial operational issues are removed from the Ministry of higher education and universities, protecting the government from being accused of interfering in academic affairs and providing more academic independence, reducing legislative center activities, and creating conditions. It is possible to get a thorough understanding of university governance, and the Ministry of Higher Education may concentrate on policy issues. One of the critical difficulties in managing higher education institutions is deciding the degree of autonomy of universities or the limitations of authority recognized by law, as well as university interactions with the national government for decision-making processes within the university. In the higher education system, governance refers to the structures, procedures, and activities involved in planning and guiding institutions and individual activities (Fielden 2008).

Watts (1992) argues that a society's attitude toward existential philosophy and the purpose of the university has a substantial impact on the administration and autonomy of its institutions. Universities in the fields of knowledge-based economy are the primary tools for attaining social progress and economic success. However, autonomists believe that the university should not be utilized to solve urgent social and economic needs. Rather, the university's key function is to deliver reasoned decisions about the necessary changes in its community's social ideals. The third group, the mutually interdependent perspective, believes that seemingly incompatible aspects of instrumentalist and autonomist viewpoints may be agreed upon. According to them, the university is interested in researching new issues at the frontiers of knowledge and experience, rather than focusing solely on the urgent demands of society, and there is a natural synergy between the university's goals and the community's efforts to attain these goals (Jones, Shanahan, and Goyan 2001, 51-74).

Many governments, the university sector, and the European Commission have all accepted that strengthening university autonomy is a critical step toward modernizing higher education in the twenty-first century. In this context, international organizations such as the European University Association (EUA) have conducted numerous studies to monitor the amount of autonomy in universities to assess the influence of this phenomenon on academic achievement in advancement. Thomas Estermann is researching to contribute to the development, reform, and modernization of the higher education system in three countries: Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine. This initiative intends to help Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine improve, reform, and modernize their higher education institutions. In this study, the researcher investigated the trends of various autonomy dimensions such as organizational autonomy, financial autonomy, staffing autonomy, and academic autonomy. In conclusion of its study, even though institutional flexibility in European universities has usually risen, a few countries continue to allow their higher education institutions too little autonomy, limiting their effectiveness. It is also crucial to emphasize the significant interdependence of

multiple aspects of autonomy such as organizational, staffing, and academic autonomy which may be severely hampered by implication. According to him, to optimize financing sustainability through revenue diversification, a more balanced combination of public and private resources will be required. He also concludes that improvements in governance and autonomy will fail unless they are supported by measures targeted at strengthening institutional capacity and human resources. If universities are to respond to the increased expectations placed on them, they must address the need for efficient and effective administration and leadership, as well as updated technical and specialized skills in a range of sectors (Estermann 2015).

Alexander highlighted in his research that University Autonomy in Europe II – The Scorecard2 EUA has provided statistics on institutional autonomy, allowing university practitioners and policymakers to compare systems throughout Europe more effectively. It categorizes and assesses higher education systems depending on their degree of autonomy, so contributing to higher education system reform. Following a decade of significant consulting in numerous European Higher Education systems, EUA is now implementing the big Tempus project ATHENA. The value of education in terms of growth and development is growing by the day, and technical advancements and current living standards necessitate educated and competent individuals all over the world. For that purpose, governments must offer universal education and increase its quality (Alexander 2000).

According to Magetti, university autonomy is a concept used to describe and examine the relationship between state authorities and universities, both at the university system/sector level and at the individual institutional level (Maassen, P., Gornitzka, A., Fumasoli, T., 2017).

University autonomy is defined as “The Institutional independence to have the authority to conduct their affairs” (Bladh 2007) and for the below reasons, It is considered essential for the proper functioning of universities:

1. It is a traditional right that has been effective in the past years.
2. Universities are responsible for preserving and transmitting culture, creating new knowledge through study and research, developing students' capacity for critical and independent judgment, foster a sense of beauty in their best Practices in a free environment that are free from direct foreign domination.
3. The complexity of academic activities requires a considerable degree of independence.
4. Independence in a democratic society provides control and balance for university staff and students.
5. If the university is to operate effectively, Learning and research needs a high degree of non-interference and external control
6. Greater productivity, economic issues, and better morale among university staff and students are essential (Paulley and Abraham 2017).

According to the European University Association's 2009 research "University autonomy in Europe," government authorities continue to have a significant role in managing higher education institutions in practice. This research evaluated 34 European nations and examined over 30 distinct indicators in four main areas of autonomy; Organizational autonomy, financial autonomy, personnel autonomy, and academic autonomy. While universities demand greater autonomy, there is no such thing as a truly autonomous university in the world, and most governments meddle in the activities of their institutions which have always been many barriers to obtaining university independence in most societies. (Paulley and Abraham 2017).

In recent decades, governments have been encouraged for several reasons to give universities more independence, including that as demand for higher education grows and governments become more aware of their role in promoting economic development, ensuring effective governance in Higher education systems. Also, higher education systems are becoming more complex as the number of private and public institutions grows, and it is becoming clear that governments are not the best rulers of how each university operates. It is not possible for government employees to effectively manage the highly complex management of academic communities remotely, and this task should be left to the institutions themselves. As a result, it is clear that the old model of comprehensive control by the Ministry of Higher Education is unsustainable in the long run and is being replaced by other

models around the world; That is, shifting from widespread intervention to a focus on greater university independence and reliance on more sophisticated methods of monitoring performance (Fielden 2008, 2).

Some researchers (Ashby, 1996, p. 290) and (Tight, 1997, p. 69) believe that university independence consists of two components: institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Academic freedom refers to a researcher's individual ability to pursue education and research without fear of punishment or job loss, and institutional independence relates to the self-governing status of research groups within the university (Tight 1992, 1384-90).

In conclusion, the independence of an institution to manage its affairs without direction or influence from any level of government is defined as university autonomy for this research.

### **2-2- *University Autonomy & Effectiveness and Efficiency of Universities***

Efficiency and effectiveness in higher education are one of the EU's (European Universities) goals, which are incorporated into the EU's education and training framework until 2020. University autonomy is a requirement for university effectiveness and efficiency. There have been several theoretical and practical investigations that suggest a positive relationship between these two variables (Kupriyanova, Pruvot, and Estermann 2020, 437).

An empirical study on university cost efficiency has been conducted particularly for Anglo-Saxon countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia. Another study reviewed the efficiency of higher education institutions in Germany which has recently been studied by (Warning 2004) for cross-section data. Another study conducted at German universities from 1998 to 2003 found that state universities with freer university regulations were much more productive than other universities (Kempkes and Pohl 2008).

According to Aghion et al. (2007), university autonomy is associated with not just the quality of university research but also with the more effective use of university financial resources. They highlighted good university rankings as one of the most important variables in how universities are governed and financed and mentioned European universities' low rankings in comparison to American universities as a result of poor governance, insufficient independence, and other factors (Aghion et al. 2008).

Fielden argues that regarding the relationship between university institutional autonomy and efficiency, there is a lot of research that confirms the positive correlation between them. For example, reducing process control at Mary College in Maryland to lead \$ 2.3 million in savings on a \$ 4.7 million construction investment, as well as \$ 120,000 in other savings for the purchase of computers, which typically cost \$ 480,000 in the government procurement process. Another study in Oregon by Arnold, Underwood & Kempner (1996) shows that delegating control over staffing, purchasing, contract management, travel, publishing, and college facilities management saves \$ 12 million per two-year course (Fielden 2008).

(Worthington and Dollery 2000) argue that measuring cost-effectiveness in the higher education system is difficult. In another research published in 2001, they found that early investigation of children's and/or parents' socioeconomic backgrounds might be an important predictor of educational attainment.

In the context of university efficiency, various studies examine university staff as well as student characteristics such as age, the proportion of academics, and so on. Stevens (2005) shows that a larger proportion of competent employees has a positive relationship with efficient institutions. In their analysis, Doucouliagos and Abbott (2007) also considered ratios such as non-academic to academic workers and the number of senior administrative employees as drivers of efficiency. According to the findings of their study, there is a positive relationship between the proportion of senior administrative employees, the ratio of non-academic to academic staff, and the effectiveness of higher education institutions (Kempkes and Pohl 2008).

### **2-3- *Introduction to Private Higher Education in Afghanistan***

In Afghanistan, private higher education institutions are a new phenomenon. According to Afghanistan's higher education statistics, the overall number of students enrolled in state universities and private higher education institutions in 2020 was 387946, a fall of 8.6 percent over 2019. This statistic includes 279,094 male students and 108,852 female students.

In 2020, there were 167 private and public universities and institutes of higher education, with 128 private and 39 public. In 2020, the number of professors at public and private colleges reached 18998, with 2617 women and 16381 males (Afghanistan statistical yearbook 2020).

During the history of higher education in Afghanistan, the first online education system started operating, 44 master's and 3 doctoral programs were created in public universities and 33 master's programs in private universities, more than 5,000 professors and staff were introduced to master's programs abroad (Farzan 2019).

Table 1 Overview of private higher education in Afghanistan

No	Indicator	2018	2019	2020
<b>1</b>	<b>Number of universities and institutions</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>167</b>
1.1	Governmental	38	38	39
1.2	Private	131	128	128
<b>2</b>	<b>Number of faculties</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>688</b>	<b>673</b>
2.1	Governmental	240	242	260
2.2	Private	445	446	413
<b>3</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>386,778</b>	<b>424,621</b>	<b>387,946</b>
3.1	Male	286,310	310,369	279,094
3.2	Female	100,468	114,252	108,852
<b>4</b>	<b>Governmental students</b>	<b>186,025</b>	<b>197,247</b>	<b>205,480</b>
4.1	Male	136,954	142,386	142,750
4.2	Female	49,071	54,861	62,730
<b>5</b>	<b>Private students</b>	<b>200,753</b>	<b>227,374</b>	<b>182,466</b>
5.1	Male	149,356	167,983	136,344
5.2	Female	51,397	59,391	46,122
<b>6</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>18,095</b>	<b>18,909</b>	<b>18,998</b>
6.1	Male	15,725	16,310	16,381
6.2	Female	2,370	2,599	2,617
<b>7</b>	<b>Governmental teachers</b>	<b>5,876</b>	<b>6,090</b>	<b>6,179</b>
7.1	Male	5,060	5,254	5,325
7.2	Female	816	836	854
<b>8</b>	<b>Private teachers</b>	<b>12,219</b>	<b>12,819</b>	<b>12,819</b>
8.1	Male	10,665	11,056	11,056
8.2	Female	1,554	1,763	1,763
Source: Ministry of higher education				

Along with public universities, Afghanistan's private higher education system is expanding. The fundamental cause for the growth of private higher education is the strong demand for this sector. Private education is growing in popularity as enrollment grows and address demands grow. The expansion of the importance of private higher education may be attributed to the fact that demand for private education has already exceeded supply. The country is now considering how to structure private institutions.

Examining regional precedents, such as the quality of performance of other governments in the administration and control of private organizations, is part of this strategy. Private institutions in Afghanistan have been strictly monitored. Private sector students frequently may not have the same rights and benefits as public students. They are not, for example, permitted to switch their location of study easily. Private institutions currently require standards, as well as executive and operational guidelines. Plus, Lack of electrical power outages and frequent shortages daily, lack of air conditioning and heating, Toilets, health services, and safe drinking water are frequently lacking in universities (Rof 2019).

The private sector in Higher education in Afghanistan has attempted to establish a platform to facilitate and coordinate academic activities in this sector for the higher education institutes and universities through the establishment of "The Association of Private Universities and Higher Education Institutions in Afghanistan (APUIHEA)" as a non-profit, national organization that represents,

argues for, and promotes the legitimate interests and concerns of Afghanistan's private sector. APUIHEA, as the voice of its member institutions, serves as a platform for advocacy, coordination, information exchange, networking, and sharing of best practices among members, the Ministry of Higher Education, stakeholders, actors, and other key stakeholders to promote and develop Afghanistan's higher education sector. This association now represents and supports over 126 private universities and higher education institutions around the nation, serving as a forum for collaboration and the sharing of information about higher education and associated activities and initiatives.

In July 2012, the group reached an agreement with representatives from over 40 private colleges to cooperate and form the Association of Private Universities and Higher Education Institutions in Afghanistan. The association's chairman, deputies, board, and members were unanimously chosen, and dozens of private higher education institutions began collaborating, opening the way for a platform to exchange ideas, discuss best practices, and formulate future objectives and plans. The activities and operations of APUIHEA are designed and administered through a central office in Kabul and three regional offices in the east, north, and southwest.

APUIHEA is a significant organization working in Afghanistan as the representative of the private sector of higher education in the country with 126 member institutions around the country which plays an important role in influencing and defining national policies, practices, initiatives, and debates that impact the operations and work of Afghanistan's private sector (APUIHEA 2022).

Ministry of higher education to organize and coordinate with the private sector of higher education in Afghanistan establish and formed a new department within the ministry structure name as "Directorate of private student affairs" to monitor and report the activities in this field. Below are some of the important rules and regulations about the private sector higher education in the law of the ministry of higher education of Afghanistan which is categorized into seven parts of the research indicators.

### **2-3-1 Staffing:**

The faculty members of the institute, with the exception of age, are eligible for the faculty members of the public higher education institutions mentioned in the Civil Higher Education Law. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The members of the academic staff and other employees of the institute are entitled to appropriate compensation in accordance with the provisions of the labor law, which are determined and paid by the institute with the agreement of the parties in accordance with a specific procedure. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The members of the academic staff and other employees of the administrative institute are entitled to work immunity and are entitled to leave, promotion, retirement and other rights and privileges in accordance with the provisions of the labor law and work-related legislative documents. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

Recruitment of faculty staff members of the institute according to the relevant bill is based on the proposal of the institute after completing the conditions and approval of the Ministry of Higher Education. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The members of the permanent academic staff of the institute, whose documents are processed in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Higher Education Law, and enjoy all the rights and privileges of the scientific staff. Whenever the relevant institution dismisses its permanent academic staff without good reason, it will be disciplined. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

### **2-3-2 Students:**

The institution is obliged to send a copy of students' educational documents (semester results book) to the head of private higher education institutions of the Ministry of Higher Education for one month after the end of each semester and after a formal submission to ensure its accuracy during the process and Keep a quote in the archives of the relevant institution. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

Before providing admission to the student, the institution is obliged to make available to the applicants all the conditions of its institution, including entrance fees, tuition fees, facilities, determining the number of credits in a specific contract. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The educational document mentioned in paragraph (1) of this article is certified by the Ministry of Higher Education and is valid like the educational document of government institutions. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)



### **2-3-3 Curriculum and Teaching**

The institution need to Provide curriculum and syllabus according to the needs of society and the labor market. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The institution need to Have a syllabus and curriculum approved by the Ministry of Higher Education. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

### **2-3-4 Academic Standards**

The institute need to have permanent building with appropriate and standard facilities. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The institute need to have at least 80% of eligible permanent faculty members with a master's degree or higher. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The institute need to have the necessary teaching equipment, internet services and information technology center. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The institute need to have active laboratories and equipped with better educational facilities for all related fields. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The institute need to have a modern and standard library equipped with electronic devices to suit the students of the institute and the existing fields. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The institute need to provide teaching facilities in teaching hospitals, both public and private, and having a well-equipped laboratory for establishing medical sciences programs. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The institute need to have the necessary infrastructure based on specialized disciplines. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The founder is obliged to standardize the institute in terms of quality with national and international standards as soon as possible. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

### **2-3-5 Research and Publication**

The institute need to have academic journals. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

One of the objectives of this regulation is to develop scientific research and research projects. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The institute need to have having an active academic research center. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The founder is obliged to establish seminars and workshops in order to improve the capacity of the faculty members and related staff and to provide them with the opportunity to participate in domestic and foreign seminars and workshops. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

### **2-3-6 University Governance**

In order to better integrate teaching, academic-research affairs in the institute in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Higher Education Law, a board of trustees is established. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The board of trustees is a group of decision-makers who are at the head of the institute and make the final decision in order to formulate policies, organization, budget and solve big problems in the light of the provisions of the Civil Higher Education Law and other related legislative documents. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The institute is obliged to establish a board of trustees in accordance with the relevant articles of association in order to regulate affairs and sound leadership. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The members of the Board of Trustees are introduced by the founder by signing a memorandum of understanding and start their work after obtaining the approval of the Minister of Higher Education. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The Academic Council of the Institute, the Academic Council of the Faculty and the Academic Council of the Department are established in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Higher Education Law and their duties and competencies are determined in accordance with the said law. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

### **2-3-7 Administration and Finance**

To establish the institution, it need to have an investment license for the institution. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

To establish the institution, it need to have a specific and official bank account in the name of the relevant institution. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

To establish the institution, it need to prepare a bill for entrance fees, tuition fees and provision of educational services. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

To establish the institution, it need to submit a bank guarantee payment document of two hundred million Afg in one of the government-owned banks. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

To establish the institution, it need to transfer the license fee of two million Afg to the account of the government unit. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The institution can establish a bank account in accordance with the procedures of the Ministry of Finance. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The institution can, at the time of enrollment for only one time, collect a sum from the student called entrance fees. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The institution can, in return for the provision of educational services to students according to the relevant bill, charge an amount called tuition fees. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The institution cannot increase the pre-determined tuition fees during the academic year without good reason and prior notice to the students and with the consent of the Ministry of Higher Education. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The bill of tuition fees mentioned in section (2) of this article can be implemented after the approval of the Association of Private Higher Education Institutions and the approval of the Ministry of Higher Education. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The Ministry of Higher Education is obliged to supervise the collection of revenues and expenses of tuition fees mentioned in paragraph (1) of this article, in accordance with the regulation of financial independence of universities. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The Ministry of Higher Education is obliged to supervise the collection of revenues and expenses of fees (fees) mentioned in paragraph (1) of this article, in accordance with the regulation of financial independence of universities. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

The Ministry of Higher Education can review the financial and accounting affairs of the institution if it does not submit an annual report with or without prior notice. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

#### **2-4- Research Conceptual Model**

The theoretical framework identifies the important variables in the context relevant to the research problem and provides a logical link to these variables (Khaki 2005). In terms of the development of the research's conceptual model, the many models of the authors and scholars are evaluated and studied to select the best model for the study as follows.

In a practical handbook published by Iwinska, Julia, and Matei, Liviu Yehuda Elkana (Center for Higher Education in Budapest, Hungary) university autonomy is divided into eight separate indicators as follows: 1) Institutional autonomy to decide about internal governance & organizational structures, 2) Institutional autonomy to decide about curriculum, academic programs, & teaching methods, 3) Institutional autonomy to decide about issues related to quality assurance, 4) Institutional autonomy to decide about issues related to research and freedom to publish, 5) Institutional autonomy to decide about students-related issues, 6) Institutional autonomy to decide about staff employment issues (academic and non-academic staff), 7) Institutional autonomy to decide about finances and administration, 8) and Institutional autonomy related to internationalization. In his 2015 study, Estermann classified university autonomy into four categories: organizational autonomy, financial autonomy, staffing autonomy, and academic autonomy (Estermann 2015).

In their research, Anderson and Johnson look at university autonomy in twenty nations using seven key factors. Staff, students, curriculum and teaching, academic standards, research and publishing, governance, and administration/finance indicators are among the indicators (Anderson and Johnson 1998). And this research is also used the same indicators and questionnaire with a little bit of localization as they used in their study.

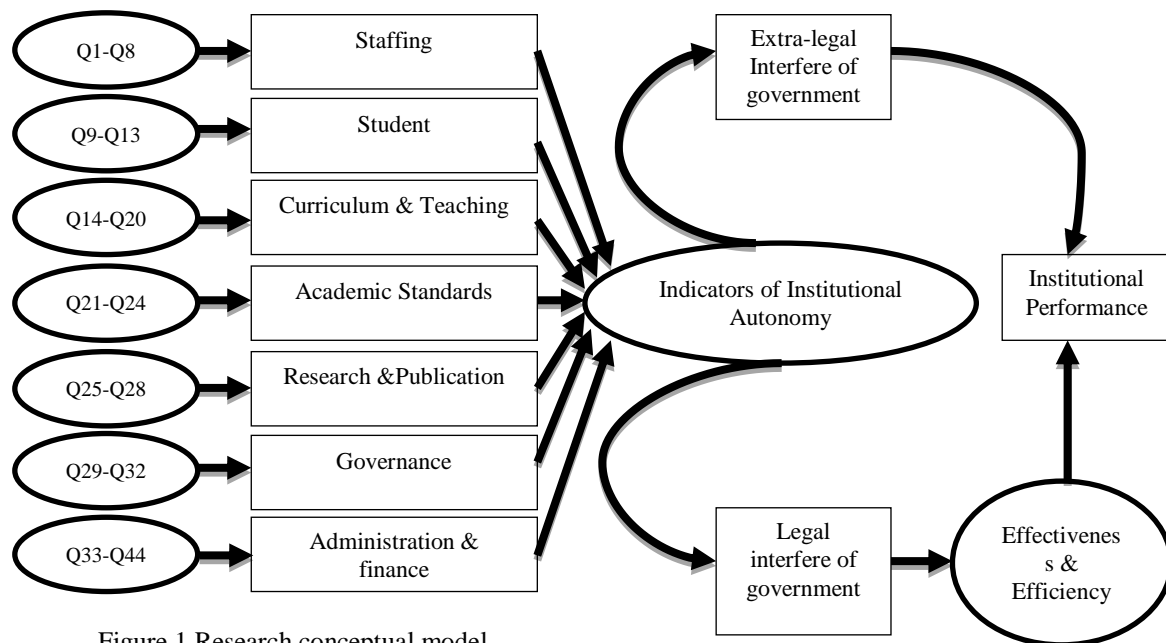


Figure 1 Research conceptual model

### Research methodology

This section of the study explains the research methodology, including how to measure the research variables, research population and sampling techniques, and other research method details. The main topics of this chapter are: identifying the research method based on the nature and purpose of the research, statistical population, sample selection, data collecting method and instruments, and data analysis.

#### 3-1- Research Design

As Kothari define the needs of research design “Research design is needed because it facilitates the smooth sailing of the various research operations, thereby making research as efficient as possible yielding maximal information with minimal expenditure of effort, time and money”(Kothari 2004), and according to the nature of data and other specifications of this research, this research is This research involves diagnostic research investigations, which determine the frequency with which something occurs or its association with something else.

regarding the purpose of the study, this research is “applied research” as the research is trying to identify the role and status of the current situation of institutional autonomy in the private sector of Afghanistan.

#### 3-2- Research Population and Sample Selection

Kothari also defines the target population as a complete set of individuals, cases, or objects with the same common observable characteristics (Kothari 2004). Therefore, the population of the study is the higher education system of the private sector in Afghanistan which is 128 private universities and higher education institutes.

The method of data collection has been completed by secondary data reviews and field surveys as the primary data. In the secondary data approach, different eBooks, statistics, and previous research were used to collect the data, and for the field survey, questionnaires, and interviews have been used.

### Sampling process

In terms of the sampling approach, random sampling with an accessible method was used for this study. When simple sampling is not an appropriate method for data collection and/or is difficult for the researcher, this method is considered.

The study gathered data from private higher education institutes and universities around Afghanistan that were interested in participating in this research. The questionnaire forms were created using Google Forms and circulated to as many universities' academic boards as possible to obtain their replies, with a total of 88 valid responses received for the study.

### 3-3- Data analysis approach

As discussed in previous parts, the research method is a descriptive study. And, data analysis has been done in descriptive statistics manner. This technique will describe the current situation of institutional autonomy through the perspectives of academic boards of universities and higher education institutes.

## 3- DATA ANALYSIS

This section analyzes data gathered from university instructors and university academic boards. Descriptive data will be used to determine and elaborate on the level of autonomy of private higher education institutes and universities in Afghanistan.

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were investigated before conducting the descriptive analysis. Experts and professionals in these fields can assess the validity of data collection instruments. And the validity of the questionnaire has previously been used and confirmed in the study by Don Anderson and Richard Johnson which is the article base for this study.

Cronbach Alpha is used to test the questionnaire's reliability and to indicate the overall correlation between the questions. The alpha value represents the strength of the overall correlations between the questions. The level of alpha varies between 0 and 1. The quantity alpha between zero and 0.5 is unreliable, the amount between 0.5 and 0.7 is medium, and the amount over 0.7 indicates that the questionnaire is very reliable. In this study, after analyzing the reliability test for the research questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha is equivalent to 0.957, indicating that the research questionnaire is very reliable.

Table 2 Table of reliability statistics of the research questionnaire

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.957	44

### 3-1- Descriptive Data Analysis

Kothari defines analysis as "the computation of particular indices or measurements, as well as the search for patterns of association that exist among the data sets." Analysis, particularly in the case of survey or experimental data, entails estimating the values of unknown population factors and testing hypotheses to make conclusions. As a result, the analysis may be divided into two types: descriptive analysis and inferential analysis (Inferential analysis is often known as statistical analysis). "Descriptive analysis is primarily concerned with the study of distributions of a single variable" (Kothari 2004). Central tendency, dispersion, and distribution scales are examples of descriptive analysis. The section that follows includes a descriptive analysis of the questionnaire that was gathered as part of the survey.

#### 3-1-1. Staff

Staff is one of the key indicators to measure the level of autonomy in private higher education. As the below table and graph show, eight questions were asked to measure this indicator for the respondents. The questions have been designed in the Likert scale spectrum which is numbered from one to five. The less scale of government interference takes the number of "1", the proper and legal interference of the government takes the number "3" as the average score of the scale and the maximum interference takes the number "5".

The analysis shows that the most interfering of the government in staffing are "appointing the chancellor and vice-chancellor of the private universities and higher education institutes" with an average score of 3.19 out of five. And the rest of them are below 3 which is the average level of interference.

Table 3 level of interference of government in Staffing

The level of government and related departments interfere in the Staffing of private higher education and universities.								
	appointing the chancellor and vice-chancellors	dismissal of the Chancellor and vice-chancellors	interfere in the appointment of professors	dismissal of university professors	appointment of other members of the academic staff	dismissal of other members of the academic staff	appointment and dismissal of other employees	payment of salaries and its conditions
Mean	3.19	2.70	2.91	2.41	2.65	2.49	2.49	2.48
Median	3.00	2.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Mode	5	2	2 <sup>a</sup>	1	1 <sup>a</sup>	1	1	1

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

**3-1-2. Student Affairs**

According to the study results, "determining the discipline and coverage of students" in student affairs is the most interfering factor by the government and associated authorities in private higher education, with an average score of 3.51 out of five. This element is closely related to the Taliban's new rules regarding female student coverage (Sharia coverage) and the separation of male and female students in courses. Following this, "determining the requirements for students' admission" is another aspect that is greater than the proper score which is 3.26 out of five.

The Taliban does not engage with other issues such as "admission of students, creating ethnic quotas for admission, and determining the degree of success or failure of students" in private higher education.

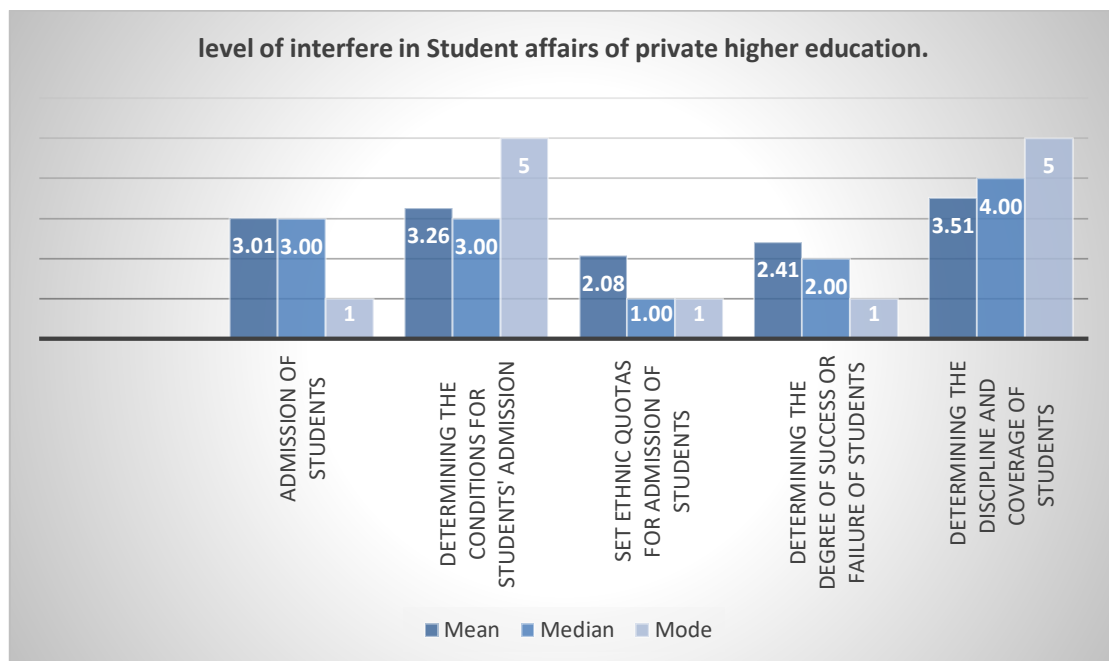


Figure 2 The level of government and related departments interfere in Student affairs

**3-1-3. Curriculum and Teaching**

Descriptive statistical analysis elaborates that "determining the method of taking exams" with a score number of 3.78 out of five is the most affected factor interfered by the government and related departments in private higher education. After this factor, "determining teaching method" is another factor that is interfered with and lost its autonomy.

The other factors such as; "designated the language of lectures, proposed new teaching areas, eliminating any field or subject matter, changing the curriculum, and changing the textbooks" have their autonomy and didn't interfere with the Taliban yet.

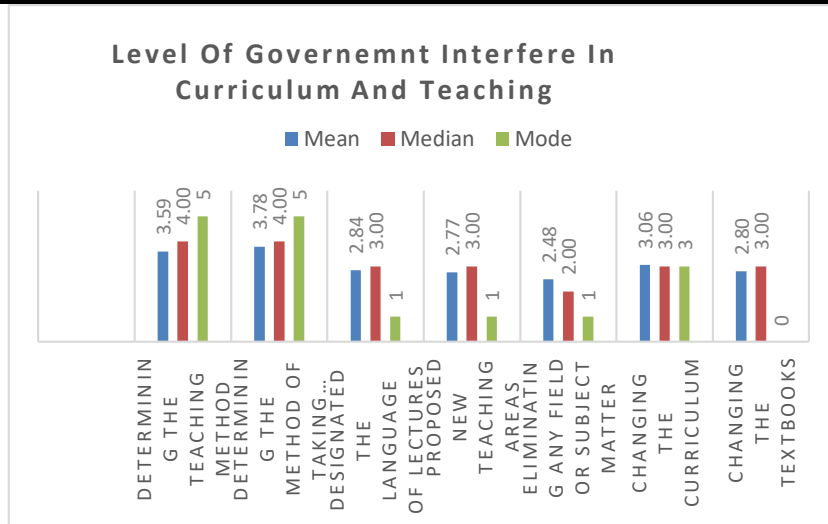


Figure 3 Level of government interfere in curriculum and teaching

**3-1-4. Academic Standards**

As shown in the table below, there are four indicators to measure the level of autonomy of private higher education in the Academic Standards area by name: graduation standards, subject standards, university or institution audit, and performing quality accreditation.

According to the data analysis, the greatest government intervention in this section is “conducting quality accreditation” applied to private universities with a score of 3.59 out of 5, followed by “auditing” of private higher education with a score of 3.52 out of 5. The remaining indications are as follows: graduation standards and subject standards appear to be low government interference.

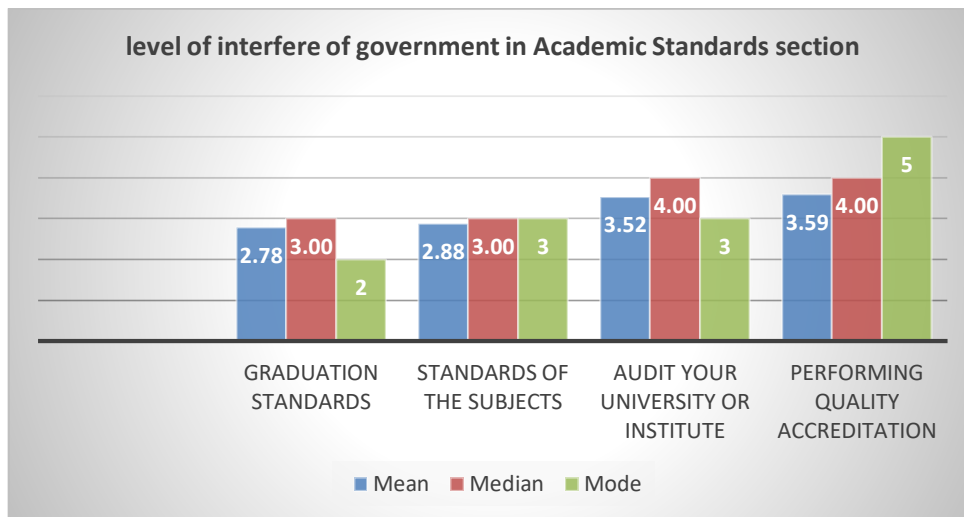


Figure 4 level of government interferences with Academic Standards

**3-1-5. Research & Publication**

As illustrated in Figure 5, the research and publication autonomy is divided into four sub-indicators: research priorities, selecting particular research topics, approval of publication research, and restrictions on academic staff public statements.

According to the research findings, “approval of published research” is slightly higher than legal interference, which is 3.15 out of 5. And the remainder of the indicators appears to be lower than expected caused by government intervention.

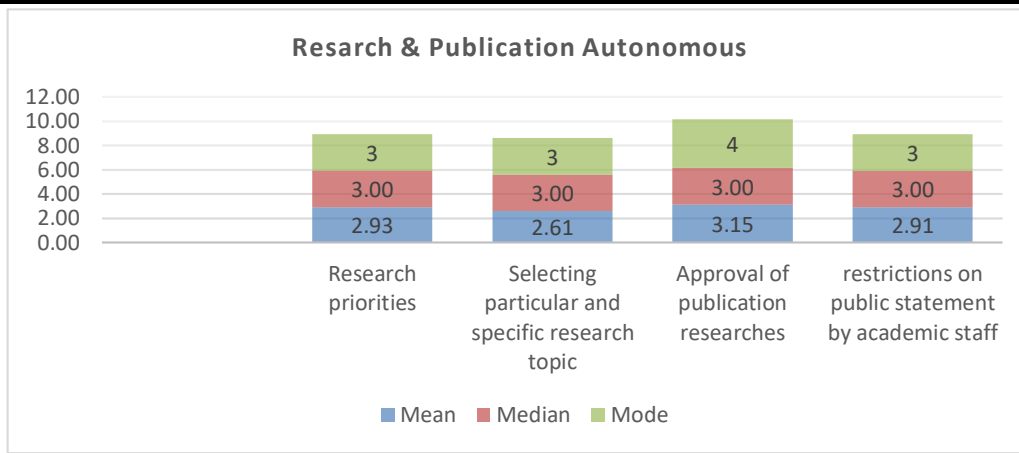


Figure 5 level of government interferes in Research & Publication

**3-1-6. University Governance**

The analyzed data shows that all factors of university governance autonomy including control of student’s association, membership of the academic board, control of the governance council, and membership in the governing council of the institute are lower than the average score which means that the government and related entities have few interfere in university governance of private higher education.

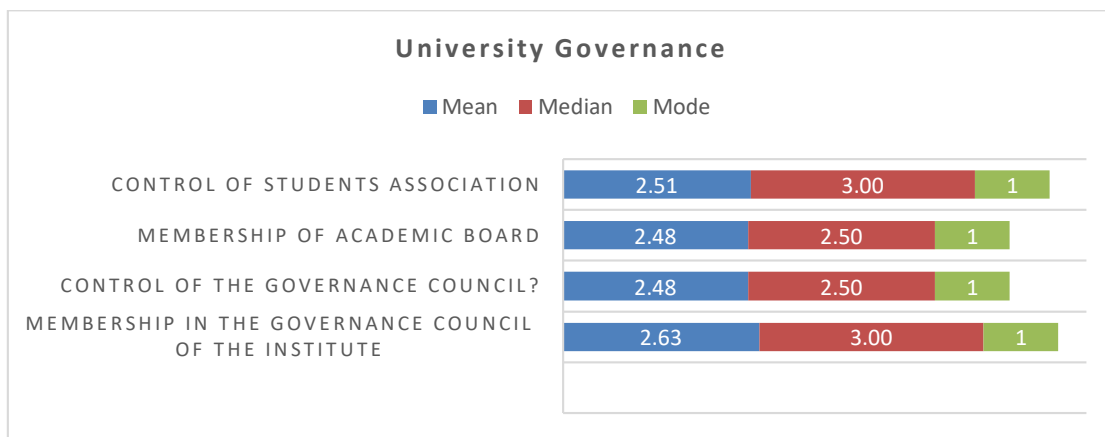


Figure 6 level of government interferes in university governance

**3-1-7. Administration and Finance**

The autonomy of administration and finance is split into 12 sub-indicators, as shown in the figure below. With a score of 3.45 out of 5, "university rules and regulations" gets the most government interference in the administration and finance section of private higher education. The “length of the semester” is the second most influential factor, with 3.3 out of 5 scores.

The element of financial audit is close to 3, indicating the government intervention in the private higher education system.

As demonstrated in the table below, the government and related organizations appear to intervene less in other aspects of finance and administration.

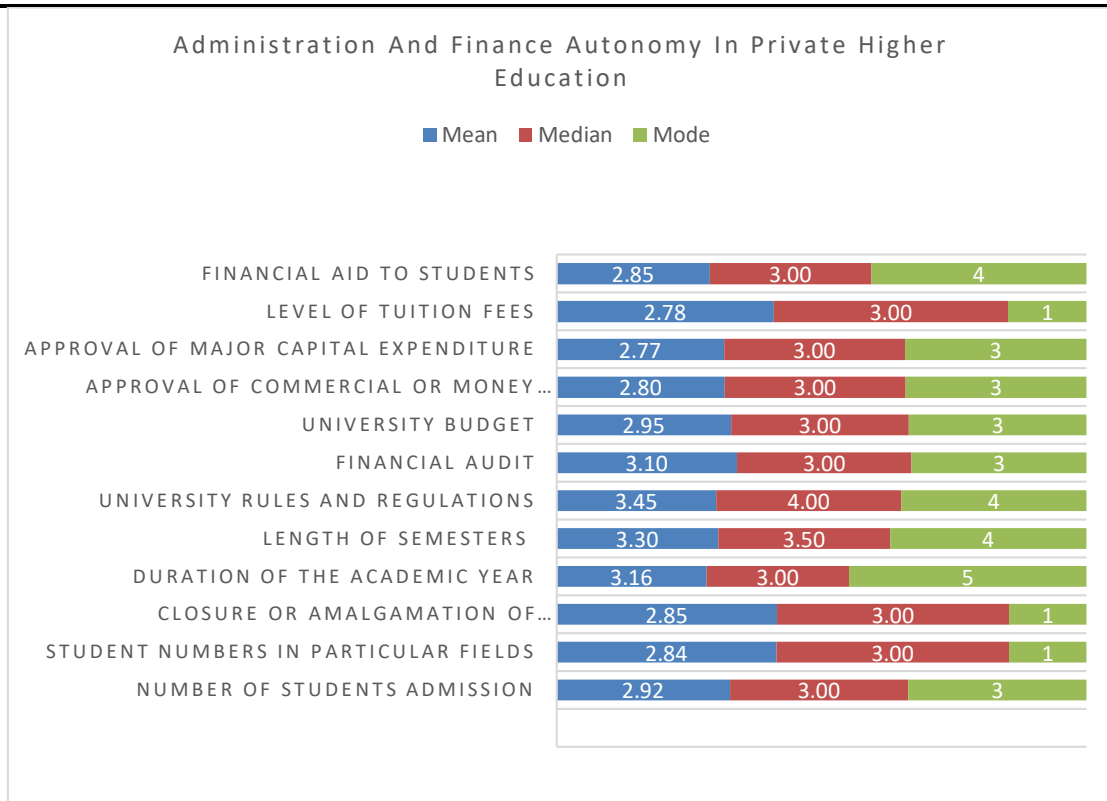


Figure 7 level of interference of government in the finance and administration

3-2- Comparative Analysis of Factors Affecting University Autonomy

In the following sections, descriptive analysis is used to compare factors affecting university autonomy in Afghanistan's private higher education. comparative descriptive analysis shows the mean of combined feedback from respondents about university autonomy factors.

Figure 8 illustrates a comparison of factors affecting university autonomy across seven important fields staff, student affairs, curriculum and teaching, academic standards, research and publishing, university governance, and administration/finance.

According to the statistics, the most important issue in which the government and related organizations intervene is "academic standards," which has a score of 3.19 out of 5. Following this element, "curriculum and teaching" have been slightly influenced by government involvement.

The government had almost no influence on the remaining criteria, which included "staff, student affairs, research and publishing, governance, and administration/finance."

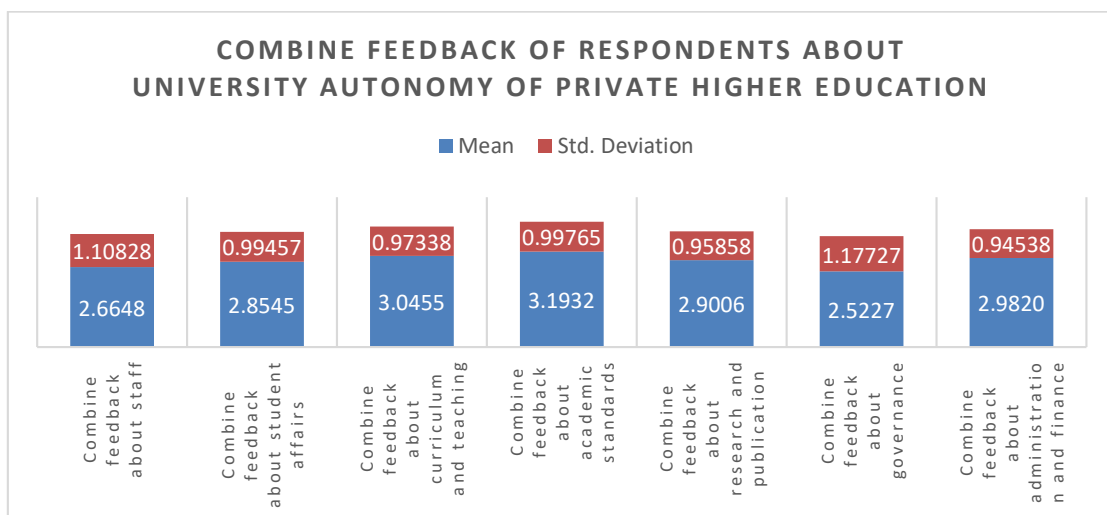


Figure 8 Comparative analysis of factors affecting university autonomy



#### 4- CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

The autonomy of the university environment implies the independence of higher education institutions from government interference, as well as the freedom of these institutions to manage their internal affairs, including the provision of financial and human resources without dependence on the government. Thus, university independence refers to the situation in which a higher education institution is allowed to conduct its activities without the direct interference and influence of an outside source.

Today, the autonomy of higher education environments is seen as a success factor for educational systems in developed countries. Adopting policies targeted at applying the paradigm of autonomy in scientific and educational contexts in developing nations might therefore help as much as possible to scientific advancement and, eventually, the country's development.

Many studies have been conducted in many countries in this area, including the research of Anderson and Johnson (1998), which were conducted in 20 countries.

To manage and coordinate with the private sector of higher education in Afghanistan, the Ministry of Higher Education established and organized a new department within the ministry structure called "Directorate of Private Student Affairs" to monitor and report on activities in this field.

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which the government interferes in the operations of universities and private higher education institutions in Afghanistan to estimate the degree of institutional autonomy in this educational sector.

The research is seeking to answer the current situation of the university autonomy of Afghanistan in the field of staff, student affairs, curriculum & teaching, academic standards, research & publication, university governance, and administration/finance. An overview of the legal authority of the government and related departments was done to comprehend the interference boundaries of the government to interfere in the private higher education system of Afghanistan.

According to the research findings, "appointing the chancellor and vice-chancellor, determining the discipline and coverage of students, determining the requirements for students' admission, determining the method of taking exams, determining the method of teaching, conducting quality accreditation, auditing, approval of published research, university rules and regulations, length of the semester" are the main factors that appear to be interfered with by the government and related departments. The "methods of taking the exam" with a score of 3.78 out of five, "teaching method" and "quality accreditation" with a score of 3.59 out of five, and "discipline and coverage of students" with a score of 3.51 out of five have been the most influenced by government involvement.

Overall, and based on the combined feedback of the respondents, the "academic standards" have a higher level of government intervention, whereas the six other categories have less or slightly similar levels of government intervention.

Surveys and interviews with faculty members of private universities in various provinces of the country revealed that following the Taliban-led government's occupation of Afghanistan in August 2021 and the issuance of permits and the opening of private universities and higher education institutions, this permission, along with some restrictions, required private universities to comply. Separation of girls' and boys' classes, the type of clothing and hijab for girls, reporting on university performance, coordinating with the Taliban Ministry of Higher Education's representative in appointing new professors, and attending without permission of Taliban's higher education representative to the leadership meetings are just a few of the restrictions.

Financial limits on university founders and account blockage, as well as restrictions on cultural programs, festivals, and celebrations are another example of interference of the Taliban government in the private higher education system.

It seems changing the curriculum and resource books of some faculties like "faculty of law" will expect in soon. And the Taliban government insists to change the higher education system to the Sharia and Islamic way as the minister of higher education of the Taliban told in his speech in a meeting with several university professors.

The acting minister of the Taliban Ministry of Higher Education emphasized that "the foundations of education in Afghanistan must be re-established and that students must be educated "according to values" from the start. And should not expect anything from students who have graduated the last twenty years studying in Afghanistan".

Mr. Haqqani, the Taliban's higher education minister, also stated that professors should be trained to educate the future generation "in a way that helps us."

It seems that the new Taliban administration would interfere more in the country's higher education system, limiting the autonomy of universities and higher education institutes. As a consequence, these institutions will be less effective and efficient, lowering the overall performance of the higher education system in the country.

## Reference

- Ahmadi. 2017. *our Afghanistan*. November 2. Accessed 11 22, 2020. [http://dailyafghanistan.com/opinion\\_detail.php?post\\_id=141470](http://dailyafghanistan.com/opinion_detail.php?post_id=141470).
- APUIHEA. 2022. *The Association of Private Universities and Higher Education Institutions in Afghanistan*. Accessed 1 19, 2022. <http://www.apuihea.edu.af/da/about>.
- Aghion, P., M. Dewatripont, C. Hoxby, Andreu Mas-Colell, and Andre Sapir. 2008. *Higher Aspirations: An Agenda for Reforming European Universities. Bruegel Blueprint 5, July 2008*.
- Alemu, Sintayehu Kassaye. 2018. "THE MEANING, IDEA, AND HISTORY OF UNIVERSITY / HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA : A." 4:210–27.
- Alexander, F. King. 2000. "The Changing Face of Accountability." *The Journal of Higher Education* 71(4):411–31. DOI: 10.1080/00221546.2000.11778843.
- Anderson, Don, and Richard Johnson. 1998. "University Autonomy in Twenty Countries." *Centre for Continuing Education The Australian National University* 3(98):1–31.
- Anon. 2012. "Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook = سالنامه احصائیوی." *Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook = سالنامه احصائیوی* (April). DOI: 10.29171/azu\_acku\_musalsal\_ha4570\_6\_alif2\_seen22\_v1391.
- Belfield, Clive, and Henry Levin. 2002. "The Effects of Competition on Educational Outcomes : A Review of US Evidence." *Review of Educational Research* 72(2):279–341.
- Bladh, Agneta. 2007. "Institutional Autonomy with Increasing Dependency on Outside Actors." *Higher Education Policy* 20(3):243–59. DOI: 10.1057/palgrave.hep.8300161.
- Caddell, Martha, and Laura Day Ashley. 2006. "Blurring Boundaries: Towards a Reconceptualisation of the Private Sector in Education." *Compare* 36(4):411–19. DOI: 10.1080/03057920601024750.
- Chandani, Arti, B. Neeraja, and Sreedevi. 2007. "Knowledge Management: An Overview & Its Impact on Software Industry." *IET Seminar Digest* 2007(2):1063–68. DOI: 10.1049/ic:20070767.
- Estermann, Thomas. 2015. "University Autonomy In Europe." *University Education* (3):28–32.
- Fielden, John. 2008. "Global Trends in University Governance by John Fielden." *Education Working Paper Series* (9):1–70.
- Farzan, M. H. 2019. *8 Sobh*. March 18. Accessed 11 22, 2020. <https://8am.af/todays-education-system-in-afghanistan-a-new-window-into-the-bright-tomorrow/>.
- Greener, S. 2008. *Business research methods*. Sue Greener & Ventus publishing Apps.
- Jones, Glen A., Theresa Shanahan, and Paul Goyan. 2001. "University Governance in Canadian Higher Education." 135–48.
- Kempkes, Gerhard, and Carsten Pohl. 2008. "Do Institutions Matter for University Cost Efficiency? Evidence from Germany." *CESifo Economic Studies* 54(2):177–203. DOI: 10.1093/cesifo/ifn009.
- Khaki, Ghulam Reza. 2005. *Research method*. Tehran: Baztab.
- Kothari, C. 2004. *Research methodology: method and techniques ( seconded)*. New Dehli: New age international (p) Ltd., publishers.
- Kupriyanova, Veronika, Enora Bennetot Pruvot, and Thomas Estermann. 2020. *Autonomy, Efficiency, and Effectiveness — Opportunities for Higher Education : A Pilot Study*. Springer International Publishing.
- Maassen, P., Gornitzka, A., Fumasoli, T.,. 2017. "University reform and institutional autonomy: A framework for analyzing the living autonomy, " *Higher Education Quarterly* 71. (Ministry of Justic, 2019), Official Gazette
- Mok, Ka Ho. 2005. "Globalisation and Governance: Educational Policy Instruments and Regulatory Arrangements." *International Review of Education* 51(4):289–311. DOI: 10.1007/s11159-005-1091-x.
- Mwangi, C.M. 2016. "Effect of loan collection procedures and loan default in microfinance institutions in Kirinyaga county." *global journal of management and business research* 16 (8).
- Paulley, F. God gift, and Nath M. Abraham. 2017. "University Autonomy, Academic Freedom and Academic Staff Union of Universities ' ( ASUU ) Struggles in Nigeria : A Historical Perspective." 8(12):265–75. DOI: 10.5539/ass.v8n12p265.
- Rof, David J. 2019. *Private higher education in Afghanistan*. March 24. Accessed January 19, 2020. [http://dailyafghanistan.com/opinion\\_detail.php?post\\_id=147355](http://dailyafghanistan.com/opinion_detail.php?post_id=147355).
- Rothblatt, s. 2006. "the university as utopia", ink. bluckert, g. neave and t. nybom (eds.)." *the European research university. a historical parenthesis, new york* 1.
- Tight, M. 1992. *Institutional Autonomy. In B Clark and G Neave (eds.)*. London: Pergamon Press.
- Uma Sekaren & Roger Boogie. 2010. *Research Methods in Management*. Government Management Training Center.
- Warning, Susanne. 2004. "Performance Differences in German Higher Education: Empirical Analysis of Strategic Groups." *Review of Industrial Organization* 24(4):393–408. DOI: 10.1023/B: REIO.0000037538.48594.2c.
- Worthington, Andrew, and Brian Dollery. 2000. "An Empirical Survey of Frontier Efficiency Measurement Techniques in Local Government." *Local Government Studies* 26(2):23–52. DOI: 10.1080/03003930008433988.
- Zakir Salehi, Ghulam Reza. 2009. "Investigating the legal and managerial dimensions of university autonomy in Iran." *Journal of Research and Planning in Higher Education, No. 53, 2009* 106 - 79.