

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS POLICY IN ISLAMIC IRAN

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Abstract

International student policy is an effective way to introduce the host country's culture and civilization to the young foreign generation and to create an interactive communication and good relation with whom taking an office. To achieve the country's main cultural and political goals, the Iranian Majlis (Parliament) considered this policy such important that established an Islamic International University, later renamed Imam Khomeini International University (IKIU) to follow the suit in 1983.

However, a variety of contending laws and regulations in addition to the changing approaches in government policies have not only created increasing obstacles to the effective enrolment of the international students in IKIU but have caused other Iranian universities losing their edge in attracting and enrolling such students as well. To these obstacles were added university welfare deficiencies and different local custom that prevent the government from significantly achieving its cultural and political objectives. This chapter explores the IKIU establishing law and other ministerial circulars to examine policy improvements in international student admission as a strong scientific and technological foundation for the nation.

Key words: Iran, Politics, Higher Education, International Students, Admission policy

Introduction

In 1979 Iran witnessed one of the great revolutions in the third world countries where by using the term 'revolution', more stress is being laid on the extent and speed of social as well as political change. The Islamic Revolution, as Krejci puts, (1994: 225) was "a genuine revolution of the vertical type" in terms of the way in which it carried out, on how many people were involved and on how shattering were the acts of revolution. The Islamic Revolution in Iran started as a revolution against the rule of a politically despotic, economically inconsistent and culturally following the west. People of divergent and often contradictory views united for a short time with respect to what they wanted to abolish and carried it out but not as to what they wanted to come afterwards. Jahangir Amuzegar (1991: 14) dubbed this momentary multifaceted revolutionary front a 'rainbow coalition.'

Nevertheless, the unifying idea in the post revolutionary Iran remained religion and its mainstream leader, the great clergy of the Shiite Islamists of the Twelve Imams, Ayatollah Khomeini who at the same time represented the strongest nationalist stream in the political spectrum. For Khomeini, as the supreme leader, and his followers, the key issues were the abolition of the monarchy and observance of the divine law, and the Islamic state and society were to be supervised by the distinguished and just theologian-jurists and this concept (Villayet-e Faqih) took reality on 10 February 1979 when the Constitution ratified by a popular referendum.

Despite the differences between the Islamic Revolution and other revolutions in fields of ideology and policy, there has been a plenty of similarity in enmity to current status and domination of monarchy and colonialism in extent of both domestic and international arenas and also proposing new way of life for humanity. The leaders of the Islamic Revolution had same thoughts of global system, mastery of autocratic powers and upon their opinion oppressed people had to stand against this mastery and abolish it. Oppressed people, to them, were not just oppressed Muslims of Afghanistan and Palestine, but people in third world countries as South Africa and Nicaragua who were suffering by these global oppressors.

"Welfare of humans in the entire world" as the main goal of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), was stressed in the constitutional law, and declared as "immutable" in Article 177. Any kind of geographical boundaries was felt against the message of Islam and the Islamic Revolution, and to Imam Khomeini himself the movement was considered one of the stages of a pervasive movement should be continued throughout the world especially

Islamic world hopping the latter will soon get all the glory. In this way and by its "exporting the revolution" project was that the IRI faced serious affront with the international system in every context.

"Exporting the revolution" was known as enhancing the revolution beyond the internationally recognized borders of Iran. The Islamic Revolution had been arisen out of two different motivations: emancipation from humiliations and repressions lied at the root of the history that toppled the shah's regime but not finished as different kind of foreign conspiracies by colonialist countries continued right after the victory of the revolution aiming at restoring previous situation and at keeping plundering country. The second motivation was religious duty and the belief that Islam is a worldwide and expanding Islam throughout the world is a call of duty for every Muslim. Many individuals and religious institutions from Qom, Mashhad and Tehran devoted themselves in publicizing religion, proselytizing and to this approach there was no difference between village and city, and inside or outside the country.

Therefore, there was enough courage for Muslim militants and the IRI to stand against global domination so early and show their facilities and skills in several fields of culture, science, politics, medicine, economy and military. That is why maintaining "too difficult to say what sort of means was adopted for 'exporting the revolution'" Farhang Rajaei (1990: 73) argued this was "because of various organs and institutions utilizing different means."

Among these government policies was the international student policy admitting in the Iranian universities. Both government and private universities and higher education centers were involved in this policy and sought to utilize from different aspects of every theoretical and applicable scientific and technical field helping Muslim and oppressed nations to strengthen their scientific bases. Referring to various related laws and circulars, this article attempts to explore reasons and motivations of IRI in adopting different policies for admission of international students and analyze its evolutionary policies during past three decades from centralization to non-centralization, and from individualism to structuralism. Indicating the contrasts in laws, differences among related authorities, and educational inabilities and welfare shortcomings towards achieving international students policy objectives are the main promises of this research supported by personal observations, interviews with IKIU officers working in central secretariat at Darband and the hard copies of the applicants' archival profiles. At the end information gathered was put in SPSS statistic software to find the most frequencies and analyze the developments of the policy in action.

Revolutionary Scientific Goals

Attention to and emphases on sciences, scientific expansion and empowerment of scientific basis of Muslims and all other oppressed people in the world happened from very beginning of the Islamic Revolution and that was due to the value being paid by Islam from its early outburst in all theoretical and applied fields of knowledge. Article 2 (2) of IRI's constitution maintains "the exalted dignity and value of man, and his freedom coupled with responsibility before God" as one of the fundamental principles of the Islamic Republic to be secured by "sciences and arts and the most advanced results of human experience, together with the effort to advance them further." In order to attain the objectives specified in Article 2, the government of IRI has the duty of directing all its resources to the goals including:

- 2) Raising the level of public awareness in all areas ...
- 3) Free education and physical training for everyone at all levels, and the facilitation and expansion of higher education;
- 4) Strengthening the spirit of inquiry, investigation, and innovation in all areas of science, technology, and culture, as well as Islamic studies, by establishing research centers and encouraging researchers;
- [...]
- 13) The attainment of self-sufficiency in scientific, technological, industrial, agricultural, and military domains, and other similar spheres;

To IRI, thus, science and technology is considered as material means for obtaining and securing the religious objective of "the exalted dignity and value of man" and every government policies and strategies were to service this objective. One declaration of the IRI Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirms this approach as such:

Since its creation, following several decades of genuine Islamic and popular struggle, the Islamic Republic of Iran has considered it one of its main duties to defend dear Islam, its sacred aspirations, and the oppressed Muslims in every region of the world. (7 March 1989)

The subject and the correlation between science and religion were also emphasized in Imam Khomeini's will. These two, upon his view, were "the tools of knowing the universe and must be at service of human" and he was insisting on training scientists "in all fields of science according to the needs of country and Islam." In his message known as "clergy charter," expressing his hatred of conditions and situations made him to admit the UN resolution of 598 in 22 February 1989, Khomeini recommended the

Iranian youth "to be prepared for a scientific and practical competition to achieve the spectrum goals of Islamic revolution" and advised officials too to "make their best on providing facilities for moral, ideological, scientific, artistic improvement of youth" and accompany them to "the point of best values and innovations" and "keep the spirit of independence and self reliance alive." On his opinion this "scientific competition" will cause to revive "the spirit of courage and discovery of realities and facts," and be of complimentary form of "practical competition in the best scenes of life, militancy and martyrdom."

Science to IRI's current leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, is of special importance too and has focal role in "exporting the revolution." In an occasion he stated "it is by the power of science that a nation can reach its voice to others' ears around the world and by the power of science it can attain the high politics and an upper hand in the world of politics." The point has found its best incongruity in a televised interview with an Islamic Revolutionary Corps Guard general, Jafar Aslani (2007) who acknowledged "scientific stronghold is the most important stronghold providing our comprehensive security in the current world."

One aspect of this scientific attempt for "exporting the revolution" was laid in admission of international students to Iranian universities. A variety of government and nongovernment public institutions put their efforts to achieve this goal in teaching and training non Iranian Muslims and non Muslims according to Islamic and revolutionary principles. Through developing science and achieving its high stages, it was deemed that IRI may secure its comprehensive security and widely publicize its achievements throughout the world. Some institutions such as Imam Sadeq University operating in 1982 and the Global Center for Islamic Sciences operating since 1986 are nongovernmental public institutions and some are administered by the two sponsors of higher education in Iran, the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (MSRT) and the Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MOHME) and such the most prominent one as the Islamic International University (IIU) established in January 1983 by a Parliament Act. As an honor to late Imam Khomeini, this university changed its name after him when passing away in 1988.

International student's changing policies

To the legal development of international student policy was added some circulars released timely by MSRT. The first ministerial circular in this concern was signed on 28 April 1983 before the actual establishment of IIU and the second one was signed after its establishment on 21

September 1986 and addressed on 16 March 1989 to IIU's first president Mahmood Broujerdi. In these two circulars, the cause and course of the policy was much the same but different from that of the law. "Introducing and expanding the Islamic culture" and "training the committed experts" of the law and statute felt insufficient thus the circular added, two more missions of "expanding the scientific and cultural relations of the Islamic Republic of Iran with other nations especially Muslim ones." Neglecting the IKIU law of establishment, Article 3 (v) of the circular made "the knowledge of Persian language or passing Persian language course" a further precondition and prerequisite to final admission of international students in IKIU.

The seventh circular named as "Admission Regulation of Foreign Students" signed by the two ministers of MSRT and MOHME on 16 June 1994 was the first joint policy of this kind. Referring for the first time to the IKIU law of establishment, this circular called IKIU as the first source for investigating foreign applications residing inside and outside Iran. Although IKIU was still considered the precedence in admission, Article 5 of this circular recognized other universities' precedence namely: Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, Mashhad and Tabriz in sequence to admit international students. Article 1 of the circular, however, had required "every receiving organs of the foreign applications" to send such documents to IKIU for necessary investigations.

Accordingly, IKIU was to run some supplementary pre university courses for those applicants had not graduated from the 12th grade in secondary school equivalent to that of Iran and to facilitate their transition to one of the above mentioned universities. In addition, IKIU was recognized as the sole responsible to "acquire" visas and residing permissions for the international students and to "schedule" their cultural and extracurricular affairs in cooperation with their receiving universities. Other receiving universities had not even been allowed to determine the educational fees of their own international students and the admission quota of every university was to be decided centrally by the two ministries.

Further changes to this trend still to come when "the circular for admission of non-Iranian Students in the universities and higher education centers of Islamic Republic" issued on 31 July 2005 by the two reformist cabinet ministers of Mohammad Khatami conveying the message of "dialogue among the civilizations." In this circular, "educational possibility of non-Iranian applicants" was determined along the line of "expanding the scientific and cultural relations of the Islamic Republic of Iran with other countries." Regardless of the one at IKIU and in parallel

with it, MSRT created a “scholarship council secretariat for non-Iranian students” to “make and hold the applicants’ profiles and pursuit the council’s decisions.”

Further changes happened in the fundamentalist presidency of Mahmood Ahmadinezhad whose two ministers issued another 16-article joint circular in April 2006 and put more emphasis on “strategic function” of education in “vast, deep and ever rising competition among countries.” They both aimed the educational scholarship at “admitting more nobles, thinkers and experts in this context from other countries” and named the responsibility of “the Islamic Republic, as the Muslims Mother Town, so important and heavy” even more than past in “supporting the qualified youth especially the one of the Islamic countries.”

Therefore, IRI not only did not restrict itself in theory to admitting the Muslim applicants but in action further expanded its circle to involve the non-Muslims as well, though applicants from oppressed or Muslim countries were given some priorities. More attentions were also made to the Persian language and expansion of the national culture that had already received enough attention in practice. Out of more than 600 admitted applications from non-Muslim countries were only 52 Christians and 12 Buddhists. Rejected ones also show that religion has never been a determinant factor for admission or rejection of any application. However, it is not known why non-Muslims are inclusively from these two religions and why these 12 Buddhists were all girls from Japan, South Korea, Vietnam and Thailand.

Article 1 of the latest circular also set some new and different goals for admission of the international students, namely:

- 1) Expanding Persian language and literature and establishing and supporting Persian language and literature chairs and departments,
- 2) Expanding scientific and cultural relations of the Islamic Republic of Iran with other countries of the glob,
- 3) Supporting the qualified youth of Islamic countries,
- 4) Providing suitable ground for indentifying the Islamic Republic more and better,
- 5) Introducing, propagating and expanding the Iranian Islamic culture,
- 6) Helping the health and remedy to grow and develop in the Islamic and developing counties,
- 7) Training committed experts in order to help scientific self sufficiency of the Islamic counties,

In addition to these changing goals, the main organs of admitting international students changed too. According to the new circular,

admission of international students was based on decentralization and as a result the composition of the admission body consequently changed.

Admission body and its developments

After many years of location studies, MSRT finally found an appropriate place for IKIU in Qazvin and ordered Dehkhoda Higher Education Center in Qazvin to merge to it and thus let it practically start its work in 1993. From beginning, IKIU has had two main characteristics distinguishing it from other Iranian post-revolutionary universities; first of all it is the only Iranian higher education institute that constituted by a Parliament Act of January 1983. According to Article 1 of the law, it has to be supervised by MSRT and its goal was declared as “to introduce the culture, civilization and knowledge of Islam that is the most supportive of science and scientist in the globe and to resurrect its method for education and training.” Other objectives of this university was mentioned as

- 1) Utilizing from sciences and techniques according to the Islamic principles
- 2) Training committed experts in order to make Islamic and oppressed countries needless to the oppressing and aggressive communities, non Muslim and non-committed scientists,
- 3) Enhancing and realizing the Islamic culture in the Islamic world
- 4) Expanding Islamic culture and knowledge in the international level
- 5) Making communication with the scientific centers and figures in the world especially the Islamic ones and
- 6) Helping to expand the country’s higher education (Iranian Official Newsletter, 11365)

The second unique characteristic of IKIU was inherited in its monopoly of educating and training international students applying for studying in Iran. According to the establishing law, IKIU was the only university in Iran that authorized to admit such students. The wording of IKIU's title shows multi faceted approaches to the establishment of this academic institution. From “international,” it meant IKIU could admit students from all over the world and according to Article 6 of its law, though Persian was the preferential language of teaching, teaching “in Arabic, Urdu and other languages if necessitated” was also allowed. In observing Article 82 of the Constitution, a great advantage was given to IKIU to hire foreign experts preferably among scientifically, morally and religiously eligible Muslims and “to send some of outstanding committed Muslims of post-graduates abroad to obtain more expertise.” (Article 20)

It was also named “Islamic” as it had to admit only Muslims whether Iranian or non-Iranian applicants who practically were committed to the Islamic teachings. Article 21 of its law reads such:

Students of this university is chosen among the domestic and foreign applicants of Muslims, committed to Islam and practically pledged to its teachings accordingly:

- a) Domestic students according to the admission policy of country's universities and higher education institutions
- b) Foreign students according to the investigation of applicant's dossier and the relative regulations provided by IKIU. This will be implemented by the ministry of foreign affairs after ratified by the ministry of Science. (Iranian Official Newsletter, 11365)

IKIU had to consist of a specific educational center for international students and the number of its domestic students had to have never been at any time more than one third of its full capacity as the waver of Article 21 clearly shows. The opposite perception is that the law hoped the international students should be as much as two thirds of the whole students, and in this course required them to enter IKIU and not anywhere else in the country for studying and to accompany the domestic students so they would get easily accustomed with the Islamic culture and Iranian revolution.

Ratified shortly after the victory of the revolution and in the middle of the war with Iraq, the law clearly shows dominance of the idealist approach in its objectives and goals. However, IKIU's statute which ratified later in 1998 by the reformist government of Khatami heading the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution (SCCR) though preserving the two goals of IKIU, changed not only the decision making body of the university but its objectives as well. Accordingly, IKIU were:

- 1) Enhancing and realizing the Islamic culture in the Islamic world
- 2) Expanding the Islamic culture and knowledge in the international level
- 3) Identifying the Islamic world figures for deepening the Islamic culture
- 4) Utilizing from sciences and techniques along with the Islamic culture
- 5) Training committed experts in order to make scientific and cultural self reliance of the Islamic countries and
- 6) Helping to expand the country's higher education

The statute's most concerns were reality and real restrictions, as it differentiated between the “the Islamic world” and the wider scene of “international.” In the context of the Islamic world, IKIU had to “enhance and realize the Islamic culture,” while in that of international level it had

only to “expand the Islamic culture and knowledge.” Another change was in applying Persian language as a tool for teaching university courses. Teaching in other courses was permitted according to the Article 2 of the statute, but if only “needed and necessitated” and had to be “proposed by the university council and ratified by the board of trustees” thus made harder or even impossible.

Reemphasizing the priority of the international students to the domestic ones in IKIU, Article 5 (15) of the statute explicitly stated that they would never be less than half of the whole students meaning that the rise in domestic students may be allowed if it leads to the rise in the number of international students. This equilibrium, according to the law and statute, should be a bound in IKIU's growth both in quantity and in quality as well.

Concerning the admission, a centralized policy was adopted from the beginning by MSRT and ministry's circular of 29 April 1983 centralized the policy in the hands of ministry itself. However, according to a later circular of 15 February 1989, while maintaining the centralized policy, the ministry transferred this mission to IKIU though it had not yet started its work and gave it the exclusive authority to put the admission policy into action. Based on Article 3, IKIU was obliged to "select and admit some eligible applicants for two semesters a year considering the vacancies in the universities and higher education institutions." Accordingly, IKIU instituted an admission committee to receive foreign applications and documents, to investigate their profiles and to hold their archives. IKIU's dean for education was the head of this committee and the dean for international students was its secretary and thus an office opened at IKIU's office in Darband, Tehran. IKIU was given mandatory until when the students would enroll in their university courses provided. Even before enrollment to any courses, international students were required to acquire appropriate knowledge in Persian language and take supplementary pre-university subjects for 9 months in IKIU's Persian Language Center. It was only after the university course enrollment that MRST would have taken the mandatory.

Academic committee used to hold its meetings in Central secretariat in IKIU's office at Darband until 1998 but then transferred its meetings to MSRT's headquarter while Central secretariat in Darband was still receiving and investigating foreign applications. This job also transferred in 2003 to MSRT. From 1992 to 2000 there was an especial consideration in appointing the dean for international students, and he was appointed by IKIU's president after being approved by the Ministry of Intelligence. Revising its operation since 2000, the Ministry left all its functions to IKIU and continued its supervision through a representative in the

"academic qualification investigation committee" up until 2003. Since then IKIU needed no approval for appointing the dean for its international students.

Table 1- Admission number of International Students

Year	Place of Committee	Admission No.
1994	IKIU	152
1995	IKIU	202
1996	IKIU	451
1997	IKIU	650
1998	MSRT	359
1999	MSRT	414
2000	MSRT	492
2001	MSRT	537
2002	MSRT	608
2003	MSRT	402
2004	MSRT	580
2005	MSRT	383
	Total	5230

Source: IKIU Central Secretariat, Darband

In his circular of 11 April 2005, Jafar Tofiqi, the last Khatami's reformist minister of MSRT authorized all universities and higher education centers to admit international students and even allowed the universities to run their classes in secondary language - preferably English - and in this way not only put an end to the centralized policy of IKIU's or MSRT's central secretariat but the teaching monopoly in Persian language and IKIU exception in secondary languages were neglected as well.

Table 2: International Students Applications from around the world

Region	Country	No.	Percent	Region	Country	No.	Percent
Asia	Afghanistan	895	12.22	Africa	Equatorial Guinea	113	1.54
	Pakistan	549	7.49		Morocco	112	1.53
	Tajikistan	368	5.02		Nigeria	90	1.23
	China	223	3.04		Senegal	86	1.17
	India, Kashmir	163	2.22		Somalia	81	1.11
	Turkey	152	2.07		Mali	70	0.96
	Azerbaijan	109	1.49		Kenya	63	0.86
	Turkmenistan	61	0.83		Chad	62	0.85
	Indonesia	58	0.79		Burkina Faso	52	0.71
	Russia	58	0.78		Egypt	50	0.68
	Nakhchivan	50	0.68		Ethiopia	47	0.64
	Kazakhstan	43	0.59		Benin	42	0.57
	Bangladesh	41	0.56		Tanzania	31	0.42
	Thai	37	0.51		Burundi	26	0.35
	Kyrgyzstan	22	0.30		Mauritania	26	0.35
	South Korea	22	0.30		Libya	22	0.30
	Japan	20	0.27		Cameroon	19	0.26
	Georgia	15	0.20		Central Africa	17	0.23
	Sri Lanka	14	0.19		Liberia	17	0.23
	Armenia	13	0.18		Djibouti	16	0.22
Myanmar	13	0.18	Togo	13	0.18		
Malaysia	12	0.16	Nigeria	13	0.18		

Africa	Sudan	239	3.26	Austria			1	0.01
	Ghana	223	3.04	U.K			1	0.01
	Comoros	192	2.62	Belgium			1	0.01
	Ivory Coast	155	2.12	Sweden			1	0.01
	Gambia	135	1.84	Total			7326	100

Source: IKIU secretariat, Darband

Table 3: International Students in Iran

	Country	No.	Gender		Scholarship status			Program			Marital	
			M	F	Full	Half	None	BA/BS	MA/MS	PhD	M	S
1	Afghanistan	145	108	37	36	96	13	81	39	25	31	114
2	Syria	136	126	10	35	100	1	103	15	18	11	125
3	Iraq	82	46	36	5	17	60	55	20	7	3	79
4	Yemen	62	56	6	18	42	2	47	12	3	14	48
5	Lebanon	61	50	11	19	41	1	46	5	10	13	48
6	Tajikistan	40	31	9	15	25	0	31	8	1	6	34
7	China	38	23	15	15	16	7	28	5	5	10	28
8	Turkey	33	13	20	15	16	2	18	10	5	8	25
9	Pakistan	26	19	7	16	8	2	2	7	17	18	8
10	Azerbaijan	17	12	5	8	8	1	9	5	3	7	10
11	India	13	11	2	7	3	3	4	7	2	1	12
12	South Korea	12	9	3	0	0	12	4	7	1	3	9
13	Palestine res. in Syria	11	11	0	7	4	0	10	0	1	1	10

14	Russia	9	7	2	1	8	0	8	1	0	1	8
15	Jordan	8	7	1	4	4	0	4	0	4	1	7
16	Japan	8	4	4	0	5	3	1	4	3	1	7
17	Ukraine	6	2	4	2	2	0	2	0	4	1	5
18	Bosnia & Herzegovina	6	5	1	6	0	0	4	0	2	3	3
19	Turkmenistan	6	5	1	3	3	0	4	2	0	1	5
20	Sudan	6	6	0	4	2	0	3	0	3	2	4
21	Indonesia	5	3	2	3	1	1	1	3	1	0	5
22	Somali	5	5	0	1	4	0	5	0	0	0	5
23	Oman	5	3	2	0	1	4	2	2	1	0	5
24	Palestine res. in Lebanon	5	5	0	3	2	0	4	1	0	1	4
25	Morocco	5	0	5	3	2	0	0	2	3	3	2
26	Armenia	4	1	3	1	3	0	2	0	2	0	4
27	German	4	2	2	0	2	2	3	1	0	0	4
28	Thai	4	1	3	0	3	1	1	1	2	0	4
29	Palestine	4	3	1	4	0	0	3	1	0	0	4
30	Philippine	4	3	1	2	0	2	2	0	2	1	3
31	Georgia	4	1	3	4	0	0	0	0	4	1	3
32	Austria	3	2	1	1	2	0	0	2	1	3	0
33	Ethiopia	3	3	0	1	2	2	1	2	0	0	3
34	Spain	3	2	1	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	3
35	Albania	3	3	0	1	2	0	3	0	0	0	3
36	UAE	3	3	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	3
37	Bahrain	3	3	0	0	1	2	1	1	1	2	1

38	Bangladesh	3	3	0	1	2	0	1	0	2	3	0
39	Saudi Arabia	3	1	3	0	0	3	1	2	0	0	3
40	Palestine res. in Jordan	3	1	2	1	2	0	3	0	0	0	3
41	Kyrgyzstan	3	3	0	1	2	0	3	0	0	0	3
42	Cuba	3	3	0	2	0	1	1	2	0	0	3
43	Nigeria	3	3	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
44	India Kashmir	3	3	0	1	1	1	1	2	0	0	3
45	USA	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	2
46	Bulgaria	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	2
47	Denmark	2	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	2
48	Romania	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
49	Ivory coast	2	1	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	2
50	Kana	2	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	1
51	Kazakhstan	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	2
52	Qatar	2	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	2
53	Gabon	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
54	Malaysia	2	0	2	0	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
55	Macedonia	2	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	1	1
56	Algeria	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
57	Burkina Faso	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
58	Tanzania	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
59	Sri Lanka	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
60	Senegal	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
61	Cameroon	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0

Official statistics on admission numbers show that the committee's activities located at Darband in 1994-1998 was always moving upward, though smoothly, and in its 4 year activity increased up to 4 times of its initial one. However, when the secretariat moved to MRST in 1998, this trend noticeably decreased to half of its number and kept its fluctuations up until 2005.

Despite 1994-2003 archival profiles of Central Secretariat at Darband showing receipt of 7326 applications from 103 countries out of which 2578 had been admitted, the numbers prove nothing as no one may be sure of anyone who may have ever enrolled in IKIU Persian Language Center, any courses in other universities or even have entered in Iran. Furthermore they might have been dismissed from the university and deported from Iran thus had no chance of completing their studies.

A more reliable statistics on the real numbers of international students studying in Iran is MSRT's report on 27 April 2007, announcing their numbers 851 people from 71 different nations based on the countries subject to, gender, kind of scholarship, program enrolled and their marital status. (See table 3)

Another report issued in that year by MSRT indicates distribution of international students in 49 Iranian higher education and research institutes. Accordingly, the most frequencies of the students were in two universities of IKIU and Tehran University. Although the number of students in these two universities was the same, the differentiations were many as Tehran University hosted more PhD, MA/MS, stipend and married international students whereas IKIU hosts more BA/BS and single ones. IKIU as a new built university is not much improved and equipped in post-graduate fields as Tehran University as the oldest university of Iran is well equipped. Another important point here is the attention paid by MSRT to Tehran University, as it received three times more full scholarships than IKIU while IKIU had to admit two times more students of half scholarship and self paying fees than Tehran University. (See tables 3 and 4)

Investigating 7404 applications rejected by IKIU Central Secretariat also indicates a direct correlation between number of admitted applicants and the number of applications received from different regions and nations. The number of rejected applicants is as follow: South America 1, Oceania 2, and North America 10, Central America 11, West Europe 19 (%0.3), East Asia 83 (%1.1), East Europe 91 (%1.2), Central Asia and Caucasus 687 (%9.3), Indian Peninsula 714 (%9.6), Middle East 830 (%11.2) and the most rejections from South and Central Africa totally 4956 (%66.9). In another account, 1223 rejected cases (%16.5) were from

neighboring countries whereas 6181 cases (%83.5) were from none neighboring ones. (See Table 5)

Table 4: International Students in Iran

University	No.	%	University	No.	%
IKIU	129	15.16	Imam Sadegh	6	0.71
Tehran	129	15.16	Osule Din University	6	0.71
Tarbiat Modarres	54	6.35	Yazd	6	0.71
Allame Tabatabai	54	6.35	Orumiye	5	0.59
Ferdosi Mashhad	54	6.35	Razavi Mashhad	5	0.59
Shahid Beheshti	40	4.70	MFA School of Int. Relations	4	0.47
Esfahan	35	4.11	Esfahan Industrial	4	0.47
Bu Ali Sina	27	3.17	Tarbiat Moalem Tehran	3	0.35
Art	23	2.70	Qom Higher Education Center	3	0.35
Shiraz	22	2.59	Sistan va Baluchestan	3	0.35
Mofid Qom	22	2.59	Bime Higher Education Center	3	0.35
Amir Kabir Industrial	18	2.12	Kar High Education center of Qazvin	3	0.35
Gilan	18	2.12	Honar e Esfahan	3	0.35
Al Zahra	17	2.00	Zanjan	2	0.24
Iran Science & Industry	17	2.00	Gorgan	2	0.24
Mazandaran	17	2.00	Bagherol Olum High Education Center	2	0.24
Shahid Chamran	14	1.65	Payame Noor	1	0.12
Seda va Sima	14	1.65	Jame Elmi Karbordy	1	0.12
Qom	13	1.53	Shahid Bahonar Kerman	1	0.12
Khage Nasire Din Tussi	11	1.29	Aviation Industrial	1	0.12
Tabriz	10	1.18	Chababar Marin Science	1	0.12
Sana't Naft	10	1.18	Qom Olum va Hadis	1	0.12
Khabar	9	1.06	Ahle Beit Education Center	1	0.12
Sharif Industrial	8	0.94	Iran Hekmat va Falsafe Research center	1	0.12
Kashan	8	0.94			

Source: MRST Reports, 2006

Table 5: Rejected applications by IKIU Central Secretariat

Countries	No.	%	Countries	No.	%
Ghana	885	12.0	Tunisia	12	0.2
Nigeria	489	6.6	Niger	12	0.2
Sudan	455	6.1	Seri Lanka	9	0.1
Ivory Coast	441	6.0	Malaysia	9	0.1
Pakistan	391	5.3	Mozambique	9	0.1
Afghanistan	371	5.0	Iran	8	0.1
Kenya	328	4.4	Kazakhstan	8	0.1
Ethiopia	282	3.8	Myanmar	8	0.1
India	279	3.8	Thailand	7	0.1
Somali	202	2.7	Colombia	7	0.1
Gambia	185	2.5	Algeria	6	0.1
Comoros	168	2.3	England	6	0.1
Sir Leon	165	2.2	Ukraine	6	0.1
Syria	162	2.2	UAE	5	0.1
Chad	149	2.0	USA	5	0.1
Azerbaijan	136	1.8	Bahrain	5	0.1
Jordan	132	1.8	Sao tome	5	0.1
Mali	125	1.7	Canada	5	0.1
Senegal	118	1.6	Kuwait	5	0.1
Yemen	111	1.5	Madagascar	5	0.1
Tanzania	111	1.5	Angola	4	0.1
Burkina Faso	98	1.3	Armenia	4	0.1
Iraq	98	1.3	Zimbabwe	4	0.1
Uganda	98	1.3	Oman	4	0.1
Tajikistan	98	1.3	Russia	3	0
Brandy	86	1.2	Zambia	3	0
Djibouti	83	1.1	Ivory Coast	3	0
Congo	75	1.0	Ireland	2	0
Lebanon	75	1.0	Czechoslovakia	2	0
Morocco	69	0.9	Romania	2	0
Benin	62	0.8	France	2	0
Guinea	56	0.8	Korowais	2	0
Malawi	55	0.7	South Korea	2	0
Turkey	52	0.7	Cuba	2	0
Togo	44	0.6	Nepal	2	0
Libya	44	0.6	New Zealand	2	0
Bosnia	38	0.5	Netherlands	2	0

Albany	35	0.5	Yugoslavia	2	0
Bangladesh	35	0.5	German	1	0
Mauritania	34	0.5	Spain	1	0
Egypt	26	0.4	Italy	1	0
Turkmenistan	25	0.3	Brazil	1	0
Georgia	24	0.3	Belgium	1	0
Gabon	23	0.3	Bulgaria	1	0
Liberia	23	0.3	Portugal	1	0
Nakhchivan	22	0.3	Turkmenistan	1	0
Philippine	21	0.3	Rwanda	1	0
Central Africa	18	0.2	Sao tome	1	0
Indonesia	18	0.2	Sweden	1	0
Palestine	16	0.2	Switzerland	1	0
South Africa	14	0.2	Chili	1	0
China	14	0.2	Poland	1	0
Zaire	14	0.2	Mongolia	1	0
Cameron	13	0.2	Mexico	1	0
Eritrea	12	0.2	Total	7404	100.0

Source: IKIU secretariat, Darband

Conclusion

International student policy is one of the main educational policies in the world and is pursued by both developed and developing countries though with different approaches of cultural, economic, and political. For Islamic Iran, it is highly important to receive International students sincerely, educate, train and equip them with essentials of scientific theories and instruments. However, the many obstacles in this path have thwarted even the most determined international students.

For that reason, these impediments will need to be addressed if the government is to expand the enrollment of international students. It is recommended to increase the budget of scholarship and allocate more on talented individuals who are eager to study in the fields important to Iran. The government needs to have a comprehensive strategic plan for international education and promote new approaches to that from time to time. These changes would involve government, business, and universities. To deal with both policy and processing problems, the government needs to increase accountability and improve coordination among the numerous departments with authority over international students. One approach would be to require a single administration official to

coordinate policy and address emerging problems. That person could chair a coordinating council that would periodically meet on international student issues.

Table 6: Rejected applications on gender, religion, sponsors and degrees bases

		No.	%
Gender	Male	6735	91.5
	Female	625	8.5
Religion	Muslim	7128	97.8
	Christian	160	2.2
Sponsors	Personal request	2910	61.0
	Foreign affairs	858	18.0
	MSRT	508	10.6
	Islamic Culture and Communications Org.	197	4.1
	Universities	87	1.8
	Vahdat Party	61	1.3
	Imam Mahdi's school	48	1.0
	Health Ministry	38	0.8
	Leadership office	32	0.7
	Hezbollah	27	0.6
	Eco Insurance	5	0.1
	Nehzat	1	0
	Degrees	High School	4444
BA/BS		576	10.7
Under High School		197	3.7
MA/MS		129	2.4
PhD		25	0.5

Source: IKIU secretariat, Darband

The number of the international students in Iran is very low comparing to the hundred thousands of developed countries such as USA and Japan and even the developing countries such as Malaysia and Turkey. The universities need to increase their scientific collaboration and marketing abroad to attract international students to the Islamic Republic. While certainly, there are some collaboration and marketing abroad, the increased competition means more should be done by IKIU hoping to enroll more international students.

Iran is certainly the best place to gain education in some fields such as Islamic Shiite theology and Iranian sciences and arts. As the government continues to provide financial assistance to other nations, it should consider providing part of that assistance in the form of need-based vouchers to qualified international students from those nations to study at IKIU. This would turn a portion of foreign aid into student aid spent in the IRI for tuition and accommodation, while providing an opportunity to educate and expose individuals to Iran who do not possess the resources to self-fund. Assistance of any kind is most effective when it is tangible and directly affects the lives of individuals.

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