

# **Role of Universities and Higher Education Institutes in Peacebuilding in Afghanistan**

## **Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

Research on the role of universities in peace building in Afghanistan was conducted by Department of Peace and Conflict Studies in 2012. This was the first research on the mentioned topic which was done by a professional research center in Afghanistan.

Definition of peace in this research is **“Peace is a situation and procedure in which there is the potentiality of convergent activation and motivation of human forces and material resources towards obtaining peacefully and non-violently a more ideal conditions which is inclusive of and domination-free for all citizens.”**

The main objective of this research was to access a scientific knowledge on the role of universities in peace building and the proper and practical mechanisms for realizing peace in Afghanistan. The main research questions were:

1. How the universities can influence peace building process in Afghanistan?
2. What are the positive and negative conditions in universities which has effects on peace building process?
3. Which solutions can be suggested for improvement of the role of universities in peace building?

The researchers used both quantitative and qualitative methods in this research. Five percent of total population (all professors, associate professors and lecturers in public and private universities in Kabul) were elected based on purposive sampling method.

Qualitative method of data collection was implemented through a focus group discussion. Participants in focus group were elected considering different variables like gender, ethnicity, religion, social status, course of study, scientific degree, activity in different governmental and non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations etc.

This research report gives a good profile of peace studies background. The theoretical bases of this research have presented some important philosophical, religious and sociological approaches to peace and conflict. Consequently, the theoretical frame of this report shows the role of science, universal knowledge, education and finally universities as the most important academic centers in peace building.

Some important points in this research reports are as follow:

Data collected by this research shows that, 72.9 per cent of respondents have not participated in workshops and seminars on peace and conflicts in universities. It states that the main reason is the lack of seminars and workshops in universities. About 78.2 percent of the sample has claimed that there is not any especial program on peace building or internalizing peace values in their departments and faculties, but 67.6 of respondents use proper proverbs in their classes to promote peace. According to less than 40 percent of respondents' opinion, there are different types of religious, ethnic, political and lingual conflicts among university professors and lecturers in medium and high level. There is no specific department in relation to peace and conflict studies, as there is no such a field in universities and institutes of higher education. However, recently the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences and the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences have added a new subject related to peace and conflict into their curricula, which is a positive step.

The qualitative data shows that some respondents insisted the positive peace, whereas others emphasized on negative peace to be proliferated first as a precondition of a positive peace to be worked over the years. However, our definition of peace should be considering Afghanistan situation and realities. Universities have the highest legitimacy to give the exact, scientific and rational definition of peace as well as proper practicable policies for building peace. Universities can be free from exclusivism, ethnocentrism discriminations and generally beliefs, ideas, ideologies, methods and practices that are barriers to realize peace in Afghanistan.

Universities can be considered the best fields of communication and rational social actions. Thousands of students, professors and lecturers from different areas of social life, from rural and urban life styles, with different ethnicities, social status and religions, and genders come to universities and are influenced by the new values.

Some important suggestions to improve the role of universities in peace building are:

1. Establishing a department of peace in framework of universities to study conditions of peace, causes of conflicts and approaches and practices to build peace in an academic manner.
2. Revising the curricula and adding some proper new subjects geared to the realities of Afghanistan and the need for peace in this country.
3. Implementation of influential programs in order to improve peace values among students, professors and lecturers in departments and faculties. For example, scientific and artistic competitions and democratic dialogues will be effective in this case.
4. Using the peaceful methods of teaching, stories and proverbs in the classes by professors and lecturers.
5. Creating networks like unions and associations among students from different social organizations in order to internalize and institutionalize peace values among them.

6. Creating programs, spaces and schemes where to connect different universities, faculties and students and help them engage in joint activities, entertainments, learning and problems solving.
7. Holding seminars and conferences related to conflict management and peace building not only in the level of universities, but also in connection with different governmental organizations, NGOs and civil society organizations by universities.
8. Doing new and continuum researches on peace and conflicts in Afghanistan.
9. Broadcasting scientific programs of universities by the media to bring positive changes in the minds of different social groups.
10. Studying the experiences of other post-conflict countries, examine the conditions, challenges and approaches so that to provide more insights into peace process generally and building peace in Afghanistan in particular.
11. Suggesting for proper, rational and practical policies by universities on building peace in Afghanistan that can be used by the other social forces and government agencies.