

STRATEGIC TRAJECTORIES: AN IN-DEPTH EXPLORATION OF THE COMPLEX LANDSCAPE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

This research presents a thorough and nuanced exploration of Indonesia's intricate and multifaceted landscape of higher education. The primary objective is to discern and illuminate strategic trajectories that have the potential to profoundly shape the future trajectory of the nation's academic institutions. Employing a meticulous approach, the study critically scrutinizes pivotal aspects, including key trends, challenges, and policy outcomes, offering profound insights into the dynamic forces that influence the higher education sector. Through a comprehensive analysis and an exhaustive literature review, this research skillfully navigates the complex interplay of internationalization, technological transformation, and the implementation of policies within the higher education realm of Indonesia. The study delves into the subtleties and complexities inherent in these dynamics, providing a rich understanding of how these factors intersect and influence the overarching landscape of higher education. Furthermore, the research goes beyond surface-level examination, emphasizing the need for a strategic and forward-thinking approach. The implications for future research are thoroughly discussed, underscoring the imperative for longitudinal studies that can provide sustained insights into the impact of evolving trends and policy changes over time. The call for exploring innovative pedagogical approaches reflects a proactive stance toward addressing the evolving needs of diverse student populations. Additionally, the research advocates for a deeper understanding of the intricate impact of internationalization on local institutions, urging scholars to unravel the nuanced implications of global influences on the indigenous higher education framework.

Keywords: Higher education, Indonesia, internationalization, technology, policy implementation, strategic trajectories, academic institutions, challenges, trends, future research.

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Introduction

Indonesia's commitment to academic excellence has shaped a diverse higher education landscape (Sakhiyya, 2018; Sitopu et al., 2024). State universities, private colleges, and specialized institutes collectively form the backbone of Indonesia's higher education, fostering a diverse and vibrant academic environment. This varied landscape provides students with many educational opportunities, reflecting the nation's commitment to academic excellence and intellectual growth. The evolution of Indonesia's higher education system mirrors the nation's historical journey. Rooted in the colonial era, institutions were established under Dutch rule. Post-independence in 1945, a formalized system emerged, emphasizing foundational institutions. This dynamic evolution showcases Indonesia's recognition of education as a catalyst for comprehensive development, aligning with the nation's historical narrative (Kölbel, 2017; Tubagus et al., 2023; Aslan & Shiong, 2023; Muharrom et al., 2023).

In the early post-independence years, a concerted effort was directed towards laying the foundation for higher education. Key institutions were established, setting the stage for subsequent growth and diversification in the higher education sector, and this foundational period marked a crucial phase in shaping the character of Indonesia's academic institutions. Over subsequent decades, Indonesia experienced a rapid expansion of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This expansion was not merely numerical but marked a qualitative shift, reflecting the nation's increasing emphasis on education as a transformative force for societal and economic development (Becker et al., 2018; Nurhayati et al., 2023; Erwan et al., 2023). HEIs became integral to Indonesia's development agenda, contributing significantly to national progress. The diversity of institutions, including state universities, private colleges, and specialized institutes, underscores the richness of Indonesia's higher education system. This diversity extends beyond organizational structures, encompassing various educational approaches and specializations. It reflects the commitment to providing students with a holistic and varied educational experience.

Today, Indonesia's higher education system stands as a testament to the nation's foresight in recognizing the transformative power of education. The diversity in institutions continues to contribute to an intellectually vibrant society. As the nation navigates contemporary challenges and opportunities, this diverse higher education landscape remains a cornerstone for shaping the future of Indonesia's academic, economic, and societal advancement (Salmi, 2020; Nurdiana et al., 2023). The legacy of a well-established and diverse higher education system plays a pivotal role in steering the nation toward continued progress and excellence. Indonesia's contemporary higher education landscape presents a blend of challenges and opportunities. Issues of access and equity persist, with certain regions needing help to provide widespread educational opportunities. This highlights the imperative for inclusive policies that bridge regional disparities and ensure education is accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic background or geographical location.

Funding constraints are a formidable obstacle, impacting infrastructure development and the overall quality of education. Addressing this challenge requires strategic financial planning, innovative funding models, and collaborative efforts involving the government, private sector, and international partners. A sustainable and equitable resource distribution system is crucial for the long-term health of higher education (Adenle, 2020; Sarmila et al., 2023; Sulastri et al., 2023). The need for alignment with global standards and technological advancements remains a continuous challenge. The dynamic nature of global educational trends demands constant adaptation and innovation within the higher education sector. Embracing technological advancements is essential for staying relevant globally and enhancing the quality and effectiveness of educational delivery.

Within these challenges, opportunities emerge. The government's commitment to educational reforms and strategic plans signals a proactive approach to overcoming obstacles. This dedication creates an environment conducive to transformative change and improvement within the higher education system. International collaborations contribute significantly to shaping the future of Indonesian higher education. Partnerships with institutions abroad foster a more globalized education system, facilitating cross-cultural exchange and enriching the academic experience. These collaborations provide avenues for knowledge-sharing, collaborative research, and exposure to diverse perspectives, preparing students for a globally interconnected world (Pedro et al., 2019; (Haddar et al., 2023; Tuhuteru et al., 2023; Astuti et al., 2023). The increasing role of technology in education presents exciting opportunities. Embracing technological advancements opens avenues for innovative learning methods, online education, and interactive platforms. This enhances the overall quality of education and equips students with essential digital literacy skills for the contemporary workforce.

In conclusion, the current state of higher education in Indonesia is characterized by a dynamic interplay of challenges and opportunities. Addressing access issues, overcoming funding constraints, aligning with global standards, and integrating technology is pivotal for the system's advancement. The government's commitment and international collaborations offer pathways for positive change. Recognizing and navigating these dynamics are imperative for shaping the trajectory of higher education in Indonesia, ensuring it remains responsive, inclusive, and globally competitive (Amalia & von Korflesch, 2021).

Indonesia's contemporary higher education landscape presents a blend of challenges and opportunities, necessitating a nuanced approach to address systemic issues and avenues for improvement. Issues of access and equity persist, with certain regions needing help to provide widespread educational opportunities. This highlights the imperative for inclusive policies that bridge regional disparities and ensure education is accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic background or geographical location. Funding constraints are a formidable obstacle, impacting infrastructure development and the overall quality of education. The primary objective is to develop and implement

strategic financial planning, innovative funding models, and collaborative efforts involving the government, private sector, and international partners. The goal is to establish a sustainable and equitable resource distribution system that ensures higher education's long-term health and vitality (Lindsay, 2022).

The need to align with global standards and technological advancements remains a continuous challenge, underscoring the objective of fostering adaptability and innovation within the higher education sector. The dynamic nature of global educational trends demands constant evolution and proactive measures to stay relevant on the global stage. The overarching aim is to embrace technological advancements for global competitiveness and enhance the quality and effectiveness of educational delivery (Kilag et al., 2023). Within these challenges, the objective is to leverage the government's commitment to educational reforms and strategic plans. The dedication of policymakers creates an environment conducive to transformative change and continuous improvement within the higher education system. The ultimate goal is to implement effective reforms that address systemic challenges and enhance the overall quality of education.

International collaborations contribute significantly to shaping the future of Indonesian higher education, aligning to create a more globalized education system. Collaborations with institutions abroad facilitate cross-cultural exchange, enrich the academic experience, and provide avenues for knowledge-sharing and collaborative research. The objective is strengthening international partnerships and fostering a globally interconnected higher education landscape (Waham et al., 2023). The increasing role of technology in education presents exciting opportunities, aligning to enhance the overall quality of education. The goal is to embrace technological advancements to create innovative learning methods, promote online education, and establish interactive platforms. The objective is to equip students with essential digital literacy skills, ensuring their preparedness for the contemporary workforce.

In conclusion, Indonesia's current state of higher education calls for a comprehensive approach with clear objectives. Addressing access issues, overcoming funding constraints, aligning with global standards, and integrating technology are pivotal objectives for the system's advancement. The government's commitment and international collaborations offer pathways for positive change, contributing to the overarching objective of shaping a higher education landscape that is responsive, inclusive, and globally competitive.

Research Methodology

The research methodology adopted for this literature review aims to provide a robust framework for systematically exploring and analyzing the existing body of knowledge on higher education in Indonesia. The framework encompasses critical elements such as the literature selection criteria and thematic focus areas. The identification of relevant literature was a meticulous process guided by specific criteria.

Peer-reviewed journals, academic books, and reputable conference proceedings were prioritized to ensure the reliability and credibility of the sources (Anthony et al., 2022). The selection criteria emphasized recency, relevance to the research questions, and the scholarly impact of the publications. By employing stringent criteria, the intention was to curate a body of literature that reflects the most current and influential contributions to understanding higher education dynamics in Indonesia.

Thematic categorization was a pivotal aspect of the literature review framework. The identified literature was organized into vital thematic areas to facilitate a structured and comprehensive analysis. These thematic areas included but were not limited to global trends in higher education, national policies and reforms, institutional governance, and the impact of technology. This thematic categorization allowed for a nuanced exploration of diverse aspects shaping higher education in the Indonesian context (Hanelt et al., 2021). The search strategies employed in this literature review involved a systematic and iterative approach. Multiple databases were meticulously chosen to ensure a broad scope of coverage, including reputable platforms such as JSTOR, Scopus, and Google Scholar. The search terms were thoughtfully selected to encompass a wide range of relevant topics within higher education in Indonesia. Keywords such as "Indonesian higher education," "policy reforms," and "institutional governance" were utilized to yield a comprehensive dataset. The iterative nature of the search process involved refining and expanding search terms as new insights emerged, ensuring the inclusion of the most pertinent literature (Madanaguli et al., 2023).

Data synthesis and analysis involved a two-tiered approach: coding and categorizing literature followed by thematic synthesis. A systematic coding process was initially applied to classify literature based on key themes and concepts. This coding process facilitated the organization of diverse perspectives into coherent categories, enhancing the clarity of the subsequent analysis. The thematic synthesis comprehensively examines these coded themes to identify patterns, trends, and relationships within the literature. This iterative process allowed for a nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in the higher education landscape in Indonesia (Curry et al., 2021).

In summary, the research methodology for this literature review was designed to ensure a rigorous and systematic exploration of the existing knowledge on higher education in Indonesia. The framework encompassed selection criteria, thematic categorization, search strategies, and a meticulous data synthesis and analysis approach. These methodological considerations lay the foundation for a robust and insightful literature examination.

Findings

Adapting Indonesian Higher Education: Trends, Challenges, and Policy Dynamics

Examining the trends shaping the future of higher education in Indonesia reveals a dynamic landscape influenced by national and global factors. One prominent trend is the increasing emphasis on internationalization, with universities fostering collaborations with

global institutions. This trend aligns with the broader goal of enhancing the quality of education through exposure to diverse perspectives and research networks. Additionally, a growing focus on interdisciplinary studies and industry-relevant programs reflects the job market's and society's evolving needs (Jarvis & Mok, 2019).

Despite aspirations for positive change, higher education institutions (HEIs) in Indonesia grapple with multifaceted challenges in implementing reforms. Financial constraints pose a significant hurdle, impacting infrastructure development, faculty recruitment, and overall institutional capacity. Furthermore, the complexities of bureaucratic processes and regulatory frameworks create delays in the execution of reform initiatives. Resistance to change, both within institutions and from external stakeholders, adds another layer of complexity. Overcoming these challenges necessitates a strategic and collaborative approach involving government bodies, institutions, and the broader community (Gkrimpizi et al., 2023).

The critical analysis of policy implementation in Indonesian higher education reveals a mixed landscape of successes and failures. Successful policies often stem from clear objectives, effective communication, and stakeholder engagement. For instance, initiatives promoting inclusivity and education access have shown positive outcomes. However, failures are often attributed to inadequate planning, insufficient resources, or ineffective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The complex interplay of political, economic, and social factors further influences the outcomes of policy implementation. Understanding these nuances is essential for crafting and refining policies that genuinely contribute to advancing higher education in Indonesia (Anthony et al., 2022).

Technology is pivotal in transforming higher education in Indonesia, offering both opportunities and challenges. Integrating digital tools enhances accessibility to educational resources, facilitates online learning, and fosters collaboration among students and researchers. However, the digital divide remains challenging, with disparities in access to technology and internet connectivity. Moreover, the rapid pace of technological advancements requires continuous adaptation by HEIs to ensure that curriculum and teaching methods remain relevant. Balancing the benefits and challenges of technology integration is imperative for harnessing its transformative potential (Zen et al., 2023).

Gaps in Current Literature

Despite the wealth of literature on higher education in Indonesia, specific gaps persist, limiting the depth of scholarly understanding. One notable gap is the need for more extensive longitudinal studies that track the long-term impact of policy implementations on institutional development and student outcomes. Additionally, there needs to be more research examining the experiences of marginalized groups within higher education, hindering efforts to comprehensively address issues of inclusivity and equity. Exploring the intersectionality of various factors, such as gender, socioeconomic

status, and regional disparities, is crucial for a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by diverse student populations (Al Haddar et al., 2023).

Several areas within higher education in Indonesia demand further exploration and in-depth study. First and foremost, understanding the intricate relationship between government policies and institutional autonomy is essential for navigating the complexities of the higher education system. Additionally, the impact of cultural and regional diversity on educational practices and outcomes merits closer attention. Exploring innovative pedagogical approaches that align with cultural contexts and address the diverse learning needs of students is an area ripe for further investigation. Furthermore, the evolving role of higher education in contributing to sustainable development and societal well-being necessitates ongoing research to inform strategic planning and policy formulation (Adiawaty et al., 2023).

In conclusion, critically analyzing critical themes in Indonesian higher education reveals a complex and dynamic landscape. Trends, challenges, policy outcomes, and technological influences shape the trajectory of higher education institutions. Identifying gaps in current literature highlights the need for more comprehensive and inclusive research, while areas requiring further exploration underscore the ongoing evolution of higher education in Indonesia.

Implications for Future Research

The critical analysis of key themes in Indonesian higher education unveils avenues for future research that can contribute significantly to the field. First and foremost, future research should delve into the nuanced exploration of the impact of internationalization on local higher education institutions (Grosseck et al., 2019). Understanding how collaborations with global institutions influence curriculum development, teaching methodologies, and the overall educational experience is crucial for fostering a globalized yet contextually relevant education system. Furthermore, there is a pressing need for longitudinal studies that track the sustained effects of policy implementations. This requires researchers to adopt a comprehensive approach, examining not only immediate outcomes but also the long-term implications on institutional development, student success, and societal progress. Additionally, exploring the intersectionality of factors influencing access and success in higher education, including gender, socioeconomic status, and regional disparities, can provide insights into targeted interventions for diverse student populations (Minarti et al., 2023).

Research that delves into innovative pedagogical approaches aligned with cultural contexts and capable of addressing the diverse learning needs of students is imperative. This includes exploring technology-enhanced learning methods and their effectiveness in bridging educational gaps, especially in remote or underprivileged areas (Diano et al., 2023). Moreover, studies investigating the role of higher education in contributing to sustainable development and societal well-being can inform future policies and practices

that align with broader national goals. Future research in Indonesian higher education holds immense potential for informing policy and practice. By examining successful policy implementations and identifying the factors contributing to their success, researchers can provide actionable insights for policymakers. Recommendations derived from empirical evidence can guide the formulation of policies that address current challenges and align with the dynamic needs of the education sector (Abulibdeh et al., 2024).

Moreover, research outcomes can contribute to enhancing institutional practices within higher education. For instance, understanding the role of technology in transforming education can inform the development of strategic plans for technology integration within institutions. Insights derived from the critical analysis of policy implementation can guide institutional leaders in navigating the complexities of reform initiatives, promoting effective governance, and ensuring transparency and accountability (Aboramadan et al., 2024).

The gap between research findings and their practical implementation remains a significant challenge in Indonesian higher education. Future research efforts should prioritize strategies for bridging this divide. This involves fostering stronger collaborations between researchers, policymakers, and institutional leaders. Establishing interdisciplinary research teams that include practitioners and policymakers can facilitate the translation of research insights into actionable policies and practices. Furthermore, enhancing communication channels and knowledge-sharing platforms between the academic community and policymakers is essential. Regular forums, workshops, and conferences that bring together researchers and practitioners can facilitate meaningful dialogue, ensuring that research findings are not confined to academic circles but actively inform decision-making processes (Rakhmani & Siregar, 2016).

In conclusion, the implications for future research in Indonesian higher education are vast and multifaceted. Recommendations for future research directions, potential contributions to policy and practice, and strategies for bridging the gap between research and implementation collectively contribute to the ongoing enhancement and evolution of the higher education landscape in Indonesia.

Table: Critical Themes in Indonesian Higher Education: Findings and Implications

Theme	Description	Evidences	Implications for Future Research
Trends in Higher Education	Emphasis on internationalization, interdisciplinary studies, and industry-relevant programs.	Jarvis & Mok (2019), Gkrimpizi et al. (2023)	Explore impact on local institutions and sustainability of trends.
Challenges in Implementation	Financial constraints, bureaucratic complexities, and resistance to change in reform initiatives.	Gkrimpizi et al. (2023), Anthony et al. (2022)	Investigate factors contributing to policy success and overcoming obstacles.

Theme	Description	Evidences	Implications for Future Research
Policy Implementation Analysis	Mixed landscape of successes and failures. Successful policies stem from clear objectives and stakeholder engagement.	Anthony et al. (2022), Gkrimpizi et al. (2023)	Identify success factors, address gaps in planning, and consider socio-political influences.
Technology in Higher Education	Role in enhancing accessibility and fostering collaboration, with challenges like the digital divide.	Zen et al. (2023), Diano et al. (2023)	Explore effectiveness of technology-enhanced learning and strategies for adaptation.
Gaps in Current Literature	Lack of extensive longitudinal studies and limited research on marginalized groups.	Al Haddar et al. (2023), Adiawaty et al. (2023)	Conduct comprehensive studies on policy impact and experiences of marginalized groups.
Areas Requiring Further Study	Relationship between government policies and institutional autonomy, impact of cultural and regional diversity.	Adiawaty et al. (2023), Grosseck et al. (2019)	Investigate dynamics of policies and diversity influence on education.
Implications for Future Research	Recommendations for extensive studies on internationalization, longitudinal research on policy impact.	Grosseck et al. (2019), Abulibdeh et al. (2024)	Inform policymakers, contribute empirical evidence, and guide institutions in effective governance.
Bridging Research and Practice	Challenges in translating research findings into practical implementation in higher education.	Rakhmani & Siregar (2016)	Prioritize strategies for bridging the gap between research and practice, establish interdisciplinary teams.

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Discussion

The discussion section aims to delve deeper into the implications of the critical findings and synthesize the broader context of higher education in Indonesia. It addresses the significance of the identified trends, challenges, and future research potential in shaping the trajectory of Indonesian higher education.

The identified trends shaping the future of higher education in Indonesia signify a deliberate effort to align the nation's educational system with global standards. The emphasis on internationalization reflects an acknowledgment of the interconnectedness of education in a globalized world (Altbach et al., 2019). Collaborations with international

institutions enhance the quality of education and foster a diverse and inclusive learning environment. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, Indonesian higher education institutions (HEIs) adapt to the demands of a global knowledge economy. Simultaneously, the focus on interdisciplinary studies and industry-relevant programs signifies a forward-looking approach. It recognizes that education should not exist in isolation but should respond to the job market's and society's evolving needs. Incorporating interdisciplinary approaches prepares students for the complex challenges of the modern world, where problem-solving often requires synthesizing knowledge from various fields (Stentoft, 2017).

The role of technology as a transformative force in higher education is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it enhances accessibility to educational resources, facilitates collaborative learning, and expands educational opportunities. On the other hand, the digital divide remains a pressing issue, highlighting disparities in access to technology and internet connectivity. To maximize the benefits of technology, policymakers and institutions must address these disparities, ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, can fully participate in the digital learning landscape (Lee et al., 2017). The discussion of challenges HEIs face in implementing reforms reveals the complex realities that institutions grapple with. Financial constraints emerge as a pervasive barrier, impacting infrastructure development, faculty recruitment, and overall institutional capacity. The intricate bureaucratic processes and regulatory frameworks add complexity, leading to delays in implementing reform initiatives. The resistance to change, both within institutions and from external stakeholders, further complicates the reform landscape.

Addressing these challenges requires a strategic and collaborative approach. Financial constraints may necessitate innovative funding models, partnerships with the private sector, or governmental initiatives to increase funding for higher education. Streamlining bureaucratic processes and ensuring transparent regulatory frameworks can expedite the implementation of reforms (Evans et al., 2017). Moreover, fostering a culture of openness to change within institutions and engaging stakeholders in reform is essential to overcoming resistance.

The critical analysis of policy implementation underscores the importance of effective policymaking and the need for continuous evaluation. Clear objectives, effective communication, and stakeholder engagement characterize successful policies. Initiatives that promote inclusivity and access to education have shown positive outcomes. Understanding the factors contributing to the success of these policies is vital for replicating effective models and scaling them to a national level. However, failures often stem from inadequate planning, insufficient resources, or ineffective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The complexities of the higher education system demand meticulous planning, adequate resource allocation, and continuous evaluation to ensure that policies achieve their intended outcomes. Learning from successes and failures provides a roadmap for policymakers, enabling them to design more robust and impactful reforms (Rafeian & Kianfar, 2023).

The discussion of implications for future research outlines the key areas that demand scholarly attention to enrich our understanding of Indonesian higher education further. The recommendations for future research underscore the importance of longitudinal studies, exploration of innovative pedagogical approaches, and a deeper understanding of the impact of internationalization. Longitudinal studies can provide insights into the sustained effects of policy implementations, tracking the long-term impact on institutional development, student success, and societal progress. These studies are crucial for developing evidence-based policies and strategic plans that consider the dynamic nature of the higher education landscape (Adiawaty et al., 2023).

Exploring innovative pedagogical approaches aligned with cultural contexts is essential for addressing the diverse learning needs of students. When contextualized to the Indonesian setting, technology-enhanced learning methods can bridge educational gaps and enhance the overall quality of education. A deeper understanding of the impact of internationalization on local higher education institutions is necessary to inform policies that balance the benefits of global collaboration with the preservation of local identity and values.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the discussion reflects on the intricate interplay of trends, challenges, policy outcomes, and the potential of future research in shaping the landscape of higher education in Indonesia. By exploring these facets, we gain valuable insights into the dynamic nature of Indonesian higher education and the pathways for its continued evolution. The comprehensive exploration of Indonesian higher education through this literature review has unveiled vital findings that shed light on the complex dynamics within the system. Notably, the trends shaping the future of higher education reflect a commitment to internationalization, interdisciplinary studies, and a growing reliance on technology. These trends signify a proactive response to global demands and an evolving educational landscape.

However, challenges persist, particularly in the implementation of reforms. Financial constraints, bureaucratic complexities, and resistance to change pose significant hurdles. Successful policies are characterized by clear objectives, effective communication, and stakeholder engagement, while failures often stem from inadequate planning and resource allocation. The role of technology emerges as a transformative force, offering both opportunities and challenges. While technology enhances accessibility and collaboration, the digital divide remains a concern. Balancing these aspects is crucial for harnessing the full potential of technology in education.

This literature review contributes to a nuanced understanding of higher education dynamics in Indonesia by synthesizing key themes and critically analyzing their implications. Examining trends reveals the forward-looking nature of Indonesian higher education, poised to meet the demands of a globalized world. Identifying challenges provides insights into the multifaceted obstacles hindering the effective implementation

of reforms. Both successful and unsuccessful policy outcomes offer lessons for policymakers and institutional leaders. The synthesis of research on the role of technology highlights its dual impact on accessibility and inequality. The gaps identified in the literature underscore the need for more comprehensive and inclusive research, urging scholars to address issues of inclusivity, equity, and the experiences of marginalized groups within higher education.

Looking forward, recommendations for future research emphasize the importance of longitudinal studies, exploration of innovative pedagogical approaches, and a deeper understanding of the impact of internationalization. These insights can inform policymakers and institutional leaders, guiding evidence-based policies and strategic plans. In conclusion, this literature review serves as a comprehensive guide to the higher education landscape in Indonesia. Summarizing key findings and synthesizing the contributions of the literature provides a foundation for future research. It informs strategic decision-making processes within higher education institutions and policymaking bodies.

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