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GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BANGLADESH, INDONESIA, MALAYSIA, AND PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This study explores evolving landscape of higher education in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia & Pakistan, emphasizing graduate attributes necessary for the success in the 21st-century workforce. The higher education policy documents were analyzed using the qualitative content analysis method and the themes were derived from developed countries' higher education documents. The analysis of documents analyzed in this study revealed that all the skills identified in higher education policy document of developed world were also the focus of higher education plans and these plans asked the universities to offer the programmes that prepare graduates who can thrive in multicultural, technology-driven environments while addressing local and global challenges, creating and strengthening the indigenous knowledge, employable & lifelong learning skills, intercultural adaptability, critical thinking, communication skills, ethical awareness, and adaptability. The analysis offered significant indormation in reaching the conclusion and making the suitable decesions about the phenomena under consideration. Moreover, this study recommends continuous evaluation of educational programmes to ensure the alignment with emerging trends as well as the development of the comprehensive frameworks for assessing the policy implementation.

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INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving landscape of the 21st century, being shaped by factors such as advances in technology, mass migration, new economic and business trends, and access to a wide range of choices contributing to forming their social, cultural, religious, and political values, made the countries to rethink their higher education (HE) policies, plans and budgets. The focus of HE in the last quarter of 20th century was science, information technology, and automation. The rapid rise in the use of internet, microprocessors, and software development and advances

in telecommunications (such as mobile phones and satellite systems) also contributed to the expansion of the service sectors (industries such as finance, healthcare, and IT) becoming the dominating sectors for job and revenue generation. The rise of global business and trade across countries and the spread of the services sector also saw new trends of capital investment from industrialized countries to countries with lower levels of industrialization (Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023).

This study focuses on Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Pakistan's (hereafter referred to as the 'states') HE systems and structures because these countries inherited the education system established by the British and continue to strengthen and expand the educational systems and collaborated with international organizations to strengthen their educational systems. These countries share the qualification frameworks, teaching English as a core course, textbooks used and recommended by these countries are prepared and published by the UK-based publication houses, such as the Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press, and the students after completing their first university degree from these countries prefer UK-based universities for their further studies, academic (masters) and research degrees (doctoral and post-doctoral). Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), public & private, in these countries, have signed academic, research, and professional agreements with different UK universities and British government offers the academic scholarships and research fellowships through the British Council in these countries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Graduate attributes (GA) are defined as a set of broad capabilities and qualities that students are expected to learn, practice, and develop during their academic study years in the selected disciplinary knowledge, extend it beyond that discipline knowledge, called interdisciplinary knowledge. These attributes are transferable across various contexts, making them essential for graduates' professional, personal, and civic success. While traditional university education has primarily focused on subject-specific knowledge, 21st century has prompted a shift towards equipping students with multifaceted skills and competencies that align with rapidly changing the global environment (Thornhill, Camarda, Mercier, Morisseau, Bougrine, Vinchon, Hayek, Landais & Mourey, 2023). HE authorities globally have defined GA and continue to change them to incorporate and reflect the creation of new fields of study and work and the expansion of the existing areas of research and work. The HEI responded to documents developed by the states, their HE authorities and they continue to develop and offer educational programmes aligned with states' goal of HE. For example, the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) created the second edition of The Australian Qualifications Framework and this document has since then seen many changes, called Addendums (The Australian Qualifications Framework, 2024).

The European Union connected the HE and HEI of its member countries through the European Qualifications Framework to encourage academic and professional linkages amongst HEI and to support mobility of students through cultural and academic exchange programmes amongst the universities and students of member countries. The HE authorities in these states formed quality assurance cells to ensure that the programmes taught at all levels in the universities are

meeting the needs of these states and producing graduates equipped with the knowledge and skills supporting them to be globally competitive. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has been aiming to enhance the quality and accessibility of HE across Pakistan and it is reflected in its recent policy, titled The Graduate Education Policy (GEP-2023) designed to address the evolving needs of academic community and job market (HEC, 2023). The QAA of UK supported HEC in revamping its Quality Assurance Agency, designing tools & guidelines to review the programmes, teaching, services and facilities. The Malaysian government created the National Higher Education Strategic Plan to monitor and review the working of different public and private sector HEI, aligned with goal given by the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia.

This body also works as a connection between students who wish to continue their studies and universities, providing scholarships and loans to students, funding different research centers, and establishing international partnerships and alliances (Ministry of Higher Education, 2024) with universities from different parts of the world. Bangladesh presented its National Strategic Plan for Higher Education Colleges in Bangladesh: 2023-2031 which was guided by National Education Policy 2010, Perspective Plan 2021-2041, Eighth Five Year Plan 2020-25, incorporated Sustainable Development Goals, and national and international needs to bring about quality changes in the teaching-learning environment and enhancing the quality of HE in Bangladeshi universities. Thus, this document contains guidelines ranging from the quality of educational programmes, financing of HE, and developing infrastructure in Bangladeshi universities, such as the development of the science, technology and ICT labs and centers (Ministry of Education, 2023; University Grants Commission of Bangladesh, 2018). Indonesia's Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, as well as Technology created the Directorate General of Higher Education, Research and Technology which provides funds, and supports them to connect to first-world universities and establish academic, and research links with them (The Ministry of Education, 2022).

A careful analysis of the education policy documents of the states revealed the focus of these documents on making education equitable, improving access to education, quality assurance and enhancement of educational programmes, the relevance of educational programmes to the 21st century, and employability of graduates, governance and autonomy of the HEI, promoting teaching and research in STEM areas, technology integration in academic and non-academic areas education. The education policies are also shaped by socio-cultural lives of the citizens of the states and religion, Islam, Islamic teachings, and Islamic values are visible in the education policies, plans, programmes approved to be taught at different levels, from early childhood education to highest level, post-doctoral fellowships. The other evidence of Islam being a force shaping these states' educational landscape is presence of a network of International Islamic Universities, established to teach Islam-focused areas of studies like Sharia, History, Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic Interpretation, Philosophy, Theology and Arabic language to Muslim students of these states. These universities expanded educational programs to areas of banking and finance and started offering programmes in Islamic Banking and Finance (Padmanabhan, 2023).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data for this study is extracted from the higher education policy documents, plans, and frameworks of Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia & Pakistan. The documents were downloaded from the government websites of the ministries of education and higher education. The text was analyzed using the qualitative content analysis method and the categories to analyze the policy documents were extracted using inductive approach, that is, extracted from the higher education policy documents and frameworks developed in the developed countries and the UNESCO documents on higher education (Chircop, 2022; Ministry of Education RoK, 2023; OECD, 2018). This approach was used in this study because this is the best approach due to its foundation in existing literature and data rather than intuition or personal preference. This approach also showed that researcher is committed to showing an understanding of the value of the data and designing the whole data analysis process around obtaining and analyzing research data existing in the already created knowledge. The documents of the EU, UNESCO, Korea, and Japan were carefully read codes, and themes were extracted inductively for this study.

The selection of these documents was also based on the fact that the states strive to emulate the education and higher education policies of these countries. The categories extracted were (1) value systems and ideological footing of HE system, (2) critical thinking and problem-solving skills, (3) ethical and moral reasoning, (4), employability skills, and (6) research and innovation skills. Documents for analysis were downloaded from government websites of Departments or ministries of Education and Higher Education of Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, & Pakistan. The first reading of policy documents analyzed in this study helped the author to mark data under different themes, and group data from different documents. The second reading was used to compare the texts classified under themes designed to analyze the data of this research to find similarities and differences in the data marked and grouped under different categories and themes. The data was described using thick description approach which encompasses the interpretation of the explicit and implicit messages as communicated through the texts, an account of intentional, communicative and interpretative meaning of the data (Jae-an Crisman, 2023).

FINDINGS OF STUDY

The analysis of the documents revealed that the authorities desired that HEI prepare graduates (i) whose value systems are aligned with the value and ideological system (Islamic values) of the state, (ii) possess critical thinking and problem-solving skills, (iii) capable to rationalize the global problems and issues using ethical and moral reasoning, (iv), have employability skills and compete at global level with their set of skills, (vi) competent to initiate, plan, execute and complete research and innovations in their areas of expertise and also in the interdisciplinary research areas, and (vii) adaptability and lifelong learning skills, which are also present in the HE documents of developed countries and reinforced by UNESCO as well. The development of moral values and civic engagement is paramount in HE documents and, in some instances, it is part of the university-wide programmes and curriculum. The analysis of HE documents showed a great emphasis upon protecting and promoting an Islamic value system compatible

with the global value system where justice, equality, fairness, rule of law, and construction of just state systems and structures to protect and safeguard the socio-economic disadvantaged groups.

Intercultural communication and understanding of the cultural and religious diversity of the countries and different groups living in these countries are also part of knowledge and skills that a graduate should learn and acquire. The founding fathers knew these countries were Muslim-majority countries and they ensured protection of religious minorities by enshrining equal rights, opportunities & status to religious minorities living in these countries. The Higher Education Strategic Plan (HESP) of Bangladesh suggested that the "curriculum will reflect the history and the spirit of the war of liberation and rich cultural diversity of Bangladesh" with a " strong emphasis upon ethics and moral values" which are "essential for cultivating patriotism, humanism, democratic values and cross-cultural sensibilities among our students" (University Grants Commission of Bangladesh, 2018, p. 35). The Malaysian HESP used "just, professional and talented" words to describe the focus of HESP in Malaysia for local consumption but also to export them to other countries. The HESP document explained each of these terms, 'just' "acting in the fairness, integrity and inclusiveness," 'professional,' "striving for the excellence," and 'talented,' "delivering the best to the stakeholders" (Ministry of Higher Education, 2018, p. 24).

The Indonesian and Pakistani HESP also showed the influence of Islam and Islamic values to be promoted not just through educational programmes but also through the activities planned and carried out on campus for the students and by the students and different student-run and managed clubs and societies. These countries have followed Western concept of government, a democratic government, where all eligible citizens cast votes to select the party they would like to form the government in these countries. Though these countries have seen periods of army rule periods followed by democratic governments and this is evident from HESP documents of these countries. The HESP document of Pakistan asked the universities to prepare graduates who possess the belief and value system needed to live and work in a democratic society and the global democratic world. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015 - 2025 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2018) presented to the Malaysian HEI to "embracing our values and culture" and suggested to the HEI that industry as well as employers "expect graduates who are learned, values-driven" (Ministry of Higher Education, 2018, p. 29) and have "ability to contribute to Malaysian society & actively participate in global arena" (Ministry of Higher Education, 2018, p. 37).

Indonesian government used Pancasila principle, (it is set of five key principles embodying the core tenets of independent Indonesian state and enunciated in preamble to 1945 Constitution) and asked HEI to prepare future graduates who possess basic values, Pancasila, "promoting a belief in monotheism as a religiously neutral and tolerant statement that puts Islam on an equal basis with the other religious systems: Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism), Buddhism and Hindu-Balinese; beliefs (OECD/Asian Development Bank, 2015, p. 55). HESP documents focused on developing graduates' critical thinking and problem-solving skills and connected

them with Indigenous solutions to solving national hitches using locally made & domestically available resources. These countries were aware of the need to develop Indigenous knowledge and know how to support the local industry and produce value-added products and services not just for local consumption but also to export them to other countries. The HEA advised the HEI to conceptualize the educational programmes that fix the industrial and technical gaps in these countries, that is, bringing the technical knowledge as well as skills of the graduates that contribute to generating the Indigenous solutions and these are at part with the industrialized countries.

The HEA of these countries believed that by giving a much-needed boost to industrialization of country, many other problems would also be resolved, such as youth unemployment and the inadequate scientific and technical knowledge and skills of the youth of these countries. The HESP asked for higher levels of investment in establishing scientific research centers and attracting scientific mind students to these programmes through the scholarship and research fellowships and grants (Ministry of Higher Education, 2018; OECD, 2024; University Grants Commission of Bangladesh, 2018). The HESP showed that the HE authorities believe that HE is the panacea of most of the problems of these countries and would contribute to the economic, industrial, and technological development The HESP urged the HEI to work with the industry and employers to produce a future workforce capable of creating the Indigenous solutions to indigenous problems using locally made and available resources (Murtaza & Hui, 2021). It was suggested that the HEA collaborate with the institution to prepare for "uncertain yet exciting environment. make sense of current trends and developments occurring globally" (Ministry of Higher Education, 2018) so that they could prove their skills, both, nationally, in the region and globally.

The HESP documents suggested that future programmes should focus on big data, machine learning, and other forms of data analytics because these areas are shaping and forming how businesses target and serve customers and also the next job creation area. The HESP suggested that HEI should ensure that their educational programmes and curriculum enable graduates to demonstrate their strong analytical skills and ability to approach challenges with innovative thinking; and encourage critical inquiry, enabling students to tackle complex problems using logical reasoning and sound judgment, resulting in the technological along with the economic development of these countries. The HESP focused on future employment opportunities and all the plans presented Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and related areas as an important area of focus of investment due to the fast-changing global map of technology and its impact on job markets in the HE documents and, in some instances, it is part of the university-wide programmes and curriculum. These documents wanted the HEI to study the local and international job markets and plan and offer the educational programmes preparing young people to find work in the newly emerging job market in the states and the global market.

The strategic plan documents asked whether the 'graduates and postgraduates experience any difficulties in finding appropriate employment or other career opportunities,' and if so, how

HEI could work with them to support them either to improve their skills or retrain them in the newly emerging job markets. The Bangladesh HESP suggested that HEI should work with the graduates and the industry in country to create opportunities for 1 million ICT and technology -related jobs (Ministry of Education, 2023). The Malaysian government suggested to all the stakeholders (HEI, state departments, and industry) to "enhance skills and competencies of the graduates for the employment" which could only be completed by reviewing the curriculum structure and its existing programmes. The document suggested that the HEI and the state departments should work with other international universities and plan student and faculty exchange programmes to enhance the teaching and learning and the efficacy of the educational programmes taught at Malaysian HEI (Ministry of Higher Education, 2018). The Indonesian and Pakistani governments' HESP also showed that governments and the HEA highlighted the need for and importance of expanding employment opportunities in the newly emerging job markets and adopting new technology in the traditional (agriculture) and non-formal service sectors.

The Indonesian government revised its previous HESP and with technical support from OECD and Asian Development Bank, created a new HESP that urged the Indonesia Indonesian HEI to realize the significance and importance of informal employment sectors. The strategic plan suggested to HEI that they should devise educational programmes to "expand opportunities for more secure income, greater productivity and better working conditions within informal sector, and to equip more people to make the transition from the informal to the formal sector" (OECD/Asian Development Bank, 2015, p. 24). The government of Pakistan while suggesting that HEI should develop quality assurance mechanism in academic & research administrative structures also urged the HEI to evaluate their existing programmes and plan new education programmes that are aligned with criterion of graduate employment skills, local and globally. Pakistan's HE strategic plan recommended that HEI should develop and teach educational programmes that would prepare future employers, employees & leaders, in enabling learning environment enriching and developing abilities, academic, research, professional & intellectual that would shape future academic, research and innovation landscape of Pakistan, region and global world.

Adaptability & Intercultural Learning

The governments of these states are aware of the diversity and plurality of these societies and the education policies highlighted the importance of multicultural education and presented it as endeavour to actualize educational equality for students from diverse groups (racial, ethnic, cultural, social-class, and linguistic groups). The states founded their educational systems on the principles of social justice , equality, fairness, and diversity and highlighted the importance of intercultural and multicultural education through educational spaces and educational materials. The violence between religious and ethnic groups in these countries also contributed to realising the importance of intercultural and multicultural education endeavour. There have been incidents of violence between ethnic, religious groups in different regions of Indonesia like disharmony among Chinese and Javanese ethnic groups, and conflict between Muslims and Christians in some areas of Indonesia. The Malaysian successive governments after violent

clashes between Malay and Chinese communities in May 1969 thought of creating a promoting united Malaysian nation. There are recorded incidents of violence against religious minorities in Bangladesh and Pakistan (Suntana & Tresnawaty, 2021). There are incidents of violence against Shia Muslim minority, Ahmadis, and Christians in Pakistan that have resulted in the loss of lives and affected the whole community (Mehfooz, 2021). The Founding Fathers of these states were aware of pluralistic makeup of societies and wanted to promote a single national identity.

Sukarno, for example, during the constitution-making exercise of Indonesia, suggested to the members of the constitution-making body that "if we establish a state based on Islam, many areas whose population is not Islamic, such as the Moluccas, Bali, Flores, Timor, Kai islands, and Sulawesi, will secede" (Feith & Castles, 1970, p. 164); Muhammad Ali Jinnah (known as Quaid-e-Azam in Pakistan, English translation, great leader) while speaking to the members of the first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan urged its members to be aware of the danger of using religion as the only course of constitution-making exercise and he pronounced during his address that all religious groups, majority, and minority religious groups are free to go to their worship places and the state would have no business regarding the religious beliefs of citizens, making religion the private matter (Khokhar & Muhammad, 2022). The Leaders of Bangladesh and the Malaysian independence movement leaders were aware of the role of the religious minority in their independence movements and urged their compatriots to view their countries as pluralistic societies and not just a Muslim-majority country only. For example, Malaysia introduced Malay-preference policies & Bangladesh and Pakistan made Islam as the state religion and pronounced that no law should be passed that is against Shria and Islamic teachings.

DISCUSSION

The shift in higher education is forced by rapid technological spreads, global connectivity, and dynamic socio-economic shifts that have radically transformed landscape of higher education globally. The states started making its higher education policies and strategic plans to respond to global changes and incorporated new areas of study and specializations like ICT, computer hardware, software, machine learning, and automation. HEI guided by state HEA redesigned competencies, skills, and disposition to support graduates in finding employment and thriving in this complex work environment. The HESP focus on preparing future graduates ready to live and work in 21st century, possessing employability skills, digital literacy, critical thinking, communication skills, ethical and moral awareness, adaptability, intercultural, and lifelong learning skills. The graduate attributes approach recognizes importance of not only producing subject-matter experts but also developing well-rounded individuals who can adapt to various roles and challenges in their lives (Thornhill-Miller et al., 2023). The analysis of the current set of HESP showed that these documents were built on earlier plans and the HEA made changes in their plans to make the new plans reflect the changing society, industry, and employment areas.

The old plans were not as detailed as the current ones, as they focused more on employability skills and having skills to find employment in industrial sector, lacking the focus on creating

graduates ready to adapt to changes in their workplaces, that is digitization. HEA recognized that their current plans were needed due to immense changes in way industrialization sector and the introduction of new industries and expansion of the service sector (Higher Education Commission, 2023; Ministry of Higher Education, 2018; Ministry of Education, 2022; University Grants Commission of Bangladesh, 2018). The study finds that though the HESP and quality assurance mechanism developed by HEA did not list graduate attributes but these documents urged the HEI to plan, develop, and teach educational programmes that prepare young men and women to be ready to find work in current marketplace and adapt their skills according to the fast-changing nature of different jobs and nature of the jobs, such as automated industry, service industry and jobs in sustainable agriculture and industrial sectors. The earlier studies about higher education in these countries (Hoodbhoy, 2021; Sarkar & Hossain, 2020; Tilak, 2015) also found similar issues as identified in this through the analysis of the HESP of these states.

The evaluation of the documents also revealed the HEA in these states have been interacting and developing academic, professional, and research connections with different government and non-governmental organizations such as European Qualifications Framework (EU, 2017), australia graduate skills assessment (Australian Qualifications Framework, 2024), Cambridge's Thinking Skills Assessment and the Workkeys assessment conducted by the American College Testing Center for Education and Work, etc. The deliberations process undertaken by the HEA in the states also showed the input as well as technical support provided by the international organizations and HEI and the HEA as they developed their plans and policies on the higher education qualification framework, its evaluation mechanism, as well as future development framework. Employability was the key focus area of the earlier HE development plans of these states and they continue to remain the key focus area of the current HE development plans pushed by the authorities and advised HEI to focus on working to produce graduates having 21st-century employability skills that not only consist of possessing technical or disciplinary expertise but also involve a range of soft skills and personal qualities enabling graduates to navigate evolving world of work (Abelha et al., 2020; Bonnard, 2020; Bridgstock, 2009; Tight, 2023).

The employability discourse and focus of HE has placed enormous pressure on HEI, making them think of discontinuing some programmes and starting new programmes that resulting in opening new employment opportunities for the graduates. Research suggests that graduates who possess both technical knowledge and the ability, to apply their skills in practical settings, and adapt their skills using the new technology are more likely to secure employment in their chosen fields (Byrne, 2022; Clarke, 2017). The universities in these states focus on the digital literacy for all their students irrespective of their area of study and specialization because of the realisation of how technology impacts skill set required for success in the 21st century. Digital literacy is no longer confined to basic skills such as browsing the internet to find information and online communication, but it has expanded to the ability to use technology and different technological platforms effectively and critically after evaluating information received from different platforms. Workplaces have increasingly been digitized, and graduates are supposed

to be proficient in using the various digital platforms, software, and tools to survive in such working environments, such as the ability to navigate social media, cloud-based platforms, & artificial intelligence systems (Assante et al., 2022; Cooney et al., 2018; Fernández-Prados et al., 2021).

This study shows that states' focus on preparing graduates to demonstrate digital citizenship, which includes ethical considerations such as data privacy, cybersecurity, and the responsible use of social media because digital literacy has become an important graduate attribute in the 21st century. The states have become sensitive to importance of existence of multiple religious, cultural, historical, political narratives and believe that some of these narratives are anti-state and anti-Islam. The states insisted that the graduates should be fully prepared to participate in a technology-driven world and find and read correct and authentic information and sources of information before making any choice. This is a new addition to earlier plans and it showed the states' inclination toward creating an environment where graduates learn difference between misinformation, misinformation and malinformation, take into account sources of information they access, and make informed decisions rooted in correct and authentic information the key focus area of the current HE (Alwreikat, 2022; Amorim & Miranda, 2021). The development of critical thinking skills requires more than memorization and recall of facts; it involves ability to engage in reflective thinking, question assumptions, and synthesize information from various sources.

The critical thinking is another core graduate attribute that has gained prominence in the 21st century as employers demand that graduate approaching them for employment should have critical thinking skills, coupled with the un-learning and re-learning, that would enable them to work in automated work environment, where information is rich but not always reliable. The documents analyzed in study showed that the states insisted that the graduates should develop critical thinking skills irrespective of their area of study, be it science, business, or the humanities & arts because this skill set contributes to developing graduates' ability to evaluate evidence, construct well-reasoned arguments and knowledge (Liyanage et al., 2021; Ostendorf & Thoma, 2022). HEA asked universities to prepare graduates who could create indigenous solutions by incorporating Western knowledge and practices in indigenous technology to find solutions to problems faced by states. The creation of indigenous solutions, the states believe, will demonstrate the use of critical thinking skills by the graduates enabling them to invent and improve the technology required to solve the country-specific problems and contribute to generating employment, and generating wealth, and prosperity for society (Berdykulova et al., 2021).

The analysis of the documents showed that HEA of these states are aware of fast-developing technological tools in the communication area and how they could be used by graduates, the ability to work collaboratively in remote settings, conveying ideas, and engaging with diverse audiences globally. The HEI consider the ability to communicate across cultural and linguistic barriers an vital part of skill set and many employers prefer graduates who can demonstrate intracultural and intercultural communication competencies at their workplaces because of the current trend of moving low-investment employment areas to third-world countries and these

countries have received a lot of attention in this area of investment and employment. Research suggests that strong communication skills donate to individual and organizational success, as they enable graduates to build relations, resolve conflicts and impact others. HEI placed strong emphasis on developing the communication skills by including communication skills elements into coursework, group projects, presentations & public speaking prospects in classrooms, and the HEI foresees the future migration trends across the world, and new ideas about creating, producing and marketing new products in a country as well as worldwide, by maximizing the effective and efficient use different social media platforms (Bandura, 2023; Succi & Canovi, 2019).

Sustainability is becoming important pillar of development and in increasingly interconnected world, graduates are expected to possess a strong sense of ethical awareness as well as social responsibility. The documents analyzed in this study highlighted graduates' ability to make decisions that are not only beneficial to themselves but also to the broader society, country, and the world. Social responsibility, sustainable development, and making moral choices (clothes, food, and other items) are closely related to the ethical awareness of graduates because these choices would show their commitment to contribute positively to society and address global challenges like inequality, environmental degradation, and social injustice (Menon & Suresh, 2020; Žalėnienė & Pereira, 2021). The creation of indigenous solutions, the states believe, will reveal the use of critical thinking skills by graduates enabling them to invent and improve the technology. Studies across world have shown that graduates are gradually becoming engaged with issues such as sustainability, corporate social responsibility, global citizenship and HEI have responded by integrating ethical education and service-learning opportunities into their curricula, allowing students to apply their knowledge to community-based projects and ethical dilemmas.

It is believed that graduates who possess a strong sense of ethics and social responsibility are better equipped to contribute to organizations that prioritize ethical decision-making and CSR initiatives (Berchin et al., 2021; Horn et al., 2023). This area is also added to higher education plans because states know they are mostly consuming countries, both the knowledge and the products, and they hardly have any share of the industrial output of the world, and they are also not part of the of technical and industrial knowledge system. The only way for these states to become part of this system is by adopting environment-friendly technology and minimizing their carbon footprint, and would attract investment and technology to these states in different areas and not just low-level investment areas. Lifelong learning, driven by the rapid pace of technological advancement and changing demands of labor market emerged as a key graduate attribute authentic information & sources of information before making any choice. The states have seen many new industries emerging in developed world and many industries becoming redundant, forcing the states to work with their HEI to focus on developing lifelong learning skills.

This lifelong learning is now associated with idea of employability, suggesting that graduates possessing lifelong learning skills are more likely to remain competitive in the job market. the

lifelong learning contributes to personal development and social engagement, as individuals seek to expand their horizons, pursue new interests, and develop new skills to contribute to their personal and the development of society (Alt & Raichel, 2022; Cropley & Knapper, 2021). The states have devised plans and support HEI to offer flexible learning opportunities, such as online courses, micro-credentials, and professional development programs believing that these programmes would enable graduates to endure learning beyond their formal learning settings, such as classrooms and labs. The lifelong learning is the cultivation of a growth mindset, and graduates who embrace a growth mindset are more likely to take on challenges, persist in the face of the difficulties, and seek out opportunities for growth and improvement. The HEI in Southeast Asia gave importance to lifelong learning skills in their HESP and it continues to be the case (Do et al., 2021) and this was also evident in HEA and universities in other parts of the world whereby lifelong learning became a core element of higher education programmes and skill-set required by the graduates (Alt & Raichel, 2022; Cropley & Knapper, 2021; Gouthro, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study found that the states made drastic changes to their educational places, materials and programmes reflecting the changes in industrial and technological areas because these were key areas of employment and wealth creation of these states. The ushering in of a new century created new demands for universities to prepare graduates for a new world of work, shaped by technology & automation. The states revised their higher education plans and incorporated changes happening in the First World and educational programmes offered by the universities in the technology-developed countries. This necessitated a new set of graduate attributes going beyond the knowledge of the discipline and incorporating other areas such as employability, digital literacy, critical thinking, communication skills, ethical awareness, adaptability, and lifelong learning to the already existing list of graduate attributes of a graduate of a university. The flexibility and adaptability have emerged as key attributes that graduates must possess to navigate the complexities of modern world. The universities are strategically aligned with the HEA and their plans for development of higher education in these states that would cultivate these attributes by designing curricula that integrate both technical knowledge & transferable skills.

The HEA have urged the HEI to prepare graduates who are equipped with the skill set needed to work and survive in a globalized, technology-driven, and constantly evolving workplace and workplace technology. The graduates should have the knowledge and skills to succeed in their chosen fields and to adapt to new challenges and opportunities at their workplace, both human and technological. The document analysis of HESP of the states showed that the states focused on producing graduates for the 21st century, a workforce capable of contributing to strengthening pluralistic societies & engaging in lifelong learning. This study found a similarity between the developed world and the states as all the documents shared the list of skills to be developed in graduate. The study suggests a detailed study to develop and derive evaluation framework to gauge execution of HESP that resulted in different education programs offered

by HEI as this framework would help to create future blueprint of higher education in these states.

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