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- Scientific Journals!? 
- Workshops and So-called Projects!?
- University Education is an important part of the educational system
- Software first or Hardware first? 
- Afghan National Textbooks Program
- Access to Online Afghan Textbooks



Higher Education in Afghanistan

Opinions, Suggestions & Advice



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Advisor at MoHE



My Opinions, Suggestions & Advice on Higher Education in Afghanistan

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1. Chapter, Textbook or the Internet?

Is it believable that most Afghan students do not have textbooks and use only learning materials written ten to twenty years ago (papers or translated notes by instructors from a book on an issue or subject). Well, I would not have believed it if I had not seen the situation in Kabul and some other provinces which makes one sad. Students take twenty or thirty pages in plastic bags to their classes, memorize them by rote and then jot down on exam papers the answers from memory, and in this way they pass the exams. In contrast, students in other countries have access to a large number of books, and also they refer to libraries several times each week.

Elsewhere in the world, university is considered the main center for new knowledge, technology and investigations, but unfortunately in Afghan universities (in 21th century) students use learning materials of 20th century. Nevertheless some lecturers have written, translated and published books in their fields. Their work is exceptional.

In the last 13 years, no systematic work has been done for providing new standard textbooks. However, in 2014, the Ministry of Higher Education published a curriculum in several volumes covering 50 fields. That was the first positive step, but unfortunately it is not being applied in every field. As the curriculum makes the plan and framework for better teaching, books of the curriculum should be available for each taught subject in native language of the lecturers and students in order to be taught by the lecturer within the framework of the curriculum and learned by the students.

Some people suggest that the lecturers and students should use English books or the Internet. However, not all of our lecturers and students are familiar enough with English language to take full advantage of English books. Also the Internet can never be a substitute for books as books have been the best way of transferring and learning knowledge for thousands of years.

I launched an online course (2003-2005) and worked as its tutor in InWEnt gGmbH/Bonn for doctors in Asia, Africa and Latin America who had studied in Germany. That course was about HIV/AIDS in the German language, and later on it was translated into English. In such a developed country like Germany, works and investigations are still done in this area; e-learning is getting more common, but it has not been replaced with classroom learning. The majority of training in institutions still occurs in classrooms. Although the number of users of new technology in Afghanistan is increasing year by year, the Internet cannot be accessed always because of the absence of electricity or other technical problems.

Another problem is with the language. Although teaching is possible through the Internet, learning materials should be provided in a language which is understood by the students. Then courses using these materials can be held online from other countries in order to deliver some of them to those people who are interested in them. Another issue is that learning through internet is not cheap; it costs a lot. It requires complete technical facilities such as electricity, a computer and easy access to the Internet.

In addition, learning materials should be made available, and texts should be stored in computers so that students can access them easily. Also, learning texts without charts, pictures, audio and video can be boring. Still, all over Afghanistan, there is not even one specialized and professional organization to work in this regard.

Though there are some advanced level courses of English language, they are for those who have full command of the language.

Some years ago, an online program GLP was started at Ministry of Higher Education by USAID; their experience can be followed. They spent a lot of money but were not very successful and could not however fulfil the expectations.

Elsewhere in the world, textbooks for students play the main role in studying in any field of study. Every year lecturers and authors write books in each subject and translate standard international books. The libraries of every university purchase many books in both their native language and in the English language on the basis of their students' needs, and then offer these books to their students. Every university has a bookstore, either inside or outside the campus. Let's do the same!

Do our universities do so? Thousands of new students every year come to universities. How many books do we provide for them? Unfortunately, there is no money allocated from the budget of the ministry for writing, translating and publishing books.

A classroom, a teacher and a book are the basic pillars of studies, so online learning can be the next one. Therefore, let's first build the base, and then we will construct the other pillars. At the end, I would like to quote a Greek saying: *"A student without book is like an unarmed soldier."*

Suggestions:

- ▶ In the budget of the ministry and in every university there should be a specific portion for writing, translating and publishing textbooks.
- ▶ National Textbooks Program should be started by Ministry of Higher Education, and it should be one of the priorities of the ministry.
- ▶ Financial facilities should be provided for this program.
- ▶ An appeal for funding should be made for this program from the USAID, DAAD, World Bank etc.
- ▶ The purpose should be that every subject in our universities should have curriculum and at least one textbook.

- ▶ The libraries of our universities and faculties look like warehouses of books instead of real libraries. This situation should be finished as soon as possible.
- ▶ Newly provided books should be introduced to the lecturers who teach them.
- ▶ At least one professional librarian should work in every library.
- ▶ Each library should have a specific budget for purchasing new books every year.

2. Medium of Instruction: English or National Languages?

Whenever some foreign and local experts witness the low standard of Afghan universities and lack of standard and new textbooks, they immediately suggest that both instructors and students should use English textbooks and that the medium of instruction should also be English. Nonetheless, these suggestions seem correct and a logical solution to the problem, but this solution might not be applicable.

Due to thirty years of war, all Afghan institutions have been backward in comparison to the global advancement of knowledge. Furthermore, during the 1980s the foreign language taught in schools and universities was not English, but Russian. (I studied Russian from 9th until 12th grade in school.) Similarly, thousands of Afghans and a great number of university professors got their Bachelor's degree in the former USSR. Still today these lecturers work and teach at most of the Afghan universities.

On the other hand, the instruction of English in schools is not good enough to expect that high school graduates should be able to understand instructions and textbooks in English. Another problem is the level of English sources. The instructors and students may understand English well,

but unfortunately they may not be able to comprehend the textbooks written in foreign countries because the educational level of our students is different from that of foreign students. The countries where English is not used in schools do not use English in universities as well. Rather, they use their national languages. However, some higher educational institutions use English for instruction.

Only the countries where English is used in schools adopt English for universities too. In such a case, neither students nor instructors have language problems because they have already learned English at school.

It is crystal clear that access to global knowledge is easier with English, but this can be achieved only by people who have learned English; they can get the benefits of it.

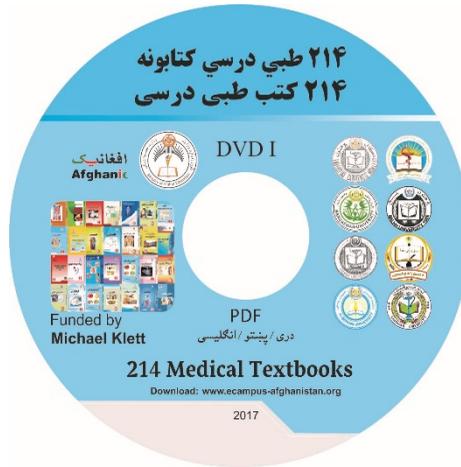
Instruction in English is only possible in some universities of Afghanistan. However, this process needs a mid-term strategy, the execution of this strategy and persistent effort. In accordance to that strategy, the high school graduates should have full command of English, and all the young lecturers of the universities should be able to give instruction in English. Then the prerequisite of using English for instruction will be fulfilled and the strategy will be implemented. Otherwise, the universities should continue using the national languages for instruction. In addition, textbooks will be prepared quicker, published and given to the students. The instructors should gain global knowledge through English. Then, they should prepare teaching material in national languages in accordance with the educational level of the students.



*"Each subject should have textbook."
"Each classroom should have projector."*



3. Textbooks on DVD the First Effective Step towards a Digital Library in Afghanistan



Afghanistan is amongst the countries which have few publications in a limited number of prints - usually 1,000 copies. However, with the help of new technology, books are now available in digital format and can easily be distributed among the interested readers.

Therefore we published 214 Medical Textbooks in English, Pashto, and Dari languages. Most of them were written by the lecturers of Kabul, Nangarhar, Khost, Kandahar, Herat, Balkh, and Kapisa universities. Some of them were also written by the professors from Germany and America. Besides publishing these textbooks, they were also saved on DVDs and distributed among all the medical faculties throughout Afghanistan. Every lecturer, student and reader can easily access these 214 textbooks. They can run the DVD on their computer for reading, or one can also download them from www.ecampus-afghanistan.org.

Nonetheless, the Ministry of Higher Education, the universities and NGOs always suggest a Digital Library in their plans, projects and programs.

Furthermore, USAID has spent some money on a Digital Library. Usually such projects include foreign books instead of Afghan writers', or they mainly serve as a link to other digital libraries. For instance, you can view the same problem on the website of Ministry of Higher Education: go to www.mohe.gov.af and then click on Electronic Library. My humble suggestion to Ministry of Higher Education and the university lecturers is that they should also publish their works via CD or DVD and upload them to their university websites too.

As the print limit is usually a thousand copies, they cannot satisfy the needs of all the interested instructors and students. So, if every textbook is published electronically, all students and lecturers will be able to access the new books easily and quickly for use. This approach will definitely improve the learning process and the teaching quality. In addition, it will also accelerate academic ties and joint practical projects among the professors of Afghan universities.

4. Correlative Theoretical and Practical Education

Four years ago, I invited an engineer to the Engineering Faculty of Nangarhar University for giving a professional presentation. At the end of the presentation a student raised his hand and said that he heard such academic and important information about practical works for the first time. However he was a student of fifth semester of that faculty, he had not even touched a brick for practical constructional work.

If we observe the education in Afghan universities, we will see that in most of the disciplines the practical work in the field or laboratory is rarely done by the students. It is the main cause that these students cannot find and do any work practically after graduation. Or if they do, that will not produce good quality work. Therefore, the authorities and faculty members of the universities should give practical training to their students.

When I was a student of medicine in Czechoslovakia, we would be taught theoretical lessons and lectures from 8 am to 12 pm. In addition during first semesters we would do practical work in practice rooms and laboratories in the afternoon. In the last semesters of our studies, we had theoretical lessons for half a day, but the rest of the day we studied patient's files, examined patients and did practical work in hospital alongside them. This way, we would practice what we had learned; we could learn easily and memorize the theoretical lessons. For example, when we were to study hepatitis, our instructor of practical works would take us to a patient suffering from the disease and show us the symptoms of the disease on the patient's body. We would observe the laboratory examinations and get information about the history of the illness. Consequently, anytime we faced a case of this disease, we would recall that patient and the knowledge about the disease.

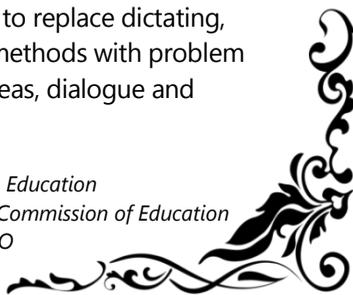
My suggestion to the authorities and lecturers is to work more on both theoretical and practical teaching and include them in their teaching plans and schedules. They should not rely only on lecture-notes and medical books because these course materials cannot effectively educate engineers and doctors for their practical works.

There is a close correlation between theoretical and practical education. Since some colleges do not have teaching hospitals where students can practically learn beside the patient's bed, this situation should no longer continue. Every medical college must have teaching hospitals.



Textbooks should be available in order to replace dictating, rote learning, and repetition teaching methods with problem solving, critical analysis, categorizing ideas, dialogue and activity.

*Rehabilitation and Development of Afghanistan Education
Policy, Goals, and Strategies Independent High Commission of Education
for Afghanistan Kabul, 2003. Funded by UNESCO*



5. Master's or Bachelor's?

Universities are established for the purpose of acquiring wisdom and knowledge. During the last few decades, the horizon of knowledge has enormously expanded, and it keeps expanding every year to a level which has never happened in centuries before. In many countries, students are categorized for either science or arts disciplines in the middle schools. Then, in a Bachelor's degree at a university, a particular discipline is studied in general. It means that an undergraduate or Bachelor's degree holder is not yet skilled enough in his/her field to be able to work independently in his/her. Therefore, after graduation from Bachelor's degree, usually students try to complete their Master's degree in a specific field of study, which advantageously differentiates them from Bachelor's degree holders. They are usually successful in job applications.

Economics, agriculture, medicine and other fields of study are in dire need of such well-versed personnel. Definitely, expertise in a field does not come with Bachelor's only, rather one needs to get special trainings, Master's and PhD for it.

Unfortunately, Afghanistan offers very few Master's and PhD programs at universities. Nonetheless, many university lecturers and government officials are doing their Master's and PhDs abroad, but this is not sufficient to satisfy the demand of the job market in Afghanistan. Therefore, the universities of Afghanistan should start Master's and PhD programs. Some private and public universities have launched Master's programs to fulfill the needs, though.

However, these programs should be launched, and their fundamental requirements should also be provided such as infrastructure, budget, curriculum, textbooks, labs, and research facilities, besides practical and academic personnel. If a university or faculty has few or no PhD personnel, they should promptly send abroad their lecturers to study for a PhD. In addition, they should hire some Afghan or foreign PhD professors until the return of their own personnel.

Similarly, since some Afghan universities have partnerships with foreign universities, they should definitely take advantage of this opportunity in

establishing their Master's programs. Afghan universities should launch the Master's programs in collaboration with their partner universities. Part of the programs should be implemented domestically, and the rest should be done abroad in the host university. In addition, foreign professors should be invited for the implementation and teaching of Master's and PhD classes.

If foreign universities are training Afghan Master's degree holders, these programs would be automatically shut in case of stopping or decreasing foreign assistance. Then, we would not be able to have any more masters.

One of the best advantages of Master's programs in our own country would be the increased participation of females. In addition, the money given to the foreign universities to provide assistance for Afghanistan is so much; using that amount can fund infrastructure, course materials and even professors' salaries here in Afghanistan. So all that money would not seep out of the country, rather it would stay and be utilized domestically.

6. Higher Education Research Center (HERC)

There is no doubt that "Higher Education" plays a very significant role in the long-term development of a community. In fact, university is the citadel of producing academic, knowledgeable, political and anthropological experts. It is university that educates and prepares young academics on Bachelor's, Master's and doctoral levels. Then, these graduates perform a fundamental role in the improvement of society and economy.

Although higher education system in Afghanistan has shown some improvement over the last thirteen years, it still faces many challenges. Without proper focus and attention, these challenges are definitely going to increase instead of decreasing. For instance, the number of high school graduates increases every year. In 2015, there will be around four hundred thousand high school graduates. However, all public and private higher education institutions together can accommodate only one hundred thousand students while the rest would remain devoid of any higher education.

In addition, universities do not produce experts for the employment market in Afghanistan. The reason can be the graduation of a huge number of Bachelor's degree holders while the Master's and doctoral are very few.

Other big concerns are: how can the teaching quality be improved? Are short-term training programs better or Master's and doctoral programs? Should the medium of instruction be English or any national languages? Do we need textbooks or should everything be available online? Should there be any entry test (Kankor) or not? Should Kankor be a separate entity apart from MoHE? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this removal? Should private higher institutions be increased or are there already more than enough? These and other similar questions should never be coped with on someone's personal insight; rather they should be meticulously studied with empirical research, verification and both national and international experiences.

Unfortunately, neither MoHE has done any research in this regard nor any of the national universities. So far five ministers have worked in MoHE in the last 13 years, but none of them has continued the previous minister's work. Rather, they set their own priorities and kept them going till another minister took over.

Keeping the aforesaid points in mind, we would like to make a suggestion that a specific research center should be established regarding Higher Education in Afghanistan. This center should work under the auspices of relevant governmental organization in accordance with the central governmental plan. Furthermore, it should commence study on the basis of specific branch of education.

We believe that this would be an effective initiative of the academic policy which will be free from the copycat models of foreign countries. So, it would be a national, academic and educational policy. Therefore, we should not solve the issues of Higher Education with copying the foreign models. Rather, we, along with the help of foreign experts, should study the issues lurking at higher education, discuss their solutions with each other, develop a plan and then implement it. In fact, the experiences and suggestions of some countries can definitely help to complete this policy and make it successful.

7. Afghan-German University in Kabul

Fifty years ago, Germany, and later the USA and the former USSR, was the first country which assisted higher education of Afghanistan in a long-lasting and effective way.

In the 1960s, Germany established the German Language Department at Kabul University and it started supporting faculties of Science and Economics in academic affairs. Many German professors visited Kabul University and taught in the classrooms. Textbooks for the Afghan students were published in collaboration with Afghan professors. Germany took an active part in building construction, equipping the laboratories, developing curriculum and publishing of textbooks. Every year, some instructors were sent to Bochum, Bonn and Cologne universities to gain Master's and Doctoral degrees in Science and Economics. The academic assistance and partnership resulted in the construction of infrastructure, the arrangement of all teaching conditions and improvement and continuation of teaching and learning quality.

Due to unfavourable conditions and war that assistance stopped but restarted in 2002. In the last ten years, joint programs resumed with German Language, Economics, Science and Computer Science faculties. In addition, Germany also extended some short-term assistance to Medical, Engineering and Pharmacy faculties. Within the last few years, as a part of the same assistance, some instructors got their Master's from Germany. They were very effective in the relevant faculties.

However, the academic community of Afghanistan has lagged behind the global knowledge for more than 30 years. On the other hand, knowledge and technology has vastly expanded and advanced in the last few decades. Therefore, our universities are in even greater need of updated infrastructure, laboratories, curriculum, teaching material and furthering the education of

our instructors to Master's and Doctoral degrees. All this can be achieved with the establishment of Afghan–German University.

According to the new constitution, it is now possible for the foreign countries to launch educational facilities in Afghanistan. The Afghan-American University is its first one, and an Afghan-Turkish University is also going to be set up soon as another one.

Keeping in mind the needs of Afghanistan and the academic assistance of Germany, this new Afghan-German University may have the following faculties: Economics, Science, Medicine, Computer Science, Engineering, Geology and Public Administration. It will definitely be a new chapter in the 100 year friendship and academic assistance between Germany and Afghanistan.

With the 100th anniversary (Diamond Jubilee) of German-Afghan relationships in 2015, it is highly expected that an Afghan-German University will be announced by the leaders of both countries during the celebration of the anniversary.

8. The Importance of Higher Education for the Future of the Country

You might have heard many times that young people make the future of a society, and they will be the future leaders. It is right. How do we value the young people who are called the future of our society and country? And how much do we invest in them?

If leaders of a society have received a good education, professional knowledge and work experience during their youth, they can be better ones. Unfortunately, Afghanistan, among some other countries, invests less in its future generation i.e. insufficient attention is given to higher education, and very little is invested in it.

Academic and professional personnel play a very important role in a society's improvement plan. As well as, with the fast improvement of knowledge and technology, the importance of higher education has increased more in the recent years.

If a community has young people who are familiar with modern knowledge, new innovations, fundamental problems of their society, finding ways for resolving the problems, this society improves quickly.

A student graduated from 12th grade of school without getting higher and professional education is not effective since he/she cannot perform an occupational task. As well as, their income and that of an illiterate are different in contrast to one who has received a higher education, and finding a job is also difficult for them.

Thus, Afghan government should pay more attention to universities where the future leaders are trained. In order to train theoretically and practically educated students for the society, the government should provide more financial facilities for the students, encourage lecturers of universities and pave the way for other students to study at universities. After few years, this will have positive effects on the development and good management of Afghanistan.

University means the motor of development; university means the future experts and leaders of a country.

If we consider the future of the country important, we should consider higher education important, as well.

9. Scientific Journals!?

Some years ago, I had a discussion with the editor-in-chief of the scientific journal of Nangarhar University (Poha) on a topic published about the textbooks which had been published by our office. I surprised as he said that it was a

scientific journal in which only academic essays were published. I suggested to him that he should look at other countries' scientific journals almost all of which involve Book Reviews regarding new published textbooks of related fields. Unfortunately, this suggestion has been in vain.

Some private higher educational institutions in Afghanistan publish journals, as well. The print quality of these journals is better than that of the public universities. Most of them are color and publish new information about the study fields of the related universities, achievements of the universities, and other new material for the students and those who are interested in the universities. But most of them are in the form of advertisements, are seen little and show few academic works of the lecturers

It would be better for the private universities to publish scientific essays of the lecturers as the same as governmental universities do, and the public universities should publish, in their scientific journals, interesting and useful information like private universities do.

The journals publish the academic essays of only professors because the faculties need to publish their works for upgrading their academic ranks. Therefore, in order to publish their works, the lecturers need to pay money in accordance with the length of their papers. For example, a lecturer should pay for four pages if his/her paper is four pages long while another should pay for six pages based on the length of his/her paper. The main purpose of publishing these journals is to complete the number of published essays for the lecturers.

Suggestions:

- As the circulation of these journals is much less (one hundred to three hundred and fifty copies), it should be increased.
- A portion should be specified for the academic journals in the budget of the ministry and each university so that they can be published on time and continuously.
- As Afghan Medical Journal and Tebi Poha (Medical Knowledge) are published by Kabul Medical University and Nangarhar Medical Faculty respectively, these and other medical journals should be gathered together and then sent to all the medical faculties so that their circulation as well as number of readers would be increased.

- The journals should be exchanged among the universities and related faculties in order to strengthen their academic ties. For example, the journal of Kabul Medical University should be distributed to the medical faculties of all the public and private universities (8 public and 27 private).
- Besides publishing academic works, other interesting topics should be published for the information of lecturers. For instance, if a program of Master's or PhD is to be started, this information is worth publishing in the journals.
- Since these journals publish research studies, it is necessary to publish research methodology and other related important information as well.
- Standard books of foreign authors and new published books of Afghan lecturers should be introduced in the journals as well as book reviews. All the academic journals should be published on the websites of related universities so that more lecturers and researchers can benefit from them. As well as, they can be published on any specific website together with monographs.

10. Workshops and So-called Projects!?

A lot of seminars, workshops and meetings are held at Ministry of Higher Education and the universities on different issues such as improving teaching quality, e-learning, English as the language of instruction, gender, women's rights and so on. Also, some projects are implemented under these names on which tens of millions of dollars are spent. Officials and the staff of the ministry and universities willingly participate in these workshops because most of such meetings are held with the financial support of foreign organizations. These meetings offer plenty of food, tea and cookies as refreshment. Pictures and videos are taken and a good report is made.

Sometimes the works and projects of some organizations are done just with holding meetings, but they don't have any other achievement. And, many of such seminars and projects do not have a sustainable benefit for the universities, lecturers or students. Some years ago, I participated in three different meetings in the conference hall at Ministry of Higher Education that were held about curriculum. Many speakers (such as deputy minister, director

general, director and some lecturers), in all the three meetings repeated their presentations. Chancellors and academic deputies of different universities, based in other provinces, were invited to those meetings. They were given the expenses of travels, accommodation as well as daily costs. The expenses of those meetings were too much in comparison to their effectiveness.

Moreover, a number of seminars were held regarding making strategic plans of the ministry (2015-2020). As I got the information, all the budget that was specified for making the plan was not spent. Therefore, it was considered better to hold another meeting in order to receive comments on the strategic plan. But unfortunately, after several years (November 2016), the strategic plan of Ministry of Higher Education, which is the most important document for the future of higher education, has not been finalized. According to two different sources*, the World Bank has spent either 300,000 dollars or 2.6 million dollars on making the strategic plan.

Similarly, a great sum of money is spent on useless seminars and workshops in different offices in Afghanistan. Also, many senior authorities are so busy with such seminars that they do not have time to think about and execute their own duties. Actually, a project should be implemented in a sector after thorough analysis and evaluation of that sector's problems. Project means accomplishing certain activities with specific budget to achieve certain goal(s) in a specific amount of time. But for some, it means spending money without having any goal or achievement.

If there is a problem, it should be discussed with the people involved and its practical solutions should be measured. Then a project should be proposed for the solution of the problems in order to solve problems and achieve our goals. Supporting the works of a project by organizations and people involved plays an important role in success of the project. I would like to present my own example here:

Seven years ago, I witnessed a main problem of students in the Faculty of Medicine at Nangarhar University. They used handwritten lecture notes, written twenty to thirty years ago, as the only teaching materials and textbooks. Even the students did not have those lecture-notes for many subjects; therefore, whatever their teachers taught them, they would note or learn the lectures by rote. That is, they would write down the notes on exam

papers. The lecturers also designed questions for exams in the limited range of their lecture notes. This way, many students did not understand many subjects because the quality of teaching was too low. Thus, this is one of the reasons why fresh graduates of the Faculty of Medicine do not know a lot of medical issues and are not professional doctors.

After seeing and evaluating the problem, I discussed it with the students, lecturers, dean of Faculty of Medicine at Nangarhar University, deputy of the faculty, chancellor of Nangarhar University, deputies of the university, as well as with authorities of Kabul University and Kabul Medical University. Then I started a project of Publishing Textbooks for Afghan Universities. At the beginning, over 12 teachers got ready, without any material support, to write and type their lecture notes in form of books, update textbooks and submit them to our project for publication. This project is still ongoing. So far, more than 270 textbooks have been published and distributed to all Afghan universities. Their softcopies are also available to everyone on the internet for free.

My purpose behind mentioning this example is that different aspects of higher education should be studied, evaluated, and discussed with students, teachers and other staff in order to cooperatively find solutions for the problems; not that foreigners should come and tell us what we need. And then they spend millions of dollars whereas priority is not placed on students, teachers or universities.

For instance, in the last 15 years, tens of millions of dollars were spent in the name of gender and women's rights. However, until a short time ago, there was no toilet for female students in the large universities while there were great expenses in the name of female students and gender—and the expenses are still on going in the same manner.

Another example is that the universities (even the ministry) do not have continuous electricity. However some are trying to start projects on E-learning and their seminars on the subject are held in various places which cost millions of dollars.

I suggest that we should meet students to see what problems they have, meet teachers to ask them what they want, visit different departments of the universities to see what they need. After that we can launch projects and spend money; we can propose our projects to international donors to solve our problems.

I have not seen, so far, any authority of the ministry or universities who have submitted a proposal regarding their works for the solution of current and future challenges. In a meeting, a foreigner asked a deputy of a university about what the problems of that university were so that those problems could be thought about and worked on. The question was answered that the university needed everything that could be offered. "If you can donate a single item such as a pen," said the deputy, "please, do it." The foreigner was astonished. Thus nothing was done for the university.

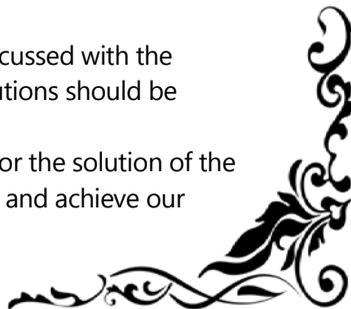
A ministry and a university (a minister and a chancellor) should have a vision for their administration: what to achieve for the organization in cooperation with colleagues and with support of donors. Making a work plan is essential for progress, instead of spending time at the office every day just signing documents and participating in meetings. The most important responsibility of senior officials is to provide guidance and appropriate work conditions for employees, so that they can try their best in their daily work. This way, they can be trained well in their fields and can innovate as well.

**Based on verbal information of two employees of Higher Education Development Program at the Ministry of Higher Education in Kabul.*



If there is a problem, it should be discussed with the people involved and its practical solutions should be measured.

Then a project should be proposed for the solution of the problems in order to solve problems and achieve our goals.



11. University Education is an important part of the educational system

After the fall of the Taliban (2001 = 1,000 schools) a large number of schools was built in Afghanistan (2014 = 17,000 schools). The Government of Afghanistan and the international community tried to give more and more boys and girls access to school. The background was of course that very few girls were allowed to attend primary school during the reign of the Taliban.

The President of Afghanistan, the Minister for Education and many donors from abroad often proudly presented the increasing number of pupils at international conferences as proof of the success of their politics and their support. During recent months a number of over 11 million school boys and girls was mentioned (2001 = 1 million students).

However, not much thought was given to the future of these young people after graduating from school and if they will all have the chance to learn a profession or go to university in order to earn money. The question simply did not come up: Will millions of people be able to qualify for a job, will they have access to further training and find work to earn a living for themselves and their families?

Thirteen years later in 2014 we now have approx. eight million school girls and boys. At the moment about 200,000 of them will complete the 12th grade every year with an upward tendency but not all of them will have a chance to go to a vocational college or to university. The 32 public universities can only accept a quarter of these school leavers (50,000). All others must either pay for expensive degree courses at private universities or will be left to themselves.

Afghanistan has concentrated mainly on basic education over the last thirteen years while vocational schools and universities were much neglected. As a consequence of this policy we have an increasing number of 12th grade school leavers who cannot find a place at one of the universities. Even university graduates have problems finding work in Afghanistan.

One reason for this is the low quality of university education that does not take into account the requirements of the job market in Afghanistan. The other reason is that the universities in Afghanistan teach theoretical basics only since there are no laboratories and students do not do internships or other practical training units. These graduates without practical skills are unable to work as doctors or engineers. Many of them work in jobs that are completely different from the subject of their university degree. Also the unemployment rate among academics is increasing rapidly.

Many patients go abroad for medical examination and treatment. Why is this so? Because Afghanistan does not have well-trained doctors! Why are the country's doctors so bad? Because medical students use hand-written notes that are decades old as their only teaching materials, they have no practical laboratory experience and did not receive daily training at the patient's bedside. Afghanistan must better understand the consequences and interdependencies of inadequate training in this area as well as in other areas. And there must be active changes if there is to be lasting success.

In order to achieve noticeable improvements the educational policy of Afghanistan must be critically reviewed and readjusted immediately. The importance of vocational training and university education for a successful development of the country must not be forgotten.

There are approximately 100,000 foreign workers in Afghanistan since the country does not have sufficient Afghan skilled workers. Although each year hundreds of millions are spent in the educational sector there is a lack of skilled workers for example in the fields of civil engineering, road construction, telecommunications and many other areas. Many foreign university lecturers (often from Pakistan and India) work at more than 85 private universities in Afghanistan.

Every year up to 2,000 students are sent to study abroad but this is not enough for a country with a population of over 30 million and 30 years of stagnation due to military conflicts. The need for well-trained skilled workers has increased significantly in Afghanistan.

In addition to students who studied abroad, Afghanistan needs some excellent universities of its own in order to meet the need for qualified specialists and management staff. These should bring international know-how to Afghanistan and pass this on to men and women nationwide. This will also give access to women as many of them cannot study abroad and get further education for cultural and family-related reasons.

There should be a fair balance of the money spent in the educational sector which means more money must be invested into vocational colleges and universities. This is a plea to the Government of Afghanistan, to the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education but also the international community and the donor nations to take action to improve the current situation.

The importance of the development policy in the medical and engineering field has not been sufficiently recognised by those responsible in Afghanistan nor by the donor nations although this was mentioned several times by the former President Hamid Karzai. Some donors have found their niche where they work and spend most of the money available to them.

In Afghanistan one ministry is responsible for basic and vocational education (Ministry of Education) and another ministry for universities (Ministry of Higher Education). Because of this communication and coordination are very important and should be improved. These two ministries must start a dialogue. Even if the status quo does not change they should develop a joint educational strategy.

Only well trained university graduates (not only bachelor degrees but also master degrees and doctoral programmes) can take an active part in economic development, innovation, start-ups and an effective administration and master the challenges of the future in Afghanistan.

This is the only way that Afghanistan can successfully stand on its own feet in the near future. Afghanistan must be put in the position to educate qualified specialists and managers at home according to international standards, trained at their own educational institutions by their own professors. *Yahya Wardak, Kabul 2014*

12. Software first or Hardware first?

During my work for universities in Afghanistan as CIM expert at the Ministry of Higher Education in Kabul, I conducted many interviews with the representatives of German, American and other donors and institutions.

The donors pointed out again and again that they, above all, wanted to support the further training of lecturers by short-term measures in their own home countries, in third states as for example Turkey or India and also locally in Afghanistan.

The Ministry of Higher Education and the representatives of the universities in Afghanistan complained repeatedly about the lack of infrastructure such as classrooms, chairs, laboratory equipment, textbooks and teaching materials. Many of them point out that without this necessary environment, lecturers cannot offer effective teaching and students cannot profit enough from these well-trained lecturers.

At present 300,000 male and female students study at the 34 public and 94 private universities. Next year another 400,000 new 12th grade leavers will apply for the few places at the universities (100,000 at both state and private universities). This massive increase in the number of students unfortunately leads to a further deterioration of quality at the universities. The university rectors complain in every conference that they get more and more students every year exceeding their capacities by 50% to 100%. For example, if a university has places for 1,000 students, they will get 2,000 students without any advance warning or planning, without more lecturers, chairs and tables etc. etc. This is why many of those responsible and many professors complain of an increasing decline of teaching. For political reasons and in order to calm down these young applicants they are sent to public or private universities to give them a second or third chance. This increase in the number of students is connected to the growing number of 12th grade leavers. In 2014 we expect approx. 400,000 school leavers to take part in the admission exam (Konkor) for students who will then apply for one of the 40,000 places at public universities. This situation will become increasingly dramatic every year.

Unfortunately this development of the situation does not worry those responsible in Afghanistan or abroad. Both parties do their daily work without giving thought to the near future. Due to the lack of capacities and because of the bureaucratic processes the Ministry of Higher Education has spent less than 50% of its development budget in the year 2013/2014. Some international donors spend a lot of money but hardly meet the needs of the universities or only as long as funds are available. There is a lot of talk about the sustainability of projects but many measures are interrupted or things come to a stop as soon as the project finishes. For example, USAID supported English lessons in Kabul and many other provincial universities, building their own infrastructure. They did not cooperate with the existing English Departments and support their structures and capacities, so that English language lessons at these universities would continue after funds cease to flow. Another example is spending a lot of money developing and trying to introduce e-learning components. Unfortunately without success since not every lecturer or student has internet access and not all teachers and learners speak English. These programmes were kept alive for a while outside university structures but many are a thing of the past now (nothing gained, nothing lost).

E-learning and short-term further training measures are like the top floor of a house: we need the ground floor first and the lower floors. Without doubt these basics are classrooms, infrastructure, equipment, laboratories, adjusting study courses to the requirements of the local job market, setting up functioning university libraries instead of the existing storage facilities for books, printing textbooks etc.

It should not be necessary to ask donors for all this. Instead those responsible in Afghanistan should apply for funds at the Ministry of Finance, then collect the funds and spend them on the purposes mentioned above. Only where the Ministry and the universities have not managed to do this for whatever reason, only then donors should be asked to provide the necessary infrastructure. And only then Capacity Building can be tackled. This means hardware first and then software.

It comes as a surprise that further e-learning programmes are planned for the near future. I urgently advise to critically evaluate the programmes and projects of the past before starting new programmes in this area.

First of all course contents and books must be translated into Afghan languages and developed further. After this they can be made available in digital form (offline on CD and DVD as well as online).

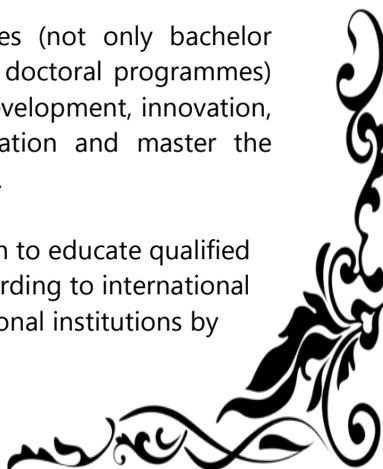
I received a message today (1 Oct 2014) that the Ministry of Education will distribute 34 million schoolbooks to primary schools nationwide. The Minister for Education explained that 10 million of these books were printed in Afghanistan and the rest in Indonesia with financial support from USAID. During the last 15 years a total of 213 million schoolbooks for various grades and on different subjects was financed with USD 119 million by the United States, Denmark and the World Bank. But what is the situation with textbooks for the universities? With the exception of my 157 medical textbooks, not even 100 book titles in all disciplines were printed with a maximum of 1,000 copies.

*Dr. Yahya Wardak, CIM Expert at the Ministry of Higher Education
Kabul, 1 Oct 2014*



Only well trained university graduates (not only bachelor degrees but also master degrees and doctoral programmes) can take an active part in economic development, innovation, start-ups and an effective administration and master the challenges of the future in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan must be put in the position to educate qualified specialists and managers at home according to international standards, trained at their own educational institutions by their own professors.



13. Afghan National Textbook Program

- The method of “papers & notes” must come to an end.
- New textbooks should be written and translated by lecturers of higher education institutions in every field.
- 100 books per year should be published: during 5 years a total number of 500 different textbooks.
- Each subject should have at least one textbook.
- Projectors should be provided for every classroom.

Recommendations

To MoHE:

- Initiation of (ANT) “Afghan National Textbooks” Program
- Declaration of this program as a “top priority”
- Encouragement of lecturers to translate/ write and publish textbooks in their respective fields

To Lecturers:

- They should revise their books and send them to us
- They should write and translate new textbooks and provide for publication

To German Federal Foreign Office, DAAD, USAID & World Bank:

- Supporting the (ANT) program
- Providing the financial cost of publication of textbooks

Suggestion for 2018

- Printing 30 medical textbooks
- Printing 30 non-medical textbooks
- Providing 10,000 copies of 2 DVDs with all medical textbooks and distributing them to every Afghan student of medical faculties.

14. Access to Online Afghan Textbooks

Since 2010, we have published 270 textbooks from different universities of Afghanistan. Currently we are working to publish textbooks. All published textbooks can be downloaded as PDF from:

www.ecampus-Afghanistan.org

First Steps at eCampus Afghanistan:

How to create an account:

eCampus Afghanistan is a Moodle-Based e-learning platform. Thus, before you can enroll for courses or make use of any of the features eCampus Afghanistan offers you, you will have to create an account on Moodle. The following steps explain how to create an account on Moodle for eCampus Afghanistan.

1. Visit www.eCampus-Afghanistan.org.
2. Click on "Create Your Account" or directly visit <https://moodle-au.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/login/signup.php>



3. Complete the form with the required information and submit it (note:

Remember your user-ID and password).

4. You will receive an email to your mentioned email-address.
5. Confirm your new account by visiting the link which is mentioned in the email.

a. Now you own an account on eCampus Afghanistan.

1. You can log on any time by entering your user-ID and password.

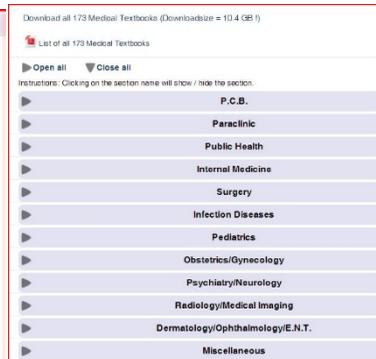
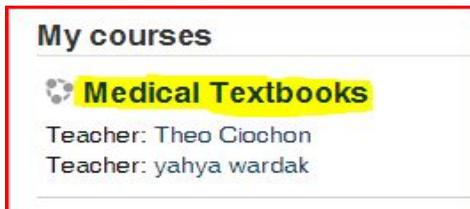
How to enroll to the course 'Medical Textbooks'

1. Log on to eCampus Afghanistan.

2. Click on the link 'Medical Textbooks'

3. Click on any part you want:

Now you have access to the collection of medical textbooks:



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Short Biography

Yahya Wardak was born in 1968. He is son of Zir Gul Wardak, whose last job was chairmanship of Pashtany Bank. He got primary education in Spin Kali School, secondary education in Harbi Showanzai (Military High School 1981-1985), and higher education in the field of General Medicine in Czechoslovakia (1985-1992).



After learning language in Germany, he studied Health System, Public Health, and Tropical Medicine in developing countries at Heidelberg University. Later on, he has studied Health Management in Mibeg Institute in Cologne for one year.

Yahya Wardak, from 2000 to 2002, was an official personal of The Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine in Hamburg. After that, he joined with InWEnt (GIZ) in Bonn. He worked in creating and applying medical e-learning courses for the doctors of Third World countries (2003-2006). He was a co-operator and advisor with Deutsche Welle Radio and some other German organizations (e.g. DED, InWEnt) regarding programs for Afghanistan, from 2007 up to 2009.

He traveled to Nangarhar in 2009 for observing the situations of Afghan universities, and he, until now (Mai, 2018), has been advisor at Ministry of Higher Education in Kabul.

In this period, besides other works, he has published 270 textbooks (208 medical and 50 of non-medical textbooks) and distributed to universities of Afghanistan. *wardak@afghanic.de*