Building Innovation into Higher Education in Afghanistan

Prof. M. O. Babury

Deputy Minister for Academic Affairs, Ministry of Higher Education

Introduction

- The foundations for the current higher education system were laid in 1932 with Kabul University established in 1946.
- Afghan higher education developed a reputation for being among the best in the region in the 1960s.
- The Higher Education system in Afghanistan has been one of the casualties of more than three decades of war
- Systems became rigid and isolated.
- Regaining control of higher education institutions in 2002 after many years of war
- Transformation from a small elitist system with less than 1% PR to one that is moving toward mass higher education (7% PR)

Developments Since Resuming Rehabilitation

Two stages of the development:

1. Developments made with coming of the new democratic government in 2002.

2. Introducing National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP) in 2009:

- A high quality tertiary education system.
- Promote national unity.
- Foster ethics and integrity.
- Foster equity in higher education.
- Establish an efficient and effective system of governance.
- Foster institutional autonomy, both administrative & financial.
- Demonstrate public accountability.

Major initiatives resulting from the NHESP

Quality:

- Shifting from a rigid and centralized system to a diversified and responsive system.
- New legal framework.
- Curriculum review and upgrading - the first major systematic upgrading in history.
- Extracurricular opportunities (student services).
- Achievements in faculty development.
- Resuming Research.
- Establishing Quality Assurance and Accreditation.
- Rehabilitation of infrastructure including e-infrastructure.
- Resuming post graduate programs

Major initiatives resulting from the NHESP

Access:

- Increase access without lowering quality
- Increase female participation in higher education (Gender Parity Index 0.25).
- New Governmental Scheme for scholarships.
- Establishing Community Colleges.

Private Higher Education:

- Forming legal framework.
- New administration.
- Quality concerns and quality assurance.
- Establishing Public Private Partnership.

Statistics on Public & Private Higher Education Programs

Public Higher Education Institutions (2013)	
Number of public universities and higher education institutions	31
Students in public institutions	138,195
Percent female students	19.1%
Faculty in public institutions	4750
Percent female faculty	15%
Percent PhD	4.8%
Percent Masters	38%
Number of faculties	157
Number of Master's Programs	28
Number of PhD Programs	2

Statistics on Public & Private Higher Education Programs

Private Higher Education Institutions (2013)	
Number of Private universities and HEI	82
Students in private institutions	76,612
Percent female students	17.6%
Faculty in public institutions	2100
Percent female faculty	8.1%
Number of programs	258
Number of Master's Programs	18
Number of PhD Programs	0

Major initiatives resulting from the NHESP

Governance:

- Delegation of autonomy to universities (transformation)
- Rationalization of the admin. structure of the higher education system
- Capacity building and reorganization at MoHE to oversee and monitor the strategic plan
- New procedures & HEMIS
- Strengthening accountability

Financing Higher Education:

- Strategic vision for the financing
- Greater financial autonomy for institutions
- Legal obstacles
- New regulation delegating financial autonomy
- The World Bank, USAID, NATO, Germany have made ongoing contributions to the NHESP

Innovation and National Development

- Growing importance of knowledge and communications revolution as major drivers of growth in national economies.

What is important is not just knowledge, but using it in innovative & creative ways!

- What does it take to establish a system of innovation, creativity, and the ongoing search for new ideas?

How to Develop Innovation?

- Rethink the curriculum in ways that help students become innovative and creative.
- Get faculty members involved in research and innovation themselves.
- Develop a culture of teaching and learning.
- Provide a supportive environment in higher education for creativity and innovation.
- Teach entrepreneurship to students.
- Work in higher education to overcome the lack of preparation from secondary education – need to provide greater *value-added* training in pre-university programs.

Establishing a Framework and Platform for Innovation

- Continued upgrading of curriculum
- Encourage faculty and student to think as entrepreneurs
- An open & questioning teaching environment
- Encourage government investment in research
- Create students who think in terms of innovation and involve them in faculty research
- Increase the quality & quantity of research.
- Foster high quality graduate programs with strong research focus
- Support the expansion, upgrading and improved quality of IT
- Foster interaction between higher education, government, business, & foreign universities.
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Prospects for the future (beyond 2014)

- Sustaining transformation of higher education system
- Quality improvements
- Increase access
- Establishing an entrepreneurial core at higher education institutions
- Attaining a diversified funding base
- We need increased government and substantial donor investment to sustain the major progress made
- Greater focus on national needs and increased response to community needs
- Moving to a more integrated and flexible system

Conclusions

- The basis for a realistic, quality higher education system has been built.
- Much of the progress remains fragile and needs additional support to be sustainable.
- While efforts have been made to improve the quality, the increase in enrollments make it difficult.
- In spite of some decentralization, the legacy of a centralized system is still a challenge.
- We have made substantial progress but also recognize that we have a long way to go ahead of us.
- Need to broaden the base of government & donor funding.

THANK YOU