

APOLU

AFGHAN PUBLIC OPEN eLEARNING UNIVERSITY

- PILOT PROJECT OUTLINE -

WOLFGANG F. FINKE

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Jena University of Applied Sciences (FH Jena)
Faculty of Business Administration
Business Information Systems Program
Prof. Dr. rer. pol. habil. Wolfgang F. Finke
Carl-Zeiss-Promenade 2, 07745 Jena/Germany
E-Mail: wolfgang.finke@bw.fh-jena.de

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SUMMARY

E-learning might offer new chances in Afghanistan to make a wider spectrum of learning opportunities available to Afghan learners who live outside metropolitan areas.

A professional pilot project (educating about 200 learners) over a period of twelve months is proposed to analyze whether a successful utilization of e-learning programs and concepts could be possible in Afghanistan.

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APOLU

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Please keep in mind, that this text is just a rough first draft and will need a considerable amount of additional work to get finalized.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Present situation

While reliable empirical research about the overall status of the Afghan educational system is not yet available, there is some common understanding about the present situation amongst educational specialist who are familiar with the country and its educational institutions:

- The number of potential (young) Afghan learners is exploding according to the strategic plans of the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education.
- Because of the successful support/extension of learning opportunities at basic and secondary/high-school levels (while the reconstruction of Afghan public higher education institutions was neglected by the international community up to now) there will be significant bottlenecks for learners who want to continue their education at community colleges or universities. Especially young Afghan women who – after years of being locked-out from educational opportunities by the former Taliban rulers – have had access to high-school education will find the situation painful.
- Afghanistan is in dire need of an Afghan “functional elite”, who will be qualified to serve as leaders in a large variety of areas and organizations and capable of helping to rebuild the country.
- There is a significant and growing need to provide additional educational opportunities to learners in the higher education segment (e.g., nurses, teachers, police and military officers, higher level managers in public administration institutions, traditional/non-traditional learners in university programs).
- The “reach” and capacity/services level of traditional higher education institutions and programs in Afghanistan is very limited up to now. Especially remodeled/rebuild international-style programs will be offered only at large public universities in metropolitan areas in the foreseeable future. Access for people who do not live close to major metropolitan universities will hardly get a chance to get access to higher education offerings.

The introduction of an Afghan Public Open eLearning University might provide solutions to some of Afghanistan's pressing educational problems.

1.2 What are the potential benefits of utilizing e-learning in Afghanistan?

Distance-learning - the predecessor of e-learning as we know it today - has a long history which reaches back more than 100 years (e.g., starting [in 1892 at the University of Wisconsin](#), or [1728 in Boston](#)). Today e-learning is commonplace around the world (e.g. [China](#), [India](#), [Africa](#)) and there are impressive educational institutions with hundreds of thousands of students who rely completely or for some parts of their studies on e-learning modules and systems (e.g., [British Open University](#), [University of Maryland](#), or the [University of Phoenix](#) with about 600.000 students on more than [200 campuses](#) worldwide).

Major advantages attributed to distance- and e-learning systems/institutions are:

- extended "reach" of educational offerings,
- good fit to the needs of adult learners (job and family obligations of adults),
- reduced commuting cost,
- reduced/eliminated cost for living close to an educational institution,
- adaptable to individual learning styles, allows for individualized educational processes (selection of courses/topics) according to the (usually checkered) educational background of learners,
- allows for easy customization of educational objectives to different target groups (e.g., vocational training/certification, academic degree),
- suitable for life-long learning,
- potential to service large numbers of students and diverse learning needs.

While it is unclear at present whether potential benefits of e-learning or distance learning could be leveraged in Afghanistan, the benefits could be significant:

- E-learning will greatly enhance access to education on the community college or higher education level for Afghan people living outside the reach of metropolitan area universities.
- Afghan people who need to work or have to play a role in taking care of their families will get a chance for systematically enhancing their knowledge and competencies at the higher education (or community college) level.
- Teachers', lecturers', police officers', and civil servants' education could be supported across Afghanistan via a professional Afghan e-learning system which could guarantee an education at well defined quality and content levels across the country.
- The significant bottleneck problems in the Afghan educational system (esp. regarding access to higher education programs) could be alleviated.
- Last-but-not-least, there could be a beneficial "nation-building" effect if learners from all Afghan provinces and cultural backgrounds would study together at the same e-learning institution rather than studying at provincial community col-

leges and universities.

Because it is not yet known whether e-learning will work in Afghanistan, there should be a pilot project at first (educating six groups of thirty learners from three different contexts within a six months time-frame) to explore the viability and the potential of utilizing e-learning systems in Afghanistan. This pilot project should be monitored and evaluated by qualified third-party observers.

It is common knowledge that successful e-learning programs in higher education require – besides the distance learning components - "same-time same-place" segments as well. Therefore, a (possible future) e-learning system for Afghanistan should have a strong and professional core - the Afghan Public Open eLearning University - and make use of local learning centers in the provinces (e.g., utilizing staff and technical resources at community colleges and public universities) for "same-time same-place" components of distance education programs.

In this context it is strongly recommended, to set up one professional and well-staffed public e-learning institution in Afghanistan and not to leave the initiative to different Afghan public universities or to educational institutions from outside of Afghanistan.

2 PILOT PROJECT

2.1 Goals and Objectives of Pilot Project

The pilot project will have the following goals and objectives (see fig. 1):

- Prove of legal feasibility – areas to analyze/organize are
 - x legal situation concerning the acquisition, distribution, and licensing of learning materials
 - x legal framework for the general operation of a possible future Afghan e-learning institution
 - x legal framework for conducting programs and issuing certification papers
- Prove of organizational feasibility – areas to analyze/organize are
 - x organizing/running the core organization
 - x organizing/running (remote) satellite learning centers
- Prove of individual/learners' feasibility – areas to analyze/organize are
 - x analyzing and selecting suitable candidates (prior knowledge/learning portfolio, probability of successful completion, individual aptitude for distance learning processes)
 - x analysis of the required individual learning environments
- Prove of technical feasibility – areas to analyze/organize are
 - x operation and administration of central e-learning IT infrastructure
 - x operation and (remote) administration of satellite e-learning IT

infrastructure

x operation and administration of basic administrative systems

- Prove of academic and cultural feasibility – areas to analyze/organize are

x establish suitable knowledge and competence levels to be reached

x providing suitable learning content (cultural aspects)

x provide suitable learning processes (cultural aspects)

x provide suitable learning environment and learner support

x certify reached knowledge and competence levels

- Independent monitoring and evaluation of pilot project.

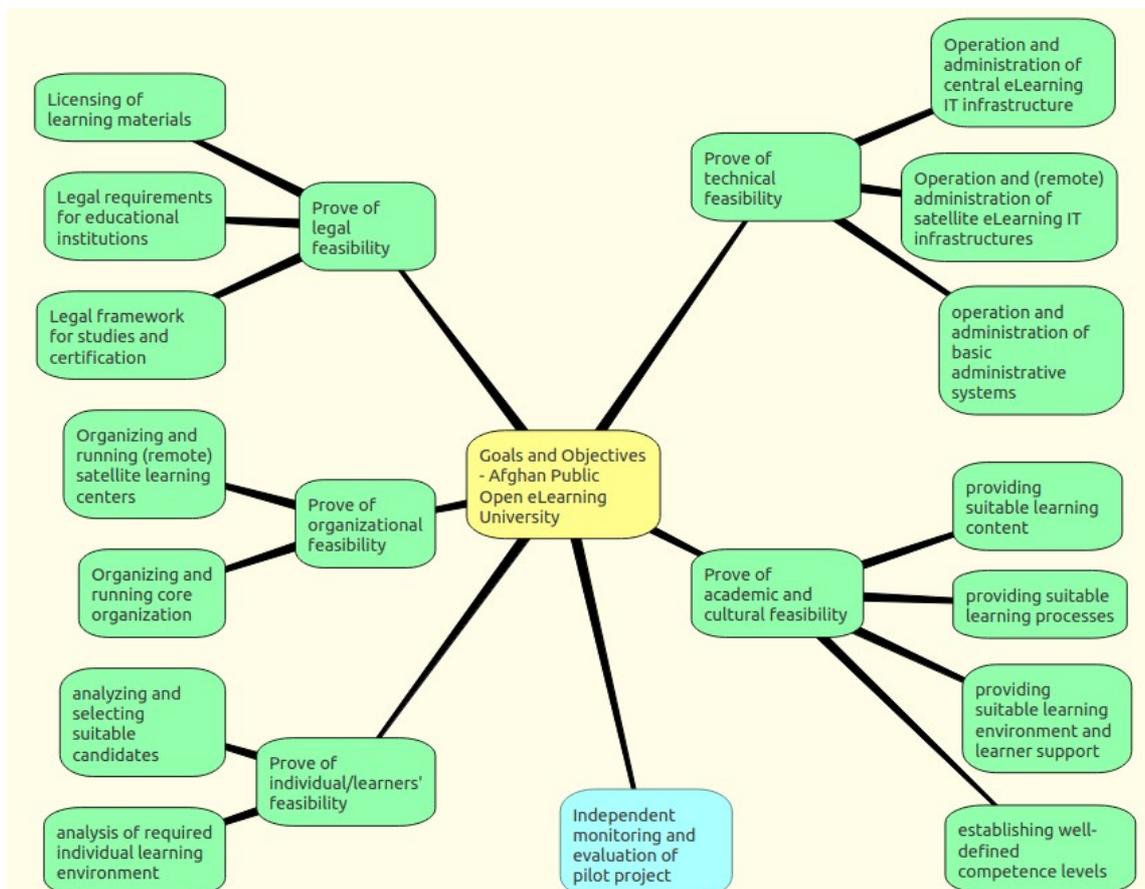


Fig. 1: Goals and objectives of pilot project

2.2 Set-up of Pilot Project

It is proposed to set-up a core operating unit and two satellite learning centers in two different (save) provinces. While Kabul might be a convenient location for the core operating unit – it would be easy to bring in international specialists – it is suggested to place the core unit and one of the satellite learning centers during the pilot phase in Mazar-e-Sharif (or in its vicinity) and the second satellite learning center in Sheberghan/Jowzjan (see fig. 2).



Fig. 2: Pilot locations

This would allow for easy testing and close communications between the core unit and the learning center in Mazar-e-Sharif and the travel distance to the Jowzjan satellite center would be convenient as well. Both learning centers would be in the Dari-speaking area but there would be a disadvantage because the viability of the concepts could not be tested in a Pashto environment (e.g., Nangarhar Province).

With regard to learner groups the following concept is proposed:

- social environment – content areas (see fig. 3)
 - x Police officers
 - x Nurses
 - x Faculty of Economics first year students from outside Mazar-e-Sharif.
- Geographical distribution of learner groups
 - x Jowzjan:
 - police officers - 1 group of 30 learners
 - nurses – 1 group of 30 learners
 - university students – 1 group of 30 learners
 - x Mazar-e-Sharif (or vicinity):
 - police officers - 1 group of 30 learners
 - nurses – 1 group of 30 learners
 - university students – 1 group of 30 learners

After a preparation phase (setting up the organizational and technical infrastructure struc-

ture, selecting participating learners, clarifying the legal requirements etc.) of six months, all learner groups should pass through two consecutive e-learning courses during the following six months and their knowledge and competence levels get certified (e-learning phase).

The e-learning phase should be monitored in a professional way by experienced scientists from the e-learning and didactics fields.

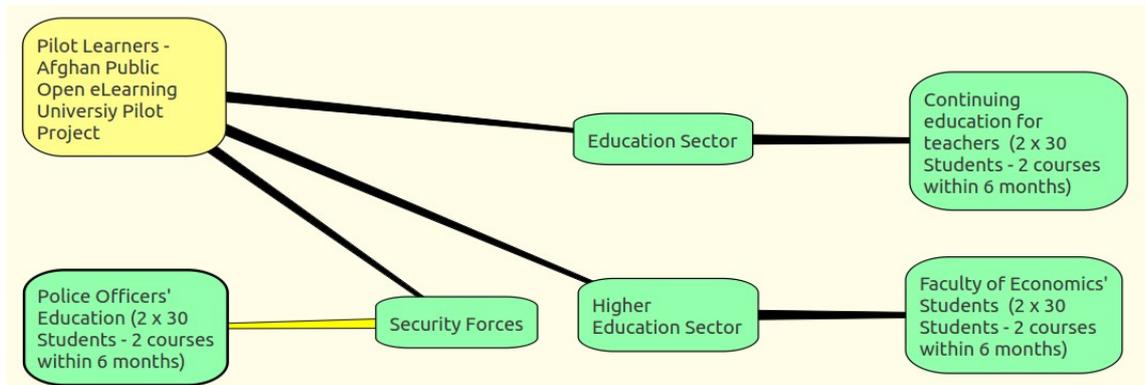


Fig. 3: Pilot learner environments and groups

3 PROJECT DETAILS AND ESTIMATES

3.1 Work Breakdown Structure

Not yet done!

3.2 Cost Estimates

The cost estimates below rely on a number of assumptions:

- standard cost for security services for international staff (e.g., GIT RMO) are accepted by other organizations,
- salaries/fees for the project manager (e.g., Prof. Finke) do not need to be incorporated,
- project staff uses public taxis and transport services to commute between learning centers,

- international staff is allowed to go for holiday every 3 months,
- an office building for the core unit can be shared with another international organization or project,
- rooms and Internet services (satellite learning center functions) are provided at no cost by the Balkh University in Mazar-e-Sharif and another organization in Sheberghan,
- both satellite learning centers are manned for the 6 months e-learning phase,
- learners will have (same-time same-place) meetings at the beginning of a course (three days – two nights), after about four weeks (one day), and at the end of the course (one day),
- after the pilot project is completed, the acquired infrastructure is handed over to the Balkh University for further use – the learners' lap-top computers are offered to the learners who have used them with a 40% reduction or offered to Balkh University students for the same price if learners do not want to keep them.

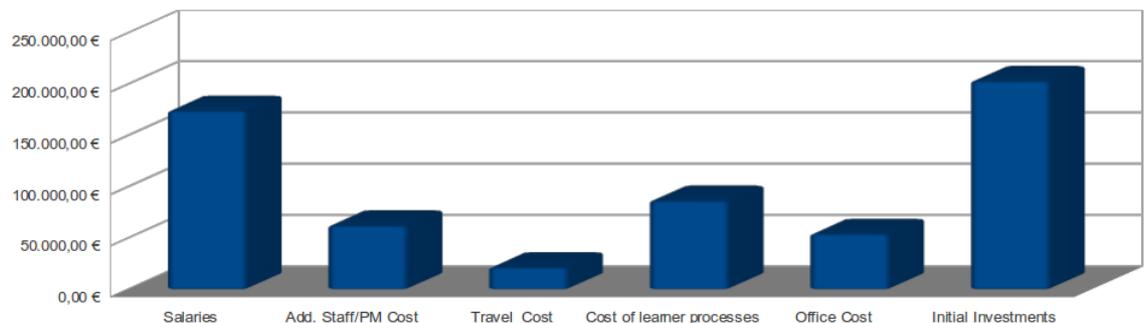


Fig. 4: Major cost components

An overview over the main cost component is given in fig. 4.

All estimates are preliminary, (probably) incomplete, and can contain errors. They should be treated a “first-guess” figures.

It is estimated that about € 54,000 can be recovered from lap-top sales at the end of the project. This money could be used to pay for the 3rd party independent evolution of the project.

				estimated total cost	600.900,00 €
Salaries					174.000,00 €
	number	months	salary per month	sub total	
local staff	1	12	2.000,00 €	24.000,00 €	
	2	6	2.000,00 €	24.000,00 €	
intl. Staff	1	12	6.000,00 €	72.000,00 €	
	1	9	6.000,00 €	54.000,00 €	
project management	1	12	0,00%	0,00 €	
Add. Staff/PM Cost					62.200,00 €
	number	months/units	cost per month/unit	sub total	
room rent (intl. Staff)	2	21	1.800,00 €	37.800,00 €	
3-monthly intl. Flight	2	7	1.500,00 €	7.000,00 €	
project management	1	12	10,00%	17.400,00 €	
Travel Cost					21.300,00 €
	number	months	travel cost	sub total	
local staff	1	12	600,00 €	600,00 €	
	2	6	600,00 €	600,00 €	
intl. Staff	1	12	6.000,00 €	6.000,00 €	
	1	9	4.500,00 €	4.500,00 €	
project management	1	12	9.600,00 €	9.600,00 €	
Cost of learner processes					86.400,00 €
	number	months	cost per month/unit	sub total	
data transmission	180	6	10,00 €	10.800,00 €	
commuting to learning centers	180	6	20,00 €	21.600,00 €	
overnight stays at learning centers incl. Food	180	6	50,00 €	54.000,00 €	

Fig. 5a: Cost details

Office Cost				54.000,00 €
	number	months	cost per month/unit	sub total
Core Unit				
Rent	1	12	2.000,00 €	24.000,00 €
Security	1	12	1.500,00 €	18.000,00 €
Utilities, Generator, DSL etc.	1	12	1.000,00 €	12.000,00 €
Satellite Learning Center A				
Rent	1	6	0,00 €	0,00 €
Security	1	6	0,00 €	0,00 €
Utilities, Generator, DSL etc.	1	6	0,00 €	0,00 €
Satellite Learning Center B				
Rent	1	8	0,00 €	0,00 €
Security	1	8	0,00 €	0,00 €
Utilities, Generator, DSL etc.	1	8	0,00 €	0,00 €
Initial Investments				203.000,00 €
	number		cost per month/unit	sub total
Core Unit				
Server installation incl. Generator, conditioner, AC, software and implementation	1		50.000,00 €	50.000,00 €
Office infrastructure incl. Staff laptop computers	1		15.000,00 €	15.000,00 €
Satellite Learning Center A				
IT resources	1		10.000,00 €	10.000,00 €
other learning and office infrastructure	1		5.000,00 €	5.000,00 €
Satellite Learning Center B				
IT resources	1		10.000,00 €	10.000,00 €
other learning and office infrastructure	1		5.000,00 €	5.000,00 €
Learner Infrastructure				
standard OpenSource LapTop with SIM card	180		500,00 €	90.000,00 €
other learning materials (two courses)	180		100,00 €	18.000,00 €

Fig. 5b: Cost details