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The Role of an Educational Website in Providing Better Opportunities for Kabul Education University

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THE ROLE OF AN EDUCATIONAL WEBSITE IN PROVIDING BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR KABUL EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

A Master’s Project Presented

by

Siddiqullah Barikzai

A thesis submitted to the Graduate school of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

(M. Ed Education Leadership and Management)

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

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Approved as to style and content by:

__________________________
Professor Gretchen Rossman
Center for International Education,
Education Policy, Research, and Administration Department, School of Education, Massachusetts at Amherst, U.S.A.
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I am thankful to Kabul Education University (KEU) administrators, teachers, and students particularly those who participated in my study for proving me their useful views on the role and importance of the website for the university. Without their useful inputs in my work, it would have been difficult for me to complete my thesis work comprehensively.

In addition, I am thankful to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Higher Education Project (HEP) for providing me this wonderful opportunity to come to the University of Massachusetts and get my master degree in Educational Leadership and Management.

I hope to be able to work for the improvement of education system in our country (Afghanistan), and provide better education opportunities for our countrymen.
ABSTRACT

Technology has played an important role in improving and expanding education worldwide. Website is a part of technology through which institutions and companies can easily and cheaply share and advertise their profiles with rest of the world.

Kabul Education University (KEU) where I used to teach is a newly established (2003) university in Kabul (the capital city); it trains professional teachers for secondary schools. The university did not have a website till recently (June 2009), while all other public universities in Kabul had it. So, I developed a website for it due to the demand of the university administrators, teachers, and students. Prior to developing the website, I conducted interviews with KEU senior officials (such as chancellor of the university, deans of six faculties, and a few heads of departments) in order to get their ideas about the role and importance of a website for the university improvement. Besides this, I distributed questionnaire (which addressed the role and importance of a website for KEU) on number of teachers (12) and students (67) to have their inputs as well on the importance of the website.

After analyzing the interviews and questionnaire data, I realized that all KEU senior officials, teachers, and students were interested that KEU should have a website due to many reasons. First of all, the university needs to introduce itself to the world, and chances are that once KEU introduces itself and its needs to the world, other universities and donors (particularly external universities and donors) will show interest in helping the university to solve its problems. In addition, the website will provide teachers and students better opportunity to update their materials; although, they can do this without website, it will be a safe gateway to enter to the internet. Furthermore, the university teachers will be able to attach their teaching materials on the website so that KEU students can download them whenever they want.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

1

## ABSTRACT

2

## LIST OF TABLES

3

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

4

## CHAPTER

### I. INTRODUCTION

1

- Historical and Research Context
  2
- Problem Statement
  8
- Purpose and Objectives of Study
  11
- Significant of the Study
  14
- Scope of the Study
  16
- KEU Stakeholder’s Views about the Website
  20
- Literature Review
  22
- Exploring the Website
  25
- Methodology
  27
- The Participants
  27
- The Researcher
  28

### II. Literature Review

30

- The Benefits of Setting up a School [university] Website
  32
- Characteristics of a Good Website
  33

### III. Data

35

- Introducing KEU to the World
  36
- Creating Partnerships
  37
Attracting More Donors .................................................39
Attracting More Students ...........................................40
Updating Teaching Materials .....................................42
Proving better Learning Resources for Students .............43

IV.
Exploring the Website ..................................................44
Structure of the Website ..............................................44
Home Page ..........................................................45
About the University ..................................................46
Administration Menu ...............................................47
Home Page of Literature Faculty .................................48
Pashto Department Home Page .................................48

V.
Discussion ..........................................................49
Finding and Limitations ..............................................49
Future Plans ........................................................50
References ............................................................52
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A few characteristics of the interview participants (KEU administrators)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A few characteristics of the questionnaire participants (KEU teachers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A few characteristic of the questionnaire participants (KEU students)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A few interview questions and participants’ responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A few statements of the questionnaire and participants responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Describes the structure of the KEU website</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Shows the main page of KEU website</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Shows the about university webpage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Shows the administration webpage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Shows the Faculty of Literature home page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Shows the Pashto Department webpage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACRONYMS

IU…………………………………………………………………………………..Indiana University

HEP …………………………………………………………………………. Higher Education Project

KU …………………………………………………………………………… Kabul University

KMU……………………………………………………………………….. Kabul Medical University

MPU ………………………………………………………………………….. Kabul Polytechnic University

KEU ………………………………………………………………………….. Kabul Education University

UMass ………………………………………………………………………….. University of Massachusetts
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays website becomes an essential part of every profession. Website makes strong impact on the image of your company [and institution]. It is very important when you are more concern about exploring your business world wide. Through website designing you will get identity, global presence and good business channel. Business without website means you are running business without having your visiting card; you can say your website as your visiting card. By effective profile of your company [institution], products/services you can build corporate image of the company in your business website (Shaik, 2005, p. 1).

This paper discusses the role and importance of a website in providing better opportunities for Kabul Education University in Afghanistan. Technology has played an important role in improving and expanding education worldwide. Website is one of the technological tools through which institutions and companies can share their academic and business profiles with the rest of the world. Institutions post their admission criteria, courses, students and their academic progress, online courses etc on their websites. Students do not any longer need to come to an institution for getting admission, choosing their favorite courses, checking their academic progress etc; instead they can do all from their homes if they have internet. Fortunately in Afghanistan personal computers (PCs) are increasing and the country is connected to the worldwide web network.

Kabul Education University (KEU), where I (the researcher) used to be a teacher, was the only university in Kabul which did not have a website until recently. I developed a website for the university in July 2009 in light of KEU senior administrators’ (such as chancellor, deans of faculties and heads of few departments) instructions. Prior to developing the website, I interviewed the university high officials to get their perspectives on the role and importance of the website for the university. The paper also explains the problems and challenges (such as
KEU isolation from the world, fewer familiarity of KEU by internal and external institutions and
academicians etc) universities that KEU faced in absence of having a website.

Generally the thesis has five main chapters. Chapter one contains research context and
methodologies used for collecting data in the field. Chapter two describes the role, importance,
and characteristics of an educational website from the literature point of view. Chapter three
includes data analysis and the themes which emerged from the field data. Chapter four explores
KEU website, its sub webpages, and contents. Finally chapter five contains research findings,
limitations, and future plans.

**Historical and Research Context**

Afghanistan, the country where I am a citizen, has been the center of wars through out its
history. In the early centuries it fought with Alexander the great, Changiz Khan, Great Britain,
and so on. More recently (1980), Afghanistan was invaded by the Soviets as a result of which the
war between Afghan Mujahidin (freedom fighters) and the Soviets was started which partly
damaged the infrastructure of the country. In 1989, when the Soviets withdrew their forces from
Afghanistan, the civil war started among different Afghan Parties, and it continued for the next 6
years. Subsequently in 1996, Taliban took power and ruled Afghanistan till 2001. During Taliban
government though most parts of the country were peaceful, but still fighting was going on in
some certain (north) provinces. It was the time when Afghanistan had lost almost its all
infrastructure. The economy, agriculture, and education systems were nearly dead. The signs of
poverty, unemployment, and hopelessness were observed everywhere. Parents asked their
children (particularly their male children) to work and bring food to their family tables instead of
going to schools; only a small percentage of parents who were economically in better condition allowed their children to attend schools.

The schools and universities faced a severe lack of teaching materials in that time (before 2001), because most of their books and libraries had been burned or destroyed by the wars. The teachers were using old teaching materials in their classes. It was the time when 9/11 incident took place in the United States and as a result of it, the US government over threw the Taliban government and replaced it with the new government under the leadership of Hamid “Karzai”. As soon as the new government took power, the international community and most countries of the world showed interest in helping Afghanistan. They started by reforming and improving Afghanistan’s political, judicial, economical, agricultural, and educational systems. They constructed and reconstructed school buildings, and provided books and other teaching resources to the schools. The Afghan government and the international community have encouraged Afghans parents to send their children to schools, and the parents have positively responded by sending their children to school both in Kabul and provinces.

Similarly, university buildings were constructed and reconstructed both in the capital (Kabul) and provinces, and electricity was brought to most campuses of the universities (prior to this, no university had electricity in its campus). The laboratories which were damaged or destroyed in the past years were reconstructed and new experimental materials were brought to them by different agencies. Likewise, new text books, journals, and articles were brought and placed in the libraries of the universities. In addition to this, computers and internet were brought to main the universities and faculties, and they were connected to the rest of the world. Teachers and students were sent for studying abroad to improve their education and bring new knowledge and expertise back to home. Overall, all Afghans showed interest in education; and enrollment
increased extraordinarily in all universities. Both boys and girls students got admissions in the universities including those girls who were banned from continuing education in universities during Taliban regime (Country Summary of Higher Education, 2007).

Teachers have updated their teaching materials via internet and have started communication and building partnerships with external universities through the help of their university websites, public and personal relationships and so on. Each university tried to first have access to internet and also then developed website for itself to share its programs and activities with other universities in the country and outside to get feedback on them.

Meanwhile, many new universities and teacher training institutions were established in Kabul and provinces by Afghan government with the assistance of international community with an aim to provide further learning opportunities for the people. Kabul Education University (KEU) is one of the new education universities which has been recently established.

Kabul Education University (KEU) was established in 2003 with an aim to train and produce qualified teachers for secondary schools. KEU has 6 faculties (Natural Science, Social Science, Language and Literature, Physical Education, Special Education, and Vocational Training), and 21 departments. Currently, the university has 4139 students of which 1602 students are female and 2537 male. The students are taught by 162 teachers of which 42 teachers are female and 122 male (Ministry of Higher Education Website, 2009). KEU has a library with limited number of text books, but majority of the books are out of date. So, the teachers cannot get help from these books to update their teaching materials. Also, the university has four computer labs two of which have access to the Internet.
I chose to develop a website for KEU, because I used to teach in the computer science department of the university. Besides this, the university administration asked me to build a website for KEU in order to provide a better opportunity for the university teachers to easily update their teaching materials. Also, the university tended to build strong relationships with other universities in the country and outside in order to get their help and support for improving its programs and activities. The university aimed to attract more donors to assist the university both physically and academically by constructing new buildings on its campus and holding workshops and seminars for its administrators and teachers to improve their capacities. So, based on these reasons I developed website for Kabul Education University to help the university in achieving its goals.

**Problem Statement**

Kabul Education University was the only university in Kabul (capital city) which did not have a website, while the rest of the universities had it. Some of the major provincial universities such as Nangarhar University, Mazar University, and Herat University also had websites. In the absence of a website, KEU was not electronically connected with other universities in the country and outside. The other universities (particularly external universities) had very little or no information about the KEU faculties, administration, teachers, students, resources, needs and so forth. As a result, if some of these universities wanted to help KEU in some certain fields, they faced a lot of challenges knowing the university needs and focus, and contacting the university, since there was no easy way for them to get in touch with the KEU. The same challenges existed for donors who wanted to help KEU.

**Purpose and Objectives of Study**
The purpose of this study was to develop a website for Kabul Education University in order to solve its above mentioned challenges. In addition, the study explored the perspectives of KEU high officials about the content of this website and discussed the possible suggestions to finance such a website in the long run.

Objectives of Study were

1. To find what problems have resulted from the absence of a website in Kabul Education University.
2. To identify what needs for a website were identified by current teachers and senior officials at KEU.
3. To discover what information and characteristics should be presented in the website.
4. To find the role, benefits, and characteristics of a quality website for an institution in the light of literature and the ideas of KEU officials.
5. To develop a comprehensive website for KEU based on the ideas and requirements of KEU stakeholders.

Significance of the Study

The last three decades of wars not only destroyed the infrastructure of Afghanistan but also kept its people from knowing about changes that occurred in technology and education. The country must use new and contemporary technology in its schools and universities in order to catch up with world’s institutions. Our institutions cannot compete with other (external) institutions if we still use our old and traditional methods and instruments in our classes.

Besides the achievements that Kabul Education University has made in the last couple of years, it has not attracted many donors’ attention as the other universities (such as Kabul
University, Kabul Medical University, and Kabul Polytechnic University) have. Very few donors have helped KEU since its establishment. One of the partnerships that KEU has made through the help of Higher Education Project (HEP) with the University of Massachusetts (UMass) and University of Indiana (UI) is a valuable partnership. Both the universities (UMass and UI) have been helping KEU for the last few years. They have accepted many KEU teachers to get their master degrees at UMass and UI. They also provided short term scholarships for many KEU faculty members to visit the universities and bring new experiences to KEU. Other than this, KEU did not make any strong partnerships with other external universities to ask them for assistance with reference to new teaching materials, methodologies, and to provide opportunity for KEU lecturers and students to study in their universities. Indeed, this kind of partnership and assistance can help the university lecturers to update their knowledge and methodologies and to teach their courses more productively.

There could be many factors exist which hindered KEU from making partnerships with other universities particularly with external universities. One of the factors which might not allow KEU to build strong relationships and partnerships with other universities could be the lack of having a website. In fact, website is a tool through which each institution or company can introduce itself to the rest of the world. It is a nice tool for attracting donors (particularly small donors), and making partnerships with other universities. Website allows donors to review the programs and needs of an institution or faculty posted on its website and offer assistance to the institution. If donors or the other universities do not know about the programs and needs of an institution, then how can they help the institution or make partnership? Although they can get information about an institution from another source like from the ministry of education and higher education or any other governmental office, it is much easier for them to take their
intended information from the website. Website is one tool that provides sufficient information about an institution, and it bridges gaps among institutions. It globalizes institutions and let institutions help each other in different areas.

Kabul Education University could have had a website couple of years ago, but due to not having a budget for supporting website it could not own a website. Usually in Afghanistan, each website owner needs to pay about 120-150 dollars each year to a private company who uploaded the website to remote server, but KEU could not support the costs of a website. However, last June (2009) when the Higher Education Project (HEP) showed interest of paying cost of the website, the university high officials enthusiastically asked me to develop a comprehensive website for KEU to provide better opportunity for the university lecturers to update their teaching materials through the website; also to let donors know about the university programs and needs if they show interest in helping the university physically or academically.

**Scope of the Study**

The study was limited to the following aspects of Kabul Education University website:

1. **KEU Stakeholders’ Views about the Website**

I explored the perspectives of Kabul Education University officials, some teachers and students about the role and importance of the website for the university. The main aim of exploring their perspectives was to find out whether KEU needs to have a website or not, and if yes then what information and characteristics the website should have in order to meet the need of university teachers, administrators and students. Also, I was interested in the kinds of problems which resulted from the absence of a website in KEU.
2. Literature Review

Besides exploring the perspectives of KEU officials, teachers, and students about the role and importance of the website, a variety of articles and journals were explored for finding views of different scholars and institutions about the role, importance, and characteristics of good educational website. I also discuss what kinds of opportunities educational websites can provide for institutions, their teachers, and students.

3. Exploring the Website

The university website will be explored page by page and the kinds of data posted in it to see whether the website matches the opinions of KEU stakeholders or not. Also, the strengths and weaknesses of the website will be explored, and ultimately some solid suggestions will be offered for the improvement of the website.

Methodology

Last June 2009, I went from the University of Massachusetts to Kabul for two months to develop a website for Kabul Education University where I used to be a teacher. Prior to developing the website, I talked with and interviewed the university senior officials (such as chancellor, directors of academic, administrative, and student affairs), deans of six faculties (Natural Science, Social Science, Language and literature, Special Education, Physical Education, and Vocational Training), heads of a few departments, a few teachers and students to get their views about the role, benefits, and characteristics of the website. Afterward, I developed the website for KEU in light of their views and instructions.
The study used mixed methods approach in collecting the data. The two methods which used for data collection are: interviews and survey.

First, I conducted a needs assessment at the university in order to get the opinions of the KEU senior officials about the website and the kinds of data that they were interested in having on their web pages. The process started by meeting and interviewing these senior officials individually to find their perspectives about the design and materials of the website.

Second, I distributed a questionnaire to a sample of the Natural Science and Literature faculty teachers (12 teachers) and students (67 students) to get their opinions about the design and information that they wanted to see on all faculties and departments’ web pages.

Third, I reviewed relevant literature about the importance and role of a website for an institution’s visibility and development.

The participants

The participants of this study were different groups in KEU. The participants included senior administrators like the chancellor of the university, the deans of six faculties, the chairs of four departments, the faculty members, and students.

For the interviews, the senior administrators were interviewed in addition to some heads of departments who had computer and Internet skills and whom I already contacted.
Table 1: The table below describes some characteristics of the interview participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Interview Participants</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Teaching Exp</th>
<th>Administrative Exp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Informant 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>55 - 65</td>
<td>15 - 20</td>
<td>Over 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Informant 2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>60 - 65</td>
<td>20 - 30</td>
<td>Over 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Informant 3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>37 - 45</td>
<td>5 - 10</td>
<td>Over 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Informant 4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>60 - 65</td>
<td>25 - 30</td>
<td>Over 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Informant 5</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>38 - 45</td>
<td>10 - 15</td>
<td>Over 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Informant 6</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>55 - 65</td>
<td>20 - 30</td>
<td>Over 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Informant 7</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>55 - 65</td>
<td>20 - 30</td>
<td>Over 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Informant 8</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>35 - 40</td>
<td>5 - 7</td>
<td>Over 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It took me just few weeks (less than three) to meet each of my interviewees individually and conduct interview with him; although, typically it takes longer time to do so if you do not know your interviewees ahead of interviews. Since I used to teach at the Computer Science Department of KEU, I knew a lot of the university administrators and did not need to bring formal documents for them from the Ministry of Higher Education to allow me interview them. I simply sat with each of them and let them know about the purpose of my study and asked them to share their insights with me regarding website. Nevertheless, a head of a department asked me to bring him formal letter from the university to allow me interview him. So, I brought him the letter and he then got ready for the interview. Each of the interviews took 25 to 35 minutes depended on the longevity of the interviewee responses, and I recorded all of the interviews. I interviewed each of my interviewees in his native language (Pashto or Dari). Although, my mother tongue is Pashto but feel fine in Dari too. After completing my interviews, I transcribed all of the interviewee responses to English and did not get help from any body else.
For the survey, the participants were faculty and students from the Natural Science, and Language and Literature Faculties. Some characteristics of the questionnaire participants (KEU Teachers and Students) are explained in the blow tables.

Table 2: The table describes some characteristics of questionnaire participants (KEU teachers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculties</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural Science</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30-45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: The table describes some characteristics of questionnaire participants (KEU students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Departments</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20 - 27</td>
<td>Juniors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20 - 27</td>
<td>Seniors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total = 67</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reasons for choosing the participants from Natural Science and Literature Faculties were the following:

- It was expected that such faculties and students have more knowledge and skills in the topic of this study.

- I knew more of both faculties’ teachers and students since I offered computer courses in both faculties. So, it was much easier for me to distribute the questionnaires and collect their responses compare to other faculties.
Because of time limitations, I was not able to include participants from all six faculties in my study.

The questionnaires contained statements which mainly described the role, importance, and characteristics of a good educational website. Each of the statements had multiple choice answers to give participants chance to choose choices which best met their ideas.

There were about 40-50 teachers and 600-800 students in the Natural Science Faculty, and about the same number of teachers and students in the Literature Faculty. I distributed questionnaires to 6 teachers in each faculty based on their interest to take part in the study. In addition, I distributed questionnaires to 33 senior (fourth year) students of computer science department in the Natural Science Faculty where I used to be a teacher. Also, I followed the same process for choosing students from the Language and Literature faculty, and distributed questionnaires to 34 junior (third year) students of English department.

**The Researcher:**

I am Siddiqullah Barikzai, MA student at the Center for International Education (CIE), University of Massachusetts. I developed a website for Kabul Education University (July 2009) where I used to be a teacher. I went to Kabul in June, 2009 with purpose in mind to develop a website for the university, and conduct interviews with KEU senior administrators, teachers, and students to find their perspectives about the role and importance of website for the university. I spent almost two months (June and July) there, and collected enough data for my thesis along with developing a website. In my thesis, I mainly focus on the opportunities that the university website can provide to KEU, and the kinds of problems and challenges that KEU faced in the absence of a website.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the literature review is to explore the role, importance, benefits, and ultimately characteristics of a good website from the point of view of various scholars. Since the study focuses on the Website of Kabul Education University which is an educational website, the literature review also mainly focuses on findings about the role and benefits of quality educational website for institutions.

Website is an important part of each career nowadays. It plays a crucial role in exploring an idea globally. It makes it simple and easy to collect data about a topic while searching on the Internet. Owning a website is a nice way of sharing and exchanging knowledge and experiences with others. It makes a strong impact on the image of a company or an institution. Therefore, every company and institution is expected to have a website; otherwise it is like a “salesman without having business card”. As a matter of fact, website should be a profile of a company and an institution where it can frequently post all its important information (The Importance of A Web Site, 2004).

Shaik (2005) in his article “Importance of having Website” believes that a website is the identity of an institution and business. He further says that there are many other reasons which encourage institutions and companies to have websites. For example, there are about 970 million Internet users around the world which makes 15% of the world’s population. So, it is a nice way of “getting involved with a large percent of people for sharing ideas and finding potential customers” (2005, p.1).
Website has no borders and it is international. If someone has a website, he has something international that all people can see in any part of the world. He gets identity, global presence, and good business channel through his website. Website can communicate longer messages than a business card or a booklet. It is an effective source for beginning interaction with a potential client. Another nice tool of communication and building relationship is an email. Through emails you can reach to your prospective audiences and discuss intended issues. Through a website an institution can share all its programs and activities with the rest of the world, and everyone can get to know about it. Having a website means as you are 24/7 in touch and accessible to the world. If anybody wants to get online information at any time about your institution, he or she can have it right away without any hesitation (Marketing, 2003).

Ival (2009) in his article “Choosing the Right Web Designer for You” illustrates that competition is existed in each field and no one can stop the competitions. However, by owning a website, we can make our identity and give potential chance to our customers to compare and buy our products. He further says that website is a good tool for advertising, and an institution cheaply and easily can publicize its history, programs, activities, and needs to the whole world to attract more audiences and support. The researcher believes that donors have opportunity now to look at the Kabul Education University programs and needs posted in its website, and assist the university in particular areas if they want. Similarly, KEU teachers, students and other people will have opportunity to look at the curricula, syllabi, and other important materials of the university and download if the materials are worthy enough for them. Reaching to the world through Internet and website is fast and economical, while through traditional way of sending and receiving documents (post office) is costly and time consuming.
The Benefits of Setting up a School [university] Website:

The article, “Webwise: an Internet Resource for Teachers”, suggests that schools and universities need to have website because

- Website provides teachers and students safe and secure access to Internet based resources.
- Educators and learners works can be viewed by global audience which will provide them a strong motivation.
- Majority of students can be kept informed about events which take place in universities.
- “Students easily feel the ownership of the design and content of Webpages which lead to real respect for the technology and higher standards of ICT work” (the article has no author name and date. It has only title and URL, so I don’t know how to cite it).
- A website improves social interaction and communication skills of teachers and students by sending and receiving emails.
- A website with having useful links extends the learning experience into the home.
- A website provides opportunity to other universities and donors to get information about the university. They can be educated about the university, its programs and needs, and get answers to many of their questions which will help to decrease the number of phone calls the university receives with this information on its website.
- Donors and other universities can be encouraged to interact and make partnerships with the university.
✓ There is a possibility that school [university] website becomes a resources of information for other schools [universities] by posting helpful educational articles and journals, you will give schools [universities] a reason to come back to your website (Reasons for using the Internet in School).

To wrap up, there are many advantages embedded with a website; hence, each institution and company is required to own a website in order to effectively introduce itself to the world, attract its customers, and ultimately get help from others for improving its programs and products.

**Characteristics of a Good Website**

Now the question is what qualities or characteristics a website should have in order to attract more visitors to visit and explore the website, and also to provide better opportunities of improvement for an institution or a company. The following articles have explicitly described the characteristics of a good website which not only attracts visitors to visit the website, but also helps its institution by drawing the attention of other institutions and donors to help the institution both physically and academically.

The New York Times has published an article under the title of “How to Make a Website Sing for You”, and it says there that the idea of “if you build it, they will come” might have worked for Kevin Costner in the movie “Field of Dream”, but it is definitely not true for a website. Website should be developed attractive, clever, and compelling, and contain attractive content in order to attract more visitors to visit the website, and explore the website and its links (Taub, 2006, p.1).
In another part of the same article “How to Make a Website Sing for You”, Nielsen (2006) says that a visitor spends about 30 seconds reviewing a home page, and only 50 percent scroll down the screen for further information. Hence, it is essential that a company or an institution message and main activities should be written in a few words so that visitors feel no need to scroll down the page for further information. Moreover, he says that most websites place their important information at the bottom of their pages, and this is the time they fail, because usually visitors like to see their needed information in the first glance after opening the web page and do not like to scroll down a page for more information.

Flanders (2006) in the same article “How to Make Your Website Sing for you” says that a good website should exclude unnecessary design, large and spinning graphics which take a long time to upload. He also recommends that no introductory splash page which forces a visitor to watch a video or animation should be added in a website. Splash pages are only used in pornography, gambling, and multinational websites which need to guide users to particular country’s page.

Wentzell (2003) thinks that a good educational website should be accessible, accurate, appropriate, and appealing. He says that a quality website and its links to other pages should always be promptly accessible on most browsers. There are some websites which work only in limited browsers, and if they are opened in other browsers they don’t work properly. Another characteristic of an educational website is that its content should be taken from reliable sources so that visitors can comfortably use them. The content of the website should meet audiences’ level of understanding. In other words, the visitors should be able to understand the content. The content should not include too many academic terms or too many simple terms which make audience bore in either ways. The last characteristic that Wentzell suggests for an educational
website is that it should be appealing. For example, nice colors should be used both for fonts and backgrounds so that visitors can easily read articles of the website. Usually readers like to see website having white background and black font color, because it is easily readable. They don’t like to see website having similar background and font color. So, it is always advised for website developers to use effective colors in their website in order to allow readers to read articles. The links should also be easily understood and followed by visitors so they enjoy browsing page to page.

In another place Warne (2009), the author of “Characteristics of a Good Business Website” article, believes that a professional website should contain: “good use of color, meaningful graphics, quality photography, simplicity, and text that is easily read” (2008. P.1). Beyond this, he says that it should have fast loading pages, low scrolling, and consistent layout.

Bhachech (2009), the author of “How to Build Search Engine Friendly Website”, argues that the first thing you should think of is to choose and buy a good domain name for your website. For example, “if your business is related to “food color” then it is good to have domain name “foodcolor”, because it makes it easier for the visitors to search it” (p.2). Do not force visitors to think about your website name what it would be. Instead, make it vivid and similar to your business or institution name so that visitors can easily find it (2009. P.1). Taking this in mind, the KEU website developer has chosen “k-eu.edu.af” domain name for Kabul Education University; it is simple for the visitors to memorize or to find the name of the website via search since it matches the university name.

Bhachech (2009) further says that the web pages of a website should have clear titles and contents to lead visitors to right direction and to easily find their needed data in the website. Use Cascading Style Sheet (CSS) files in a website; it controls the appearance of a website, and it
also helps it quickly uploading the website. You can have lovely button effects using CSS files.
A good website does not contain frames, flash files, JavaScript, image maps, or dynamic URLs.
Also, it does not contain heavy images, flash videos, animations, and so on, because they take
longer time while loading and the browser may not like waiting too long for the site to load.
Consequently, chances are that browsers or visitors may lose patience and close the website.
Instead, website should be simple, user-friendly, and easy loadable on any browser.

Bhachech (2009), in another article “Writing Importance to Increase Website Ranking”,
says that posting useful articles can increase number of visitors to visit a website. “Content is
king”, particularly in education website where each visitor opens the website to learn something
new and interesting about different academic topics. The articles can persuade those visitors to
visit the website who are really interested in subjects discussed in the articles. For example, the
articles posted for school and university teachers and students can include contemporary methods
of teaching and learning. Once visitors find out useful articles in a website which fit their needs,
they are going to regularly brows the website for further articles. The visitors could also be asked
to write articles on important topics and post them on websites. Similarly, a few of the researcher
interviewees illustrated in their interviews that they would like to write and post articles
regarding their majors on the Kabul Education University website. They also suggested that they
will encourage other teachers and students of KEU to write and post new articles on the
university website in order to enrich the website and to provide opportunity for others
(particularly for the teachers and students of other Afghan education universities) to read and get
benefits of the articles. The interviewees also illustrated that, it will create a competitive
environment where each teacher and student will try to write better articles on different topics
than other which will help improve KEU teachers and students’ knowledge and understanding (2009).

To sum up, the literature suggests that website is a good advertising tool and an institution or company can easily and cheaply advertise its programs, products, and needs through it. It further proposes that chances are that an institution can be quickly known worldwide through its website, because there are about 970 million people around the world who use internet on daily bases. Website bridges gaps between institutions and increases coordination among them which may result great consequences.
Chapter 3

DATA

The senior officials of Kabul Education University were interviewed to find out their perspectives about the role, benefits, and characteristics of a good website. So, the researcher can develop a comprehensive website for the university in light of their and literature views. The interview contained variety of questions which addressed the role, benefits and characteristics of a good educational website.

Table 4: The table describes a few interview questions and participants’ responses.

| No | Interview Questions                                                                 | Administrator A Response                                                                 | Administrator B Response                                                                 | Administrator C Response                                                                 | Administrator D Response                                                                 | Administrator E Response                                                                 |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Does KEU need to have a website or not?                                             | Yes, KEU needs it for introducing itself to the world.                                    | Yes, it will connect KEU to the world.                                                    | It will bridge the gap btw KEU and other internal and external universities.              | It will provide opportunity to other people to know about KEU.                            | It will be a safe gateway for KEU staff to enter to the Internet.                         |
| 2  | How KEU communicates with other universities (internal & external) in absence of a website now? | KEU is in touch only with internal universities via post office system.                   | It is poorly in touch with external universities.                                        | KEU admins & teachers are in touch with external universities through their personal emails. | Most KEU staff is informally (personal relationships) connected with internal & external universities. |
| 3  | What differences do you see among universities which have websites and those who not?  | They’ve developed partnerships with external universities, while KEU has not.             | They’ve attracted more donors and help, whereas KEU has not.                             | They are well known internally and externally in comparison to KEU.                       | They’ve well equipped libraries and computer labs which have been given by donors and universities. |
| 4  | What kinds of data do you want to see in the website?                                | About the history, administration, faculties, and department of KEU.                      | Data that is related to my faculty and departments.                                      | New books and articles published by well known authors with reference to education and methodology. | KEU communicates with internal universities via a monthly journal published by MoHE in which each univ has a written section. |
| 5  | In your opinion is it good to develop a colorful website or just a simple?            | Colorful website attracts more visitors than simple website.                              | Academic colors should be used, not entertaining colors.                                 | The website should be decorated with colorful content rather than physical decoration.    | More colors and pictures should not be used in the website, because it makes it slowly load. | Visitors like colorful websites and stay longer in comparison to simple website.          |
| 6  | Can teachers and students of other education universities get help from KEU website or not? | Yes, if the EKU website is well resourced.                                               | They can get help if KEU teachers post their courses chapter notes & syllabi in it.     | Since the materials used at KEU and other education universities are same, they can download their needed stuff from KEU website in their univ labs. | If we post our research articles wrote by KEU teachers, other education universities will be able to get benefits of them. | If we make our website resourceful, other education universities will definitely use it. |
| 7  | What can you do in the presence of a website that you can not do in its absence?      | We can easily update our teaching materials.                                             | We can post our teaching materials and syllabi on the site.                            | The new books and articles written by KEU teachers and students will be posted on the website. | Our teachers and students will communicate through website.                             | Website will provide competitive environment among KEU teachers and students.             |

Each of the interviewees was individually met and the interview questions were discussed with them in details.
The questionnaire included range of statements which addressed role, benefits, and characteristics of a good educational website.

Table 5: The table describes a few statements of the questionnaire (the full details are mentioned in the appendix) and participants responses to see how they reacted to different questionnaire statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Male (M)</th>
<th>Female (F)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Participant (M.1)</td>
<td>Participant (M.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>KEU needs to have a website.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>KEU website will connect us to other universities in the country and outside.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>It is a positive step for KEU to have own website.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>KEU website should include some educational links.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>KEU website should include some free software.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Other Afghan universities will get help of KEU website materials.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I would like KEU to have a colorful website</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I would like KEU to have a simple website</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The KEU administrators, teachers, and students will get benefits from the website</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I have some intense skills to use website.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The website articles should be written in English, Pashto, and Dari.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After analyzing the interviews and questionnaires data, the following themes emerged.

1. **Introducing KEU to the World**

   A website serves as a great place to refer potential investors to, to show them what your company is about, what it has achieved and what it can achieve in future (Simms, 2005, p. 1).

   Kabul Education University is one of main universities in Kabul which has over 4139 students including male and female. But, very limited number of people both in the country and outside knew about the university and its faculties, because it did not have a good advertising tool through which it could introduce itself to the world. Now the university aims to introduce itself to the world through its fresh developed website. Majority of the interviewees and survey participants strongly felt that KEU could only introduce itself to the world when it has a website; otherwise, it is impossible. One senior male administrator said “people may think that KEU is still a small institute, while it is a large university with having six faculties and over twenty departments; the university must own a website to update people about KEU”.

   KEU wants to introduce itself to the people in the country and outside, because many advantages are associated for the university with its introduction. For instance, usually in Afghanistan when students graduate from twelfth grade, they look forward if they can get admission in medical, engineering, and political science faculties. They do not have similar respect for education faculties as they have for medical, engineering etc, because the education faculties graduate teachers who receive low salaries in schools. Typically, when they can not succeed to get admission in the “respected” faculties, they join education faculties. Therefore, Kabul Education University would like to demonstrate that it has a variety of nice faculties and departments, and each of them offer extremely beneficial and interesting courses every semester. Through the help of these courses, KEU trains and produces hundreds of qualified graduates in
different majors each year. The university offers both teaching related and professional courses. So, if someone does not want to teach, he or she can work as professional in other governmental or non governmental offices. One senior administrator with over 15 years of teaching experience said

*We want to let students (high school graduates who take entrance exam for university admission) know that our graduates (KEU students) do not only have teaching skills but can also work as professionals in their focus areas. For example, our chemistry department graduates can work as chemists in chemical factories besides being able to teach chemistry in schools. And website can help us in removing this misunderstanding that students have about KEU. We will post our curricula and courses in full details on the website so that school graduates have chance to visit and to get admission in KEU.*

In my view, this will provide opportunity for those students who have frequent access to internet to check KEU curricula and activities, but majority of our students have less or no access to internet. One way is if these students go to net cafes in their areas and visit the website, but again there are very few net cafes in the rural areas where majority of students live. So, chances are that very limited number of the students be able to check the KEU curricula on the website.

The university also has a graduate center which trains and produces number of education masters each year since 2008 to lead some important positions both in ministry of education and higher education. This is the first graduate center that has been established in an education university since 1990. But, very few people even in Kabul knew about the existence of this center in Kabul Education University. Since the university did not have an advertising tool till recently through which it could introduce itself to people in the country and outside, it remained unknown for couples of years even for some people in the country. Now when the university has a website, it will post its mission, programs, accomplishments in the last few years, and needs on the website. The aim (hope) is that this website will inform people about KEU activities, and will also encourage more donors (small donors) to assist the university. Although website is not the
only source through which KEU can attract donors, it can be a helpful source for attracting tangible assistance.

Kabul Education University introduces itself to the world for many reasons. The university believes that it (introduction to the world) will increase chances for creating partnerships with other universities (particularly with external universities), it will help the university in attracting more donors to help KEU both physically and academically, and ultimately it will assist the university in attracting more competent students to get admission in the university. A senior male administrator with over 15 years of experience said

we (KEU) live in isolation from rest of the world; thus, no sign of improvement has been observed since its establishment. We need to make partnerships with other universities to get their assistance in improving our programs; we also need to attract donors to build new buildings in our campus. We face lack of classrooms, and therefore, some of our students come in the morning session for attending their classes and some come in the afternoon

a) **Creating Partnerships**

The university would like to make partnerships with other universities particularly with external universities since they are more qualified and equipped universities compared to some universities in the Afghanistan. Once the university is introduced to the world, chances are that some universities may show interest in building partnerships and assisting KEU. However, it is good to mention that website is not the only tool through which KEU can make partnerships with other universities; website is one of the tools which can help KEU in improving its relationships with other universities. All of the interviewees and survey participants agreed that KEU should build partnerships with other universities to attract their assistance in improving the university programs. All 8 KEU senior officials said we need to make partnerships with other universities desperately in order to improve our administrative and teaching skills, and also our courses; otherwise, we can not improve them alone by ourselves.
Since the university did not have a website until recently, only a limited number of external universities knew about it, maybe they heard KEU's name through our Ministry of Education or Higher Education or somebody else. So, there was less opportunity for the university to build decent partnerships with other universities which would have resulted in mutual cooperation and assistance between them. Four of the eight interviewees (senior officials) and 35 out of 66 survey participants (students) said KU, KMU, KPU universities which had websites had built stronger relationships with Japanese and western universities, and as a result of which dozens of their teachers and students have been accepted as students there to study and bring new knowledge and expertise back home. We would also be able to create similar partnerships with external universities after being introduced to the world through our website and will go for study abroad there and bring back new experiences to help our institution and country better.

If KEU would have made partnerships with other universities, its teachers would have compared their faculties and departments' curricula, syllabi, and teaching materials with the partner universities' curricula, syllabi, and teaching materials for finding similarities and differences. Now KEU teachers teach the materials which they have in their hands, but if they are asked whether their teaching materials are any longer usable in other universities or not, they may not know, because there is no communication between KEU and other universities so they can judge their teaching materials. One junior administrator with less than 5 years of administrative experience said:

_Last winter 2008; I searched the Internet for finding new materials for my subject that I wanted to teach in the next semester. I really struggled finding new materials for my subject, because there were very little updated materials available on the Internet with reference to my subject. I thought if the KEU would have made partnerships with other universities, I would ask at least one of the universities for the subject materials, and then compared my subject materials with those materials to found the similarities and differences. Now I do not know whether my teaching materials are proper to be taught in_
the university or not, because there is no sample available to compare my materials with it and judge the level of my materials.

To sum up, the university needs to build relationship and partnership with other universities in order to get their help and support for improving its programs, teachers and students capacities. And one possible way of making partnerships with other universities can be after KEU introduction to the world, because once other universities see KEU programs and activities on the website, they may show interest in making partnerships with KEU based on their interest. However, if the university stays in isolation and no external university knows about it then chances are that KEU will not be able to build any kind of partnerships with other universities.

b) Attracting More Donors

The university has received very limited help from donors compared to other Kabul based universities; therefore, fewer signs of improvements have been observed since its establishment. One of the reasons that why KEU couldn’t attract more donors in the past few years to help the university is that it was less connected to the world compared to KU, KMU, KPU, and so on. The senior universities (KU, KMU, KPU etc ) had old relationships with external universities and donors in the past, so it was easier for them to relive those relationships through the help of our Higher Education Ministry, their personal relationships with donors, and through their university websites. Six of 8 KEU officials also admitted that senior universities received enough assistance from donors in the past few years (2002- yet), and they further said if you compare today’s KU, KMU, and KPU with yesterday’s (1990-2001) KU, KMU, and KPU, you will notice a big difference. They have well equipped libraries, computer labs with having access to the Internet; cool classrooms with nice chairs, desks, and projectors, and these all are
provided by donors. However, since KEU was recently established (2003), it did not have any particular relationship with donors in the past. Therefore, it needs to work harder to build relationships and attract donors to help the university. One of the tools which can be helpful for attracting donors is its website. Once KEU introduces its programs and needs to the world through its website, chances are that donors may show interest in helping KEU in some certain areas. Sex of 8 high officials said when Kabul Education University introduces its mission, programs, and needs to the world, chances are that donors (those donors who want to assist Afghan institutions) help our university. But, again it is important to say that there is no guarantee that website will definitely attract donors. It may be a positive step toward attracting donors particularly small donors. However, the university administrators need to get help from our ministry of higher education and other governmental and non governmental organizations for making partnerships with external universities. It is true that via website a university can advertise its needs along with advertising its mission and programs to let donors know about its requirements, but meanwhile the university hierarchies are required to give their full efforts (by meeting donors through different channels and explaining goals and needs of the university, and also ensuring donors that their funds will be spent properly) to convince donors to help the university. They do not need to totally rely on the website that it will attract donors.

In my view, Kabul University, Kabul Medical University, and Kabul Polytechnic University are senior universities; they have a long history behind, so prior to having websites they had made partnerships with different universities around the world. These universities were also in touch with series of donors who used to help them in the past. So their previous relationships had played similar or may be even better role than their websites in attracting old friends (donors) to assisting the institutions. Since KEU is a young university, established
recently (2003), its administrators needs to work harder in order to attract donors, and they can use website as a tool for attracting donors. Since KEU is a young university in comparison to other universities (such as KU, KMU, and KPU), the website can become a good mean of its expansion, but stead alone website cannot meet every expectation of KEU.

c) Attracting More Students

A website gives you (institution) the opportunity to tell potential customers what you are about and why you deserve their trust and confidence (Simms, 2005, p. 1).

The university wants to inform Afghan learners (baccalaureate students who plan to get admission in universities) about its faculties, departments, and variety of courses offered by the university each year. The purpose of informing learners about KEU is to attract more talented students to get admission in KEU instead of some other universities. Six of 8 KEU senior officials said that most of the talented students try in the first place to get admission in reputable faculties such as medical, engineering, political science etc, but if they can not make it there than they come to KEU. They do not want to become teachers (because teachers are paid low in the schools); therefore, they try to get admission in other faculties. We want to demonstrate that our graduates have both teaching and professional knowledge. For example, our Computer Science Department’s graduates learn subjects with reference to teaching such as teaching methodology, pedagogy, psychology, sociology etc, but in the meanwhile, they learn a number of professional subjects such as hardware, programming languages, graphics, networking and so forth. Similarly, the Chemistry, Biology, Physics etc department students study both kinds of courses (teaching and professional). One senior administrator with over 10 years of administrative experience said “we would like to articulate that the university does not offer only teaching related courses”.

KEU graduates have two choices after graduation; joining schools as teachers, or working in governmental and non governmental office as professionals. The graduates are not
expected that they must become teachers, instead if they do not like teaching profession, they can simply work in other departments as professionals. I know a lot of my students who are graduated from the Computer Science Department of KEU, and they work with different NGOs or governmental offices as database officers, IT managers, and so on. Only a few of them who were interested in teaching professions have been teaching in schools and teacher training colleges. Kabul Education University wants to let all learners know through its website that the university has variety of departments and courses, and train professionals and technical students in different majors. The purpose of this attempt is to persuade competitive students to show interest in getting admission in the university so that KEU can train well capacities for the country.

2. Updating Teaching Materials

*The college's Web site was designed and developed to promote direct access to information resources and increase the visibility of the college. The Web site provides access to an organized and specifically designed gateway to useful Web-based content (Auburn University, 2009).*

Kabul Education University teachers and students will be able to easily update their teaching and learning materials through the university website. Although they can update their materials from the Internet without the existence of a website, but website will provide them a better opportunity to easily and manageably update their materials. Since some of the KEU teachers have decent internet skills, they can search and find important data in their fields on the internet, and these data links can be added in the website so that those teachers and students who struggle finding their purposed data can get help from the links found by other teachers and students. Six out of 8 interviewees (KEU administrators) said we want to see links to new books and articles on each faculty and department webpage so that our administrators, teachers, and students of each faculty and department have the chance to go through the materials and increase
and update their knowledge. One senior male administrator said “I want to see links to videos in which different teaching methodologies are basically practiced so that my teachers can look to them and follow in their classes; it is much easier for my teachers to learn and adapt new methodologies from videos (visuals) than theories”.

In addition, there are many teachers and students in KEU who wrote books, articles, and journals on different academic topics, but since there was no source or tool available for them to share their findings with other teachers and students of the university, the materials are left unread. Now when KEU owns a website, all these materials will be posted on the website so that all KEU and other university teachers and students have the chance to get benefits of them. One of my students has told me

*I wrote a book with respect to computer and a book on the social life of ants, but I don’t know how I can freely share them with other. I can not publish hundreds of copies of the books due to my poor economy to distribute them on my fellow colleagues and other who are eager to read. However, now as our university has a website, I can post them there so that each KEU and other university teacher and student has opportunity to read them if they like.*

Also, four of the 8 KEU administrators said we have teachers and students who wrote a lot of books on different educational topics, but very few of us got chance to read them, because KEU did not have a blog or a website where the books could be posted so that each of us had opportunity to read them. Now when the university owns a website, we can post all of those books in it.

It seems as KEU website is going to bring-alive the hidden treasure (books and articles written by KEU teachers and students in the past) along with informing the university teachers and students from the new changes which occur in education. The website contains separate webpages for each faculty and department where its administrators, teachers, and students can post beneficial information with reference to their faculties and departments.
3. **Providing better Learning Resources for Students**

*The primary objective of the Central European University (CEU) website is to provide an instant, interactive channel for the distribution of information about the university's mission, programs, services, faculty, students, and events to the world. Connecting ideas with people is an important function of the university's website and is a principal reason for its development (no author name).*

The university educators are able to post their course syllabi and teaching materials on their department webpages so that students have better understanding of their course materials and purposes ahead of time. Usually, students have access to their each semester course materials at the start of that semester, and it is a bit hard for them to have the materials ahead of semesters if they want. The rule is, when a semester starts, the teachers of each course give materials to a representative of each class and they copy materials for all students of the classes. Sometimes, even after a month or two, students are unable to have a copy of the chapter notes. Or, the teachers do not receive their notes back suitably from the representatives at the end of the day; for instance, some pages of their notes are lost or their chapter note pages aligned in a disorderly manner, which creates extra work for the teachers. Some teachers have only one copy of their taught subject notes, and if their notes are misaligned or lost (chances are since notes go to many hands while copying) by students it creates many problems for them. But now when KEU owns a website, they can post a copy of their notes in their department webpages and students can download them from there. They will not be losing their notes any longer. Similarly, it makes it easier for students too; they will not need to wait till the start of each semester to have its notes. Instead, they can have the notes at anytime and from anywhere they want.

Now the problem is that students have very limited opportunity in the university to have access to the Internet, because the university has only two internet labs, and they are usually
occupied by the teachers. So, now the question is where the students can have access to Internet to download the uploaded materials. There are several options for them through which they can have access to the Internet or materials; first they can go to net cafés where they have to pay 50 Af's (equal to $1) per each hour. The second option is that some of the students have internet connection in their homes where they can download the materials. The third option is that some students have part-time jobs, and they have internet in their offices so they can download the materials there. Now the question is, what about those students who are poor and cannot afford the net café’s payment, or the students who do not have internet in their homes, or do not have part-time jobs? How they can have the notes? The answer is that students (particularly classmates) are very cooperative in Afghanistan with each other, and if one of them downloads the materials by anyway, he or she can happily share them with all classmates. So, chances are that at least some of the students in each class would have access to Internet either in their homes or offices, or be wealthy enough to go to net cafés and download the whole materials of a semester and share them with their classmates.

Another advantage of posting teaching materials on the website is that students do not need to wait till the beginning of each semester to have their next semester materials, but instead they can have the materials ahead of the semester to read and be well prepared. The rule of the university is that students have about a month break at the end of first semester, and three months break at the end of second semester in a year. In other words, the students have around four months break in a year. So, now if the students want to have notes during break time to read and have an idea of their next semester courses, it is hard for them to have the notes. In general, the teachers don’t like to hand in their notes to them ahead of time so the students can copy notes for themselves, because teachers think the student may lose the notes or align them in a disorderly
manner. As a result, students spend the break times without any special activities and return back to the university without having prior understanding of their course materials. Now when the university has a website, every teacher can post his or her course syllabi and teaching materials on his department webpage and students can download them whenever and wherever they want. All of the interview participants said that posting course syllabi and teaching materials will not only provide opportunity to the students to have access to them at any time, but it will also help the teachers and students of other education universities to get help and benefits from. Usually, teachers of provincial education universities come to KEU to get chapter notes from there and teach them in their universities. So, if the notes are available on the website, these teachers do not need to come to KEU, and instead they can download them in their university computer labs.
Chapter 4

EXPLORING THE WEBSITE

Structure of the Website
As diagram below shows, the website is composed of four main areas: home page, main sections (include About University, Administrations, Faculties, and IT Center), subsections (include Campus, Library, (faculty names such as Literature, Social Science, Special Education...), and sub subsections (include departments’ names such as Dari, Arabic Geography.....and so on). Each webpage is connected to the home page, and visitors can have access to any page in third click. There are 2 more webpages (articles and downloads), and their navigations are included in majority of the webpages so that visitors can get in to at any time they like.

Figure 1: The below figure describes the structure of the KEU website.
Home Page

The home page of KEU website contains general information about the university along with variety of menus and links. The five menus (Home, About University, Administration, Faculties, and IT Center) exist in majority of the website sub webpages. In addition, the main page is linked to five important Afghani websites (such as Global Learning Portal, Education Ministry, Higher Education Ministry, Kabul based Universities, and Provincial based Universities) for keen visitors who are interested to head in for further information on Afghan universities. The Search menu contains links to Google and Wikipedia search engines to help visitors to explore and find extra materials on the Internet. The Article tab is linked to a webpage where new essays and articles written by KEU teachers and students will be posted. Furthermore, the Download tab is linked to the webpage which contains computer software such as anti viruses (AVG, Avira, Avast), anti spies (Spybot-Search & Destroy, Adware), dictionaries (Wordweb, Babylon), and media player (real player) so that KEU staff can download them for free. The website also contains some photos of KEU campus and buildings on the main page.

Figure 2: Below is the “Main Page” of KEU website.
“About University” menu

This page contains the history of KEU, university admission criteria and few extra menus (such as MA Program, Library, Gymnasium, and Auditorium). Each one of the extra menus contains photos and information with reference to the menu.

Figure 3: Below is the “About University” webpage.

“Administration” menu

The administration page includes biographies and photos of KEU administrators (such as the chancellor of the university, director of academic affairs, director of administrative affairs, and director of students’ affairs).
Home Page of Literature Faculty

This page includes information about overall mission of the literature faculty. The page also includes the photo and email address of the dean of the faculty. The page contains menus of five distinctive departments (Dari, Arabic, Pashto, English, and Russian departments) of the faculty. Moreover, the faculty home page is linked to the university home page in case visitors wanted to directly return back to the university home page.

Kabul Education University has six faculties (Natural Science, Social Science, Literature, Special Education, Physical Education, and Vocational Training), and similar webpages are designed and developed for all of the faculties.
Pashto Department Home Page

This page contains name and titles of the Pashto Department teachers, and photo of the department head including his email address. In addition, it includes menus of the other five departments of the literature faculties in case someone wanted to head in to them. The department webpage is also linked to the faculty (literature) home page as well as to the university home page in case visitors wanted to go back and forth.

Kabul Education University has twenty one departments in its six faculties, and similar webpages are designed and developed for all of departments.
In sum, the webpages of the website developed are pluralistic webpages which have links to all faculties, departments, administration, article, download etc on a common platform to interact and communicate for the betterment of KEU as a leading education university in Afghanistan.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The literature suggests that a good educational websites should be developed attractive, clever, compelling, and include outstanding contents to attract more visitors to visit it. Moreover, the website should keep out needless design, large and spanning graphics, videos, animations, because they make the website heavy and cannot be easily loaded. Furthermore, the graphic and color used in good websites should be attractive and meaningful. In addition, good websites need to have fast loading pages, low scrolling, consistent layout, and be accessible on most browsers. I tried to include most of these important characteristics in Kabul Education University website.

Findings and Limitations

I feel that Kabul Education University has still not been well recognized in the country and outside of the country in comparison to some of the other Afghan universities (such as KU, KPU, KMU etc). One reason is that it is a newly established university and does not have a long history. Another reason can be that it did not have a website until recently (July 2009) so that people in the country and outside could have chance to get information about its various faculties, departments, and courses which are being taught. As a consequence, the university failed to make partnerships with external universities to get their help in improving its programs. Similarly, the university couldn’t attract enough donors as the other Kabul based universities attracted to help the university both physically and academically. Currently, the university has a library with limited number of updated text books.

It also failed to provide students with access to Internet in the university. The students are not allowed to check their emails at the university internet labs. One of my students who
participated in the survey said “we need to have access to the Internet first, and than need to have a website. If we don’t have access to the Internet at KEU than how we can look at a website”. Currently, the university has two internet labs which are limited for the teachers to use them for updating their teaching materials.

The university needs help and assistance desperately from donors and external universities in order to address its problems. One of the tools which can help the university to express its needs, to make partnerships with external universities, and to attract more donors is its website which has been recently developed. It is fair to say that website is not the only source or tool that can help the university, but instead, it is one of the tools that can help the university to an extent to make partnerships with other universities and to attract more donors.

The current website of the university does not contain any large pictures or videos which make the website slow. The size of the website is (2.79MB) which help the website to load quickly. Generally internet is slow in Afghanistan, so having this concept in mind, I tried to develop a website which contained fewer photos but to make it attracting with its colorful content. The advantage of such a website is that it is easily and quickly loadable on any server (fast or slow server).

**Future Plan**

Websites are always in the mode of change and need to be constantly updated. I will make the efforts to keep the KEU website updated. The current version of the website is not the complete version of a KEU website; data of some pages (auditorium, gymnasium, and IT) are partially missing. So, my next look is to collect and post the missing data of the website.

Since the website represents KEU, having this concept in mind, I will ask KEU all stakeholders to provide me their inputs. Moreover, the university teachers need to be asked for
their course syllabi and teaching materials to post them on their department webpages. The problem is that some teachers have developed syllabi for their courses while some have not. Thus, first they should be asked to develop their course syllabi and then asked to have them posted on their department webpages. Similarly, some teachers have both hard and soft copies of their teaching materials, whereas some have only hard copies. So, they are need to be helped to prepare soft copies of their teaching materials and for posting on their department webpages. It is fair to say that these efforts will take times to collect all the course syllabi and teaching materials and post them on the website. Because of the power issue, the researcher may need to ask the university chancellor, deans of faculties, and chairs of departments for help to ask their teachers to provide their course syllabi and teaching materials soon. Meanwhile, those teachers who have their course syllabi and soft copies of teaching materials will be asked first to post their materials on their department webpages.

Presently, both teachers and students struggle with handing out and getting course chapter notes on the beginning of each semester. It takes about more than a month for students to have their course chapter notes, because first they need to ask their teachers for a hard copy of the note and then each student takes the note to copy shop for copying, and when the last student turn comes in a class, more than a month of a semester has gone. After having the chapter notes, they start catching up the previous lessons. Similarly, the teachers do not receive their complete lecture notes after getting them back from the students since they are passed through many hands. So, it is a problem for both teachers and students, and they face this misery at the beginning of each semester. However, when the teachers post their teaching materials on the website, they will not need any longer to hand in their chapter notes to students for copying.
Similarly, students will have access to the materials all the time and, they can download them at any time they want.

In addition, those university teachers and students who have published useful articles and books will be contacted by the researcher to hand in a copy of their written materials to attach or post them on the website so that KEU and other university staff can get benefits from them.

Furthermore, new books, journals, and articles with reference to different educational subjects will be found on the internet, and their links will be inserted on their related department webpages so that both teachers and students of those departments get benefits of them. The website developer (or researcher) will ask each department teachers and students who have good internet skills to find important books and articles with reference to their departments, and then their links will be inserted on their department webpages. The overall goal is that KEU website should contain very relevant materials so that all KEU and other education university teachers and students can take advantage of them.

Along with this, the university website will have two more versions in Pashto and Dari languages in the future as the university high officials, teachers, and students recommended. The aim of developing two other versions is that those teachers and students who are struggling with English have a chance to explore the website in their languages and get benefits of the posted materials. This work does not need a lot of efforts, because the structure of the website is already developed and only repositioning the menus and changing their names from English to Pashto and Dari are required. Also, the researcher needs to translate the website data to Pashto and Dari, but he may get help from his fellow teachers and students in translating data.
To finish with, each department teachers and students will be asked to fined software with reference to their departments, and they will be posted on each department webpage so that all teachers and students of each department have chance to get benefits of them.

Below is the link of Kabul Education University website if someone wants to head in to it (http://k-eu.edu.af/).

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