WESTMINSTER INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER, UNITED KINGDOM

TEMPUS PROJECT

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR INDEPENDENT LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

INDEPENDENT LEARNING PRACTICE

IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN:

CURRENT SITUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Tashkent – 2006

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS:

AMU – Adam Mickiewicz University
AQA – Academic Quality Assurance
CBILHE – Capacity Building of Independent Learning in Higher Education
ECTS - European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
HE – Higher Education
HEI – Higher Education Institutions
IL – Independent Learning
ILNA – Independent Learning Needs Analysis
ILRC - Independent Learning Resource Centre
MHSSE – The Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education
NPPT – National Program for Personnel Training
PIT – Project Implementation Team
SDU- Staff Development University
UoW – University of Westminster
WIUT – Westminster International University in Tashkent

PART 1. AIMS AND DEFINITION OF THE PROJECT

Aims of the Project

With young people under the age of 25 years constituting almost 56% of Uzbekistan's total population, government education policy is clearly critical to the country's development. Since independence Uzbekistan has made impressive gains in educational attainment with illiteracy virtually eliminated and almost 6 million children studying at school. However, as in other social sectors, education has been affected by the difficulties of the transition period. In higher education in particular there are signs of stress. There is recognition at the highest level that the content, processes and organization of Uzbekistan's higher education system should be reformed to better serve the needs of changing economic, social and political conditions and ensure a successful transition to a knowledge-based market economy. The National Programme for Personnel Training (NPPT) adopted in 1997 provides a long-term strategy for fundamental reform in key areas.

The Ministry of Higher and Specialised Secondary Education (MHSSE) of Uzbekistan has already made significant progress and been active in launching a number of reform initiatives and experience has shown that top down solutions, often involving prescriptions from foreign experts who may not have fully understood the social and cultural context, have been less effective than initiatives which are articulated and embraced by the professionals who are actually involved in the delivery of higher education. What has become clear is that building capacity in the MHSSE is more effective than interventions which bypass MHSSE structures. In designing reform itself, MHSSE will own and thus more effectively implement reform.

Several key areas have been targeted by MHSSE for reform. These include:

- Improving links between higher education and industry and making courses more relevant to professional life

- Introducing a quality assurance system

- Establishing a more personalised modular system

- Upgrading the skills of teaching staff

- Placing a greater emphasis on independent learning within the higher education curriculum

Of these reform areas it is that of independent learning which may present the best prospects of positive change in the short term as well as having positive knock on effects in other areas. The reasons for this are set out below.

At present the higher education system in Uzbekistan is structured around funding teachers and institutions rather than empowering students to learn. The inherited Soviet system which featured outdated and didactic curricula with teacher-centred pedagogy and an assumption that repetition of factual knowledge imparted by the teacher constituted proof that the student had mastered concepts, is now perceived as being of low quality and irrelevant to modern educational needs. The government of Uzbekistan has recognised the need to move towards a more flexible curricula and pedagogic approaches which put students at the centre and encourages independence. President Islam Karimov has himself emphasized this: "We all understand quite clearly that the main task of a teacher is to help students acquire and develop the habit of independent thinking. However, unfortunately, this does not always take

place in practice. If young people are not allowed to learn to think freely and independently, the effectiveness of education will inevitably go down." (Harmoniously Developed Generation is the Basis of Progress in Uzbekistan, 1998).

At present the average undergraduate student spends only about 32 of the stipulated 54 weekly study hours in formal teacher-led instruction. There is a need to equip students with the necessary skills to plan and direct their own learning and to train teachers so they are better able to facilitate this. However, there is a recognised need to move further in the direction of independent learning, such that not only will students more effectively learn but also to free up time and resources for greater investment in professional development of teachers. Devoting more time to their own scholarship would enhance the teachers' ability to assist students in independent learning, and the reduction in teaching time will also create opportunities for retraining to enable the teachers to effectively fill the new roles required of them as Uzbekistan moves further along in the requirements of the Bologna Process. Inherent in the principles of Bologna is the understanding that formal systems of provision need to become much more open and flexible, so that such opportunities can truly be tailored to the needs of the learner. Independent learning by definition implies greater flexibility and is, for example, fundamental to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) which is predicated on a significant proportion of the 1500-1800 hours of student workload each year being independent learning. In addition without developing skills in independent study, students will not be able to continue learning after their formal education comes to an end.

While in the long term a commitment to independent learning requires a restructuring of the higher education budget and investment in libraries and ICT, this doesn't mean that important steps in independent learning cannot be taken in the short-term. The foundation of independent learning is not so much material resources as a shift in mindset that sees students as responsible for their own learning. Independent learning requires a paradigm shift and well planned short-term interventions can do much to provide the necessary intellectual joint work of students and educational institutions in maintaining appropriate learning environment.

The objective is to assist the Ministry of Higher and Specialised Secondary Education (MHSSE) to develop a multistage action plan within the timescale of the project for the promotion of independent learning on a wider scale.

Outputs and outcomes of the project were determined as the following:

1. Project implementation team (PIT) of local experts including Ministry officials trained in: the principles of independent learning (IL) needs assessment and organisational diagnosis in higher education (HE) institutions analysing the experience of other HE institutions in Europe in developing IL the skills necessary for assisting MHSSE in developing an action plan for promoting IL;

2. Training guide for preparing project implementation teams in needs assessment and organisational diagnosis

3. Report on the needs and opportunities for developing IL in HE institutions of Uzbekistan compiled by PIT.

4. A group of strategic representatives from HE institutions with an understanding of the needs and opportunities for IL and trained to act as facilitators in the development of independent learning.

5. Report outlining an ideal model for IL in HE in Uzbekistan, and strategies for achieving that model.

6. Action plan developed by MHSSE in conjunction with PIT for the development of IL.

7. Recommendations for establishment and maintenance of academic quality assurance (AQA) procedures to support IL.

8. A training course on how to implement organisational development to build an IL environment.

9. Manual for introducing staff to IL.

10. Independent Learning Resource Centre (ILRC) at Westminster International University in Tashkent (WIUT) for HE institutions and MHSSE staff to develop their understanding of independent learning and aid their promotion of it.

11. Final event inaugurating the ILRC, publicising the manual and training course and launching the action plan on introducing independent learning in HE.

12. Project evaluation report.

13. Knowledge acquired by both MHSSE and local experts in PIT of needs analysis and planning of interventions in HE institutions.

To produce these outcomes PIT implemented the following activities:

1. An initial training of PIT delivered by University of Westminster (UoW) and Adam Mickiewicz University (AMU) experts.

2. Study visit to University of Westminster, UK, and Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland, by the project implementation team consisting of the Ministry and WIUT representatives to study the practice of project partners in independent learning (IL).

3. Development of an action plan research strategy for delivery of Independent Learning Need Assessment (ILNA) and organisational diagnosis in Higher Education Institutions (HEI).

4. Needs analysis in IL by PIT in 15 sites: 5 in Tashkent and 10 to universities in the regions (Ferghana, Andijan, Namangan, Samarqand, Bukhara, Nukus, Termez, Navoi, Gulistan and Karshi) by project implementation groups of 2 or 3 people with a duration of two days (three days including travel when located outside of Tashkent). These visits entailed conducting of interviews, questionnaires and focus groups, along with the identification of strategic partners in these key universities.

5. Analysis of results and writing a report on the current situation of the learning environment of local universities, identification of needs and potential for further development of IL.

6. Two day workshop with strategic representatives from HEIs, hearing their perception of the problems around teaching and learning and looking at how IL could play a role in improving the quality of learning .

5. Report on recommendations for further development of IL in Uzbek universities consisting of:

   a) Two-stage model for IL in HE in Uzbekistan and strategies for achieving this ideal.

   b) An action plan for MHSSE to implement IL.

   c) Proposals and their implications for AQA in promoting IL.

8. Preparation of course by PIT on introducing IL

9. Development of manual for local HEIs to implement IL.

10. Setting up an Independent Learning Resource Centre (ILRC) at WIUT. This entailed equipping the ILRC with the required facilities and information, development of the processes by which it will be run, and preparation and translation of materials.

11. Preparation of a final event involving stakeholders and participants. This involved planning, advertising and conducting the event (with a small reception) as well as targeting media outlets to ensure maximum impact for the event in terms of coverage on TV, newspapers and educational publications and networks.

12. Project audit and evaluation session by project implementation team with independent local expert measuring the success of the project and lessons learned.

13. Reflection session of PIT with MHSSE on lessons learned in the process of the project.

Project Consortium

The grant co-ordinator, **Westminster International University in Tashkent (WIUT)**, is uniquely placed to transfer European practice to the higher education sector in Uzbekistan given its experience in pioneering the delivery of internationally accredited degree programs in Uzbekistan. Since its foundation in 2002, upon the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan, WIUT has been at the cutting edge of introducing independent learning techniques in Uzbekistan and has been charged by the government with acting as a model and disseminator of international practice across the higher education sector. As such, WIUT already has developed contacts and regularly holds meetings with Rectors of other universities in Uzbekistan and has a close working relationship with the Ministry of Higher and Specialised Secondary Education (MHSSE). For example WIUT, in co-operation with the Academy of State and Social Construction under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, has recently launched a joint programme consisting of a series workshops for Uzbek university top managers to acquaint them with the UK system of education and its implementation in Uzbekistan. This has been overseen by the Rector of WIUT, who has served as a special advisor to the President on matters of higher education and can assist in the development of the MHSSE action plan for independent learning.

WIUT's staff is in a unique position of understanding the realities of the higher education system in Uzbekistan (having studied or taught within it) as well as the European system (the majority of academic staff having postgraduate degrees from European universities). Having experience of both teacher centred learning in Uzbekistan and independent learning in Europe they will be well placed in assisting MHSSE in developing strategies to promote independent learning across the sector.

The University of Westminster, United Kingdom, has been WIUT's partner from its inception and has been closely involved in guiding WIUT in its development of independent learning, in particular drawing from the expertise of the Educational Initiative Centre, the head of which has paid two visits to Uzbekistan to assist WIUT in implementing independent learning. In addition to its involvement with WIUT, University of Westminster has worked closely with TEMPUS partners in Russia and China and has a strong commitment to working in partnership with new accession countries. Ann Rumpus Ph.D. had over 30 years experience of lecturing and more recently fulfilling a university-wide role in curriculum development, connected with modular structures, accreditation of prior learning and credit accumulation. She is currently Head of the University's Educational Initiative Centre, an institution-wide unit which supports educational developments, and which promotes change and innovation in curriculum design and course delivery across the institution. This includes a wide range of staff development

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provision in issues of teaching and learning (including independent learning) for colleagues across a range of disciplines, within the University, and other higher and further education colleges. In addition to two previous visits to WIUT and training of WIUT colleagues in the UK, she has also carried out training in Nigeria and Lithuania. She is also responsible for the development and delivery of the University's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy and Strategy, an MA in Higher Education (a programme for academic staff), the University's Centre for Research into Education, and a number of links with associated Further Education Colleges and other bodies concerned with higher and further education. She has been involved in gaining, development and delivery of a range of Government funded projects in higher and further education.

Adam Mickiewicz University (AMU) in Poznan, Poland, has extensive experience in participating in TEMPUS projects and has itself been undergoing a process of transition from a Soviet influenced system to one that has adopted European Union norms. The expert that they will be contributing to the project, Professor Dylak Stanislaw, will be drawing from experience in assisting the Ministry of Education in Poland restructure, including being a member of the working group on restructuring and serving as advisor to the Minister of Education on issues of curriculum development and teacher education. As head of the Department of Research on Teacher Education and Teacher Professional Development, he has published widely on issues related to independent learning (including Introduction to Curriculum Development which has gone through three editions and deals with learning materials and teaching strategies necessary for independent learning.) His seniority and experience will be of particular importance when seeking to communicate the experience of Polish universities and its relevance for reform of higher education in Uzbekistan.

Jamilya Gulyamova (British Council Tashkent Information and Learning Centre Manager) will act as an independent expert for the purposes of the final project evaluation. She has been involved in a number of education projects in the area of teacher training, material development and open learning. After serving as President of the Uzbek English Teachers Association she joined the British Council as manager of an open learning centre pilot project. In 2004 she completed a special course on open and distance learning (LETTOL), with Sheffield College UK.

PART 2. NEEDS ANALYSIS REPORT ON CURRENT STATUS OF INDEPENDENT LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF UZBEKISTAN

In this section we present the findings of extensive research carried out by the Project Implementation Team (PIT). The research is aimed at scrutinizing the current state of Independent Learning in Higher Education of Uzbekistan from different perspectives.

Initially, the members of the PIT attended trainings on contemporary issues in Independent Learning conducted by qualified specialists from the University of Westminster and Adam Miskewich University. During the training the PIT had a chance to better understand different views and definitions of IL, the benefits of IL both for students and academic staff as well as possible ways of implementing IL in Higher Education Institutions of Uzbekistan. Firstly PIT members had an opportunity of observing IL in the University of Westminster, London and Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. The group met with academic and administrative staff and students of these universities and tried to look at how these universities

have been implementing IL, the challenges they faced, the ways they overcame them and best practices.

Secondly, the group visited 10 regional Higher Education Institutions of Uzbekistan and 5 HEIs in Tashkent. The PIT tried to look at each and every factor that influences the successful development of Independent Learning. Defining external and internal locus of control was therefore the primary step in detecting those factors.

The following items are considered as an external locus of control – events outside the university's control:

- educational standards

- curriculum

- the workload of academic staff and students

- assessment system

- academic regulations

- learning resources

- staff development system

Examples to internal locus of control – events guided by internal or university decisions and efforts, are:

- student mobility conditions

- teaching style of lecturers and learning style of students

- personal tutorship

- students career development

- social life

- marketing of education.

EXTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL

Educational standards

Educational standards predetermine the nature of the learning process within the HEIs of Uzbekistan. According to the Order #343 of 12/08/2001 issues by the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan (MHSSE) and with the aim of implementing the Law on Education and the National Programme of Personnel Training (NPPT), local universities developed national standards for bachelors and masters programmes.

These national standards consist of such requirements as an obligatory minimum content and level of education within each subject area, specifying:

- standard duration of education in full-time mode;
- the qualification degree;

- definition of the subject area and workplaces of graduate's professional activity;

- possibility of professional adaptation;

- possible further study directions;

- professional criteria to meet the desired qualification level;

- required knowledge and skills in the desired subject area;

- requirements for graduation qualification project work;

- the structure and content of the curriculum.

Although educational standards consist of a wide range of definitions and sets of requirements for learning outcomes, the learning process in HE is directly governed (or say predetermined) by the curriculum.

The duration of undergraduate studies is 4 years or 8 semesters whilst master degrees requires going through 2 years or 4 semesters of study.

In general we can note the following limitations of these educational standards[1]:

- _There is only one exit qualification and no intermediate qualifications are mentioned._ The availability of only exit qualifications in higher education, i.e. bachelors and masters degrees, is governed by legal considerations. This might be a short terms issue as at an initial stage of transition HE also might require some tight framework for assuring the quality and standards of national HE awards. However an open market environment might call for intermediate qualifications that, on the one hand, would enable learners to plan their study, especially when HE entails spending financial and time resources, and on the other hand, allow employers the choice of recruiting or investing in staff with intermediate qualifications.

- _The standard requirements for the exit qualifications are too broad and vague in definition and they specify only the required professional characteristics of a graduate._ Standard definitions, which are used for the specification of knowledge and skills for a degree, were designed by various universities for different areas of specialisation. This national standard is designed for a specific degree **and** specialisation. This means that for any new specialisation the HE system will require a specific educational standard that would predetermine the qualification, or more precisely, the specialisation specifications. This process of approval within a certain hierarchical process is in some ways similar to the UK system of validation of courses based on HE standards. However, this approval process is rather rigid and limited, and, moreover, is slow moving such that HE struggles to keep up with the ever changing market needs in human resources with specific and up-to-date subject specialisations. In additional, these national standards do not specify how professional knowledge and skills are developed throughout the levels. This, of course, creates some ambiguity when planning the teaching strategy at various levels and identifying specific learning outcomes at different levels and progression conditions.

- _The standards do not state which specific skills the student should obtain to get an exit qualification._ To meet market needs HEIs should develop in learners not only subject knowledge but also a set of transferable skills for further learning and professional work. These skills are even more important for the sustainability and further development of an individual as a member of society in the current competitive environment.

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[1] Sample analysis based on the educational standard for the Bachelor degree in Economic Cybernetics of Tashkent State Economic University, 2004

- *The mobility of students within a certain degree programme is restricted.* There is very limited scope for offering optional modules at higher levels of study and predefined specialisations for the further degree. Some admission restrictions for graduate programme applicants with 'not-permitted' first degree specialisations results in limited mobility of students for further studies. This stems from the fact that almost all Masters of Science courses are designed to teach students more advanced theoretical subject knowledge for pursuing mainly academic research activities. As a result individuals with their first degree in, for example, engineering cannot do their masters in business or arts.

Curriculum

The indicative curriculum, which is part of the national standards, is the main document determining what is taught in local universities. Academic staff are given some freedom for modification of some parts of a curriculum, usually when they relate to higher level and specialisation subjects. A modification process has also been established by the Ministry and some minor changes can be done internally within universities going through several stages of approval from chair to university levels.

A standard curriculum for an undergraduate programme has four blocks of modules:

1. Humanities and socio-economic subjects.

2. Mathematics and natural sciences.

3. General professional subjects.

4. Specialisation subjects.

A standard curriculum divides up into several teaching activities such as lectures, practical classes, laboratory works, seminars, course projects, and self-study. Although self-study hours are allocated separately, the allocation of an overall 41% of the study time to independent study hours was not clearly justified. For example, some modules have course projects as a part of their teaching strategy and for these modules students should have more independent study hours. However these modules have almost the same independent study hours as those which do not require completion of course projects.

The overall study load for a student to complete the undergraduate degree programme is 7344 hours. This is the compulsory teaching load for the undergraduate degree. However one regional university had a working curriculum for some students with overall 6974 hours per course. This was explained as a result of this course being taught based on the curriculum under previous standards. So within a university we found students studying at different levels with two different curricula.

In 2004 the MHSSE issued order #199, within which 2992 hours (41%) of the overall study hours were allocated as independent learning hours. This is a potentially promising ratio since it would give sufficient time within study programme to promote students independent learning. Although the MHSSE issued several instructions on how to manage students IL time, i.e. some structure for the organisation of IL exists, in practice universities use very different approaches in the organisation of these hours. Sometimes practices are even contradictory and some have a clear negative impact on the learning process.

In the following figure the allocation and ratio of subject blocks in the undergraduate course in Marketing can be seen:

Ratio of learning mode per subject blocks
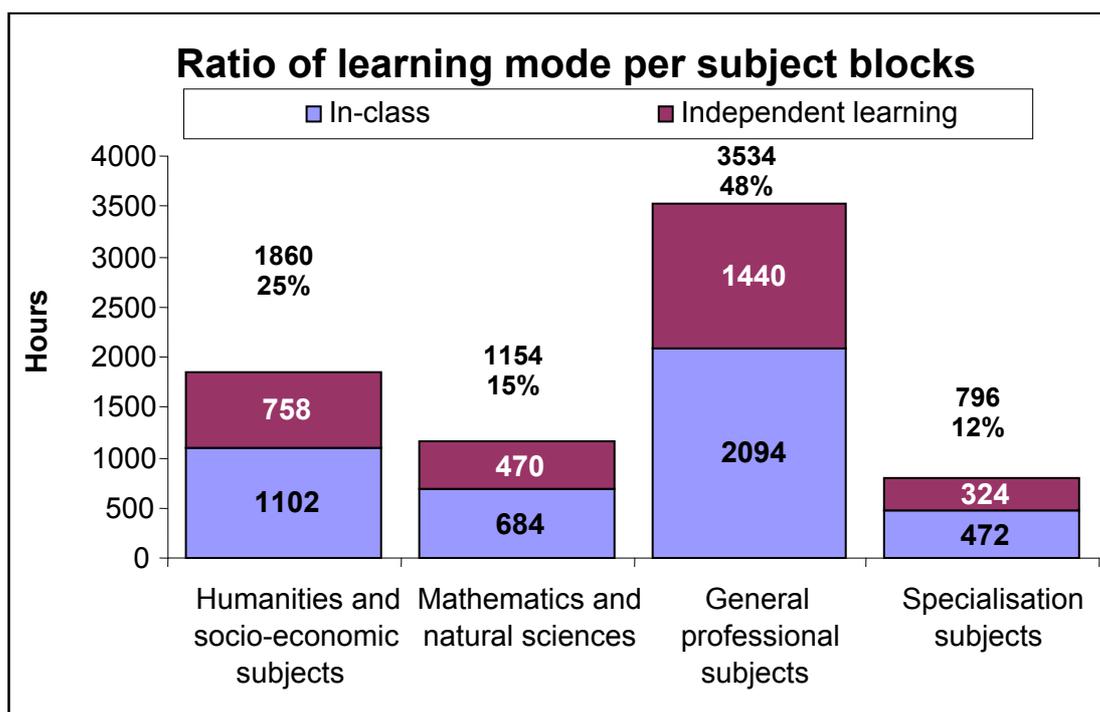
Figure 1. The ratio of learning mode per subject blocks in an undergraduate programme.

Table 1. Overall hours allocation in an undergraduate programme.

	In-class	Independent learning	Overall	%
Humanities and socio-economic subjects	1102	758	1860	25%
Mathematics and natural sciences	684	470	1154	15%
General professional subjects	2094	1440	3534	48%
Specialisation subjects	472	324	796	12%
	4352	2992	7344	100%

The teaching of all subject blocks is evenly distributed among 8 semesters. The exemption is the group of Specialisation subjects which is mainly taught in the final year, semesters 7 and 8. Although a higher level of study might require more time for independent learning strategies, the ratio of in-class and self-study hours remains the same throughout all levels.

Making a thorough analysis of the curriculum the following limits to IL of students can be noted:

- There is an overwhelming number of compulsory subjects (humanities and social subjects) not related to the main specialisation;

- The distribution of self-study hours is not justified and not reflecting the amount of coursework required by an individual module;

- The ratio of in-class- and self-study hours remains the same throughout levels;

- There is no clear definition of how and for what kind of activities the self-study hours have been allocated;

- There are very few optional modules their hours are much less than modules in the humanities;

- In general, lectures prevail over seminars or tutorials.

Workload of Academic Staff and Students

Based on our research we can say that the workload of academic staff and students are almost the same in the UK, Poland, and Uzbek universities. However the content and organisation of these working hours are quite different.

In local universities the level of the academic staff work load is specified by the Order of the MHSSE #111 of 22 June 2005. According to this the overall teaching load of a full-time lecturer must be 1540 hours per academic year, of which about 900-1100 hours are active teaching hours including research supervision.

A bachelors programme, for example, entails the following distribution of time within 204 weeks (4 years) for various activities of a learner:

Parts of learning process for bachelor programmes	# of weeks	Semester
Theoretical study	136	1 - 8
Practice	12	4, 6, 8
Assessment and State / Final Assessment (SA)	16 + 2 (SA)	1 – 8
Graduation work	8	8
Vacations	30	1 – 8
TOTAL:	**204**	

According to the standards, overall contact hours (i.e. in-class hours consisting of 'theoretical' study) should not exceed 32 academic hours, with up to 24 hours allocated for self-study. However, the modules syllabi do not always clearly identify how these self-study hours should be organised. Some university administrations, in order to organise these student self-study hours, allocated "in-class" tutorials where a group of students should work in a class-room dong their home work in the presence of a teacher. We observed that this kind of class was quite interactive – the teacher did not dominate and students felt free to ask questions of the teacher who would move around this class giving guidance. These "self-study" hours were given to teachers as an additional work load. However we feel that such sessions should be valued more as they can directly stimulate a student's independent learning even without direct student-teacher interaction.

Sports in Uzbekistan are valued highly within the education process. Sport exercises indeed give really wide opportunities for independent learning. This, however, should be reflected in the allocation of the teaching/learning load. According to the Order of the MHSSE # 111 that

determines the work load of academic staff, it specifies that 10 active hours will be allocated to a teacher's work load for the organisation of sports event. Moreover, these 'sporting event organisation" hours should not exceed 40 hours per annum. In reality, a sports instructor is usually required to hold 5-6 sporting events. As students are the main participants in sporting activities such sporting hours consume student working hours as well. Students who are most active in sports usually miss classes giving priority to sporting achievements, and are assisted in their 'smooth' progression from level to level. This is a separate topic for further consideration.

System of Assessment

The current assessment (rating) system was adopted according to the 2005 regulations of the MHSSE. These standards have been used to assess students' knowledge in all Higher Education Institutions of Uzbekistan. Assessment consists of 3 categories: day to day, intermediate and final examinations. The weighting of these components has been set by the Ministry in the following way: 85% for day to day plus intermediate and another 15% for final assessment.

According to the rating system, the assessment of all modules regardless of their subject specifics usually consists of the following:

- 4 day to day

- 2 intermediate

- 1 final exam (written).

Each University has the right to distribute this 85% of day to day and intermediate assessment as it sees fit (for example, 40% and 45%, 30% and 55%, for day to day and intermediate respectively). Further, each Module Leader can decide on how he/she would like to allocate weightings for the individual components of day to day and intermediate assessments. This should be approved by the Faculty departments.

Overall, day to day and intermediate assessment consist of approximately 6 smaller components, such as students' attendance, active participation in seminars, written lecture notes, tests, essays (referats), etc. These types of assessment are used at the discretion of the teacher.

The PIT team of the project conducted interviews with academic and administrative staff, as well as students, to find out their opinion on the present system of assessment, particularly, its effectiveness in measuring students' knowledge. In addition, regulations on assessment, students' course works and exam papers were carefully studied and analysed. As a result, the following obstacles to the implementation and development of Independent Learning were found:

Frequency of assessment. According to 47% of interviewees, the frequency of assessment carried out during the semester, has resulted in a reduction in the overall quality of the work of academic staff. Because marking is a time consuming process, especially when there are 7 assessments during a semester, academics are able to devote less time for other activities, such as conducting research, preparing for lectures, and working with students, particularly guiding them in independent learning. In addition, the overall quality of marking has decreased. Academic staff are more interested in giving a mark to a piece of work rather than providing a quality evaluation on work done. This rather shallow attitude towards marking has resulted in a similar attitude of students to assignments - which acts as a discouragement for self study.

Weighting of the assessment components. Although some freedom is given to universities on the distribution of weightings for day to day and intermediate assessments (85%), the weighting for final examination, which is 15%, remains the same for all modules. For some modules this weighting may effectively assess students' knowledge, however for others it may fail to assess module specifics. In addition, with the present proportion of weighting, assessment does not allow the student to develop an overall picture of the module and then be assessed, as assessment is piecemeal, not holistic.

Assessment methods, such as tests, and 'referat's, which do not require much time for marking, are becoming more widely used. They are easy to check but also easy to cheat in. After some years of applying the same types of assessment, students have learned techniques which enable them to easily achieve high results. Cheating and plagiarism have been encouraged by the existing assessment methods. Most importantly these methods assess only surface learning and information recall and do not challenge students to deeper learning. Our research reveal that 18% of administrative staff admitted that the assessment system discourages them from applying other methods of assessment, since they already have so much written assignments to do. There is a great need for revising assessment methods and introducing innovative methods of assessment that could encourage independent learning and develop students' critical and analytical thinking abilities. Thus, higher quality learning could be achieved.

Feedback. The system of providing feedback plays a vital role in developing Independent Learning, as feedback, if well written, can show a student's strengths and weaknesses, and guide them to more focused learning. The research has shown that very little attention is given to providing feedback to students' works in Uzbek Higher Education Institutions. Usually, under the term feedback, both students and academics understand an oral form of teacher's comments made during the seminar to the oral answer of a student. The written form of feedback, which occurs rarely, is mostly very general.

Academic Regulations

Academic regulations were an item discussed at the workshop that took place at WIUT with the participation of colleagues from the state universities both from the regions and Tashkent. This area was not researched during the field trips to the Universities. But, since it is one of the important factors that govern the teaching and learning process, it was decided to explore it during the workshop.

The emphasis of the discussion was made on the following:

- Exclusion for non attendance
- Plagiarism
- Use of cheating notes during the exam
- Deadlines for submitting courseworks
- System of expressing students' views on the teaching process in general, or on the choice of optional modules
- Referrals.

Academic Regulations. The discussion during the workshop revealed that there is no single book on academic regulations given to the students. In fact, it is not just a book that is missing, but the actual set of regulations. In contrast, in the UK system it is considered to be one of the most important documents that must be given to the students upon their arrival.

Exclusion for non attendance. Although, it is generally known that exclusion is a consequence of non attendance of 30 hours, in reality, the University can not afford to loose fee paying students and is reluctant to follow this regulation strictly.

Plagiarism. As far as plagiarism is concerned, it was revealed that plagiarism is not penalised at all. Moreover, some colleagues questioned whether an essay (referat) that is copied from another book is considered to be plagiarism. All colleagues shared their concern about writing skills in general. They believe that students are not equipped with writing skills. Moreover, colleagues admitted that there is no dedicated module which would teach students academic writing skills.

Use of cheating notes. The situation is a bit different regarding the use of cheating notes during exams. In all Universities, except only one, students were not penalised for it. Although, in one institution cheating is taken seriously, they still do not have written rules on how to penalise a students if he is caught once, twice, etc.

Deadlines. Setting up strict deadlines for coursework appeared to be a controversial question. Colleagues realise that it can encourage the students to develop the skill of punctuality and the sense of responsibility, but they felt that strict deadlines are inappropriate during the first semester when academic process is delayed by around one 1 month in regional universities as a result of the autumn agricultural campaign.

Students' feedback. The situation varies regarding the system on collecting students' views on the quality of the academic process. In some Universities, suggestion boxes are set up in the corridors, where students can drop a note. Again, how this way of feedback is treated varies from university to university. In some of them the Rector himself/herself reads students feedback. However, students can not choose optional module themselves. It is usually approved at the department meeting.

Referrals (so called 'hvostichka') represent a completely different system from what the experts are used to at WIUT. Primarily, it is different because of the rating system. If a student does not have enough marks at an intermediate assessment (промежуточный контроль) he/she has to do additional work to earn those marks, otherwise he/she is not allowed to take the final assessment. (Итоговый контроль). There could also be situations when a student does not have enough marks overall, in which case he/she is also given an opportunity to do extra work to earn those points. A certain period of time, usually 2 weeks, is given for such students to make sure that he/she contacts the Module leader, takes the task and works on it. This system is not thought through carefully. Moreover, "pass" and "taken" marks are not clearly defined.

In conclusion, it can be said that it is vital to develop a comprehensive set of academic regulations which MUST be followed very strictly without exceptions.

Learning Resources

Learning resources is a crucial component of Independent Learning development. In fact, one of the most widely used definitions of Independent Learning is a Resource-based education. Working in the library resource center will also further encourage student inquiry. Resource-based learning will enable students to access resources, and will involve them in a process of active learning in the university and community. Strong library programs can offer students guidance, support and freedom as they increasingly take responsibility for their own learning. Learning resource materials need to be sufficiently attractive and sufficiently interesting to whet students' appetites for learning.

Nowadays, the range of media available to support student learning is extended by many technological developments, and includes interactive computer-based packages, using a variety of formats including interactive video, CD-ROM, and hypermedia; interactive computer-based communications media, including computer conferencing, electronic mail, on-line databases, and the Internet; and media-based resource materials, including videotapes, audiotapes, and practical kits. In addition, there are applications of communications media, such as telephone tutoring, teleconferencing, and video-conferencing.

According to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On supplying with information and library services to the population of the Republic" (June 20, 2006) the government intention is "support of the development of the organization of library networks taking into consideration modern demands, creation of brand-new information centers, oriented on satisfaction of intellectual demands of growing population, preservation of cultural, moral, values, and creation of all necessary conditions for wider and more systematic population supplying with information". The main idea of this decree is to transform existing libraries into Informational Learning Resources Centers which will provide all modern informational facilities and assistance in finding and selecting informational and learning resources.

The PIT team made an extensive survey in order to define the current situation of provision of Learning Resources in local universities for use within IL. Members of the team conducted interviews with library managers and staff members and made library observations.

This survey showed that the current situation with Learning Resources does not fully support the development and dissemination of IL. A number of complaints were received from academic staff members about the shortage of learning resources, especially at Masters Level. The same complaints were made by students.

Book stock. Although most of the libraries have a very rich stock (around 1 million items in some universities, for example Samarqand State University, National University of Uzbekistan, Bukhara State University), most of the books were purchased 15-20 years ago and are outdated. The same is the case in medium-size and small faculty libraries.

Subscriptions. None of the libraries have international subscriptions or electronic subscriptions.

Language barrier. Shortage of textbooks in local languages (Uzbek, Karakalpak, Tajik)

The process of book order. Academic staff and library staff do not take part in the book order process. As a result, some modules are covered by an excessive quantity of learning materials, while others have none. No data is asked from the Library staff before making a book order. Most of the recent arrivals are books on socio-political issues. There is a great demand for the purchase of subject specific literature, such as in Biology, Chemistry, Business, economics, etc.

The catalogue system. All libraries are still using a manual catalogue, which requires quite a lot of time for book searches. Some of the universities are trying to introduce an electronic library catalogue, but they face different problems, such as a large number of books that need to be entered into the electronic catalogue, usage of outdated classification (most of the libraries are still using an obsolete system), and the lack of IT skilled personnel. Most of the librarians are over 55 and have low motivation for self professional development as the average salary of librarian is also at an unsatisfactory level. Because of the low salary, it is difficult to attract young qualified and ITC literate personnel who could work on creating electronic library catalogues.

Poor communication between library staff and users. Exhibitions on new book arrivals should be constantly organized so that both students and academics know what kind of books the library has. The library web-site could be also used for such purposes.

Access to library stock. None of the libraries in Uzbek universities have open access (i.e. ability to browse) for students to their book stock. It makes the process of ordering books long and inefficient, students sometimes give up on getting a book from the library and loose interest in using the library resources.

IT resources are a very big issue, since the number of computers at the libraries is not sufficient. However, there were some universities where libraries had PCs available for students' usage. But these rooms were closed and none of the computers were used by students. Very few libraries have internet access, printing and coping facilities.

Trainings for new users are not effective, because they included only information about how to use manual library catalogue and do not include other types of Learning Resources.

Staff Development System

Based on numerous measure and initiatives taken by the Ministry of Higher and Specialized Secondary Education of Uzbekistan, it is obvious that staff development and increasing the qualification of teaching staff is one of the most important and sensitive ones. Our research included interviews with heads of organizations responsible for this system. Below is the overall picture of this system drawn from our research:

General regulations. Although each university has its own department that ensures staff development, the system is coordinated on a national scale by the Ministry. Every member of academic staff is required to go through Staff Development training once every three years. These trainings are provided in 3 universities: Tashkent National University – for humanitarian subjects, Tashkent Polytechnic University for subjects of a technical nature, and Tashkent State University of Economics for economic subjects. The length of these trainings is around 2 or 3 weeks. We found it quite useful that upon the initiative of the teaching staff, they can use their Staff Development period for working more intensively on their scientific work and research.

Although before universities were required to send a certain number of teaching staff for these trainings, according to recent regulations by the Cabinet of Ministers, this ceased to be compulsory, which means that it is now at the universities' own discretion whether they do this or not. Currently the National Staff Development system works as follows. The Staff Development Universities (SDUs for the purpose of this report) send out to the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education the list of all the trainings they can provide. The Ministry then sends out these lists to all the universities. The Staff Development department of each university then reviews these lists and sends back to the Ministry the list of their staff they would like to send to any of those trainings. The Ministry then creates a plan for each Staff Development university, which the latter then has to complete by the end of the year.

Selection of trainers. Trainers are selected from different universities and, more often than not, are hired for a certain period. Interestingly, there is no a clear process by which SDUs carry out a needs analysis. The training modules are created mainly based on what's available in terms of the hired trainers competence. This makes it obvious that universities have to choose from what's available on the Trainings list. Although the range of training modules on offer is quite extensive, universities are quite limited in this sense, because each university has its own needs for specialized subjects.

Effectiveness of the Staff Development trainings in terms of delivery as well as perception of trainees is yet another topic for discussion. Although these trainings are said to have been

quite effective a number of years ago, this is mostly not the case anymore. Very often this period is used for absolutely irrelevant purposes, including unofficial breaks by trainees.

One of the most negative findings during the workshop was that very often being in the list of the staff to be sent for the Staff Development training is perceived quite negatively, especially if he/she is being sent for a training of his/her own field of specialization.

However the Ministry acknowledges that these training sessions award each trainee with an appropriate certificate which is quite positively perceived by academic staff. Moreover the Ministry keeps the staff training activities under its careful control and feedbacks continuously.

INTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL

Student mobility

Student mobility is an important issue in IL. Currently educational standards do not state any requirement to support student mobility. Students admitted to a certain course are required to complete this course and obtain a predetermined degree. However in practice students can transfer from one university or specialisation to another if these subject areas are close to each other. In this case a student has to take additionally all modules missing in his/her new study programme. The procedure of student transfers and each individual transfer is overseen by a special panel.

Although MHSSE is the supreme governmental body that governs and establishes HE policies in the country, not all universities operate under its direct management supervision. Some so called 'departmental' universities with 'narrow specialisation' belong to other ministries according to the 'specialisation'.

Student transfers between various 'departmental' universities are organized by MHSSE but approved by the special committee of the Cabinet of Ministers. Any transfer of students under the direct governance of MHSSE is subject to the approval of MHSSE whilst transfers within a single university can be approved by the administration of this university.

Teaching Style of Lecturers and Learning Skills of Students

This section of the report has been produced after having analyzed the results of 18 lecture and 14 seminar observations in different institutes of higher education of Uzbekistan. The main intention of these observations was to identify the most common ways the lecture and seminar sessions are run in the HEIs of Uzbekistan, and to determine the degree to which IL is encouraged or supported in them.

Although all efforts have been made to ensure the objectivity of observations, there were some cases where pre-prepared, or so-called "staged", lectures and seminars have taken place. This has come as a result of the common perception by the universities' management that the Project members were a team of inspectors. These cases have been dealt with via logical inter- and extrapolation. Although every lecture and seminar tends to be unique in its own way, some general tendencies have been detected, leading to relevant conclusions provided further in this report.

Quantity and attendance of students in classes. With the students' average number of 40 in lectures and 17 in seminars, the sessions mostly have quite an adequate attendance. The quantity of students is generally sufficient in terms of the purpose of the session. Although, as it will be discussed below, there are some exceptions, attendance is often a result of the threat

of punishment, ranging from an oral warning to a temporary suspension and even exclusion, rather than a desire to learn.

Means of visual aids. The blackboard tends to be the main means of visuals used by most of the lecturers and tutors. These are used most effectively during seminars (rather than lectures), when students are invited to come up and asked to solve certain problems displayed by the lecturer on the blackboard. The blackboard is used during lectures primarily for writing up the topic outline and/or the main concepts to be discussed.

There are, however, a minority of lecturers who feel comfortable using (and actually do use) more advanced means of delivering their sessions, such as TV, VCR, headsets, overhead projectors, digital data projectors, PowerPoint slides, and computers. Notably, use of such equipments does not necessarily imply an improved quality of the session. Whereas some lecturers can approach this advantage with remarkable enthusiasm (trying something new, exploring the new ways of employing the present equipment, making the most use of it), others seem to use it for the sake of it. For example, it was very interesting to see how effectively the VCR was used in one of the language classes. The lecturer would play back the "The Swan Prince" movie in a "mute" mode. At a certain point, she would stop the video and engage the students into discussion by posing the question about the probable subject of the discussion played back in the video fragment. Then, the video fragment in concern is played back again but this time with the sound and students compare their answers/suggestions.

On the other hand, another lecturer was observed using PCs during his seminar. Despite the variety of potential uses of PCs, compared to a VCR, the students have just been flipping through e-slides on the computer, accompanied by the lecturer monotonously going over these slides.

Session delivery. It is particularly difficult to draw some average line in terms of the way different lecturers approach the "right" way of delivering the session. "Highly responsible", "active", "very aggressive", "threatening", "encouraging", "mostly friendly, but shouts at students frequently", "very rude with students", "enthusiastic", "helpful", "relaxed and interactive", "interactive", "controlling and authoritative" were among the various ways the teachers have been described by observers. However, although it was very pleasing to observe a number of lecturers with a very enthusiastic and friendly attitude, ready to help and support, always encouraging the students to express their opinions, most of the sessions could be referred to as being teacher-centered, where teacher is clearly the sole source of information which cannot be challenged by the student. This impression becomes especially true when it comes to sessions where students remain under the very strict control and command of the lecturer. Students can be punished for wrong answers, not only in terms of marks but more notably in terms of aggressive and, even at times, offensive remonstrations by the lecturer.

Another point of observation worth mentioning in this section is the lecturers' varying ability to deliver the session. Most of the lecturers have been noted to be quite confident in their area of knowledge. However, what they seem to lack are presentation skills in terms of the poor eye contact, posture, and voice projection. When these insufficiencies were especially marked, this resulted in a growing number of passive and uninterested students.

The course curriculum and syllabus of a certain module is one of the factors that play an important role in creating a space and a capacity for independent learning. The observations records clearly show that in most cases students are given the full list of a certain module's topics at the very beginning of the semester. However, because not enough care is taken to demonstrate how each of those topics in the list relate to each other, thus contributing to the value of the module, students perceive this list just as it is, and only a few may refer to it once in a while just to check the topic of the next lecture/seminar. Even though most of the lecturers

do refer to the topic of the previous as well as the following lecture, this is done mostly in the way of reminding (sometimes by asking recap questions) and informing, rather than linking and explaining in terms of the wider picture of the module.

Learning resources. Guidance in terms of the relevant learning resources is another common downfall of most of the sessions. In most cases, students leave the room with their copybooks full of lecture notes as the only means of preparing for the next session. This clearly limits the students in terms of the ways the given topic can be perceived.

Structure of sessions. It is quite obvious from the observation records that many sessions coincide in their structures. Lectures, for instance, follow the common route of "Intro → Topic outline → (sometimes recap question from the previous topic) → dictation of a new topic → conclusion". Seminars mostly start by assessing the students knowledge of the previous topic (mostly all of them get to answer and obtain a certain mark for the session), followed by dictation of a new topic. Interestingly, a significant number of seminars observed did not differ from lectures in the way they are run, because of the considerable session time being dedicated to dictation of a new topic, leaving little or, sometimes, no room for discussion of the previous topic.

The relationship of lectures and seminars is another important subject of consideration. Contrary to our "1 Lecture: 1 Seminar" expectation, it has been revealed to us that some lectures are run once in two weeks, whereas seminars are delivered twice a week. The following is the rationale behind this arrangement. Lectures cover a major subject in very broad terms, while subsequent seminars cover the same subject but in a more detail.

Level of students' interest in class. Given lecturers' attitude toward discipline, combined with the presence of our project members in the class, it was difficult to identify the real level of interest of students. Level of activeness and enthusiasm, however, could be thought of as a more or less objective indicator. One common observation was that the proportion of passive students tended to increase and become more obvious by the second half of the session.

Very often, passive students remained in that state all the way through the session. However, the lecturers who attempted to engage these students would do this mostly by asking direct as well as indirect questions. At times, there were some students who could be regarded as uninterested rather than passive. These were the ones who were obviously engaged in their own matters, irrelevant to the session, and tended to be a source of distraction and disturbance. These students were, as a rule, treated in a way that focused on preventing them disturbing the class, rather than engaging them into session.

Dictation and note-taking tends to be the main associations with the concept of a lecture in almost all of the Uzbek universities. Lack of interaction is another one. Group work and collaboration is often not encouraged, if not discouraged.

General conclusion

Although most of the considerations regarding the observed lectures and seminars have been presented in the discussion above, a number of questions can be raised when a wider view is taken on them.

The question whether attendance should be compulsory can be a subject of quite a lengthy conversation. The rationale behind the compulsory state of attendance is obvious: students, given a freedom of choice and responsibility in this matter without a proper system, can simply forgo the opportunity of attending the class for the sake of other things. The quality and how the students perceive the topic being discussed, though, is another question to add to the immediate rewards (marks) for just coming to class. One thing, however, should be sadly noted

here – the advantage of good attendance is rarely taken. The chance of engaging the students in group discussions, team works and games, pair works and other means of collaborative activities are missed completely during lectures and even seminars.

The observation records reveal a positive correlation between the use of different means of delivering sessions and the degree of students' participation. Blackboard is perceived as a standard and the most common tool used in the session. Therefore, the use of something different adds variety to students' lives, making the session stand out from others, and therefore, increases their interest in it. A couple of examples above clearly reject the myth about the need for technologically advanced resources for making the session interactive and thus interesting. Indeed some lecturers have been clearly more successful in adding the element of interaction into their sessions without any additional equipment, compared with some of those who did have use of equipment. This statement should definitely ring some bells. The analysis of the observation data also portray a positive relationship between a teacher's friendly, supportive, encouraging, and participative attitude and the students' willingness to participate and be active during the sessions.

Lecturers' often aggressive and, at times, even rude, attitudes towards students that come to sessions unprepared should be raised. This way of making the students come prepared is quite questionable in terms of its effectiveness. Far more importantly, the effectiveness of coming prepared to class just for the sake of it should be questioned. This often results in students being awarded just for learning things by heart without a proper understanding of the topic.

An average quantity of uninterested and inactive students in sessions as well as the way they are perceived and treated by lecturers in Uzbek institutes of HE is another point that can be reconsidered. Unfortunately, in most of the cases there was a sense that this category of student is recognized by the teaching staff as "the type of students that is always present in every class". Therefore, when it comes to dealing with these students, teachers are focused on keeping these students from distracting the class. Not many lecturers, though, try to perceive these students as good indicators of the quality of delivering the session.

Personal Tutorship system

The subject of providing the students help and support during the period of their studies has always been and remains being one of the most important ones in almost all the institutes of higher education. Although each university, with varying effectiveness, may have its own views and policies established regarding this matter, there will always be room for improvement.

As a result of our team's lengthy interviews with academic as well as administrative staff of a number of universities both in Tashkent and in other regions of Uzbekistan, an overall impression has been established regarding the ways in which the system of Personal Tutorship is employed in Uzbek institutes of higher education as well as the extent to which Independent Learning is encouraged under it.

Personal tutors are assigned and coordinated by each faculty's Dean's administration. Tutors are selected from among the staff based mainly on their academic experience. Unfortunately, their interpersonal skills as well as their abilities of working with students are often not considered.

Personal Tutors are given booklets, published and distributed to all the Uzbek universities by the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education. These booklets include the list of various activities and discussions that Personal tutors should have with their tutees. Other than these booklets, personal tutors are given further information in handbooks that provide a

detailed description of Personal tutors' responsibilities. Although the responsibilities of Personal Tutors listed in handbooks are quite general and common sense, the factual expectations of management from Personal Tutors are quite excessive, being more of an ideological and cultural nature. The responsibilities include constantly being aware of the student's (tutee's) state of presence in the university, possessing all the personal information about him/her, and not only be the first and main means of contacting with the student, but also being "the one to blame" for any major wrongdoings of any of the tutees. More often than not, Personal Tutors are known to have gone through rebukes from management during some meetings.

As part of the Ministerial assignment, all the Uzbek universities are expected to have a so called "Manaviyat Kuni" (Enlightenment Day) every month. At the very beginning of the academic year Personal Tutors are expected to create a schedule of activities to be held during the year with their tutees. The list of these activities are presented in the booklets mentioned above and include trips to various museums and theatres, orphanages and nurseries, visits to historical sites and meetings with international organizations, etc.

Although the initial plan of setting up the system of Personal Tutorship might have been carefully considered in order to make it as effective as possible, the actual implementation of it varies from one university to another, and from one Personal tutor to another. Because of the "scheduled" and compulsory sense of this system, Personal Tutors are very often perceived by students as just another lecturer, while the activities aforementioned come to students as a burden and something unnecessary. The negative implications of this become widely obvious. Not only students often try to miss out on these activities but also the Personal Tutors themselves often perceive the purpose of their responsibilities not in the very best light.

Lastly, the performance of Personal Tutors is assessed by the management on a rating basis, although the outcome of this appraisal is more positive (various prizes and rewards) than negative.

Student Career Development

Independence brought to Uzbekistan not only sovereignty but also a significant "brain-drain" as many thousands of people- including highly qualified specialists- left the region. The urgent need to address the obvious mismatch between the higher education system and an economy in transition was emphasized in the early years of independence by President Islam Karimov himself: "It is becoming clear that the acquired profession and preparation of graduate students do not meet the requirements of the market economy" (Harmoniously Developed Generation is the Basis of Progress in Uzbekistan, 1998)

The National Programme for Personnel Training (NPPT) adopted in 1997 and subsequent government resolutions also stressed the need for "Measures to assure the conformity between education and the demands of democratic and market reforms in the county" (Resolution No. 48 of the Cabinet of Ministers January 28, 1998)

These measures have included:
- Monitoring the demand for graduates in business and industrial sectors by the Ministry of Macroeconomics and Statistics
- Development of a System to provide internships and other work integrated learning opportunities for undergraduates
- Strengthening the marketing function of higher education institutions to include the development of links with employers and the expansion of graduate opportunities

- Reforming the curriculum so that it reflects the real needs of students and their potential employers

Today students have the following alternatives for their employment:

Contract base students. Students studying on contract base and whose contract has been paid by companies have to work after graduation for certain period of time in these sponsoring organizations. This type of agreement is beneficial for both students and sponsoring companies. Students can study on a full-time basis and after graduation be provided with an appropriate job. Sponsoring organizations also receive certain benefits, for example their taxable income is reduced by the amount of contract payment. Besides tax holidays sponsoring companies have the opportunity to smooth the recruitment process, i.e. the recruitment process starts long before the need in specialist becomes visible. Furthermore, organizations can monitor the process of "training" their future employee through internships and students transcripts.

Scholarship students. Universities assign students who receive government scholarship on the basis of demand to specialists for their qualification. Nowadays the greatest demand observed is for teaching staff in schools and universities. For example, just in Tashkent city, more than 40 physics teachers are required for local schools

Internships. Second, third and forth year students have internships during their summer holidays. According to the results of internship organizations may ask students to continue employment with their company after graduation

Workshops. Universities organize workshops inviting variety of organizations ranging from local government organizations to private business for students at the end of academic year
Self- sponsoring students looking for employment opportunities themselves

Social Life of Students

The social life of students is also an important factor in the development of Independent Learning. It is proved that through informal communication with friends, peers and teachers, students can sometimes get necessary information, generate new ideas and finally, develop transferable skills. Therefore, the organization of different social activities by students and for students should always be welcomed. However, it is essential to note that the educational process must not be disturbed by any extra curricula social event, but be organized in accordance with the timetable of students.

Conversations with students during the university visits have shown that students in HEIs of Uzbekistan do take part in various university and city events and are members of a particular university society, mostly the youth organization "Kamolot". They expressed their interest in participating in different events as well as several concerns. But they also expressed dissatisfaction regarding compulsory involvement. The summary of these issues is provided below:

Compulsory participation. Sometimes the involvement in extra curricular activities is done not on a voluntary, but on a compulsory base. Thus, the situation where a student does something not appropriate for his nature, character is observed. For example a student is involved in sport events despite his particular interest in intellectual activity or visa versa.

There are a lot of youth organizations: students trade union, students union, "Kamolot" youth organisation and etc. Again, the membership is done on a compulsory base. The student is

usually not asked whether he wants to be in this organization or not, but is just obliged to sign in as a member. Thus students are simply "involved" in a particular youth organization but are not interested in its activities.

TV takes up a lot of the free time of students, often taking the place of reading books. Some people think that TV has a negative influence on the intelligence of students and their inner world becomes poorer as a result. But others believe that all that students faces with are factors dictated by the modern world. Today TV is the main source of getting information and entertaining for students, still more so than the internet. Therefore it would be useful for all society, especially for students, if TV companies broadcast more educational programmes.

Books unfortunately come last in the list of students' interests. One of the reasons is the change of Uzbek letters from Cyrillic into Latin and the insufficiency of translated books into Uzbek language (10 years ago students communicated in two languages: Uzbek and Russian, but nowadays there are lack of interest in learning Russian in the regions).

Marketing of education

The understanding and development of marketing of education – promoting the university through various means of communication, whether it is a TV, internet, radio, newspaper, presentation, varies across the universities. In some regions, where there is only one HEI in the given area, education marketing is poorly developed. In big cities, having several educational institutions, the sense of competition to some extent drives universities to be involved in promotional campaigns. However, generally speaking, the overall level of universities' involvement in marketing their services is low. Some of the possible reasons for that are provided below:

Inactiveness of universities' marketing departments. Most of the administrative staff as well as members of marketing departments are not aware of the main functions of the department. This has resulted in just the official "existence" of those department and hence not involvement in tasks crucial for university development

Lack of resources. Usually administrative staff are reluctant to share funding from the university budget for the expenses of the marketing department. However, the spent money should be considered not as an expense, but as an investment which can bring recognition and financial reward.

PART 3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF INDEPENDENT LEARNING IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION OF UZBEKISTAN

Our recommendations for the further development of IL in Uzbekistan HEIs are also structured according to the components of external and internal locus of control identified in the above section and structured around two stages of development: short-term and long-term development action plans.

EXTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL

Educational standards

As we stated before the educational standard is the main document that governs the academic delivery process in local HEIs. Therefore for the improvement of the students' IL environment,

some sequential developments should be implemented in these documents. The MHSSE and local universities have already identified IL as the main priority and are working regularly on the modification of standards and curricula. However, the absence of clear objectives and an action plan for the improvement of HE quality and standards can frustrate these changes.

Based on the experience learned internationally and within WIUT the following recommendations were generated by PIT and other local experts for the initial stage of development:

- Educational standards must be developed by a group of experts formed by MHSSE taking into consideration the potential employers of graduates, i.e. organisations and business. In the current practice, development of educational standards is assigned to leading universities which usually serve the interests of their existing academic personnel.

- An innovative approach should be used in the development of educational standards, i.e. design of standards should also consider the interest and motives of learners.

- Decrease the number of modules in the short-term to 40% from the current set of modules, and in a long-term to 60% focusing mainly on the improvement of the content, teaching and assessment strategy. This would bring Uzbekistan's educational standards closer to international ones. The content development could be done in the following directions:

    - Introduction of integrated and cross-disciplinary modules

    - Introduction of pre-requisites and incremental progression in learning of modules

    - Identification of learning outcomes for each module with certain requirements in knowledge, competence, transferable and application skills relevant to the level of study

    - Gradually extending the option list at higher levels of study and pass marks of progression

    - Clear statement of the independent learning components and their teaching/learning strategies in curriculum.

- More specifically determined professional knowledge, competence and skill requirements for a qualification should form the programme/course learning outcomes. Instead of studying everything one should learn less but in greater depth. It would be useful if educational standards identified some generic knowledge, competence, transferable and practical application skill requirements for the given degree. However the development of generic knowledge and various skill requirements for the qualification in a wider subject area would give some flexibility (mobility) in curriculum modifications and the introduction of new courses.

- Consolidate some subject areas within one educational standard and introduce sub-subjects (pathways) through offering a wider scope of specialisation modules as options. An increased number of optional modules and identifying the specific subject orientation of learners through choosing a certain set of core and optional modules would give more mobility to students and flexibility to universities in the administration of the academic delivery process.

- Define gradual qualification requirements for knowledge, competence and skills according to the level/year of study. This would help academic staff to plan both teaching and the assessment strategy in different levels of study.

- The word "minimum" must be used in the definition of requirements;

- Introduce at least one intermediate degree. In the current market conditions not every student can finish four year studies without a break. Therefore it will be appropriate if one intermediate degree is introduced and officially adopted as an initial HE qualification.

For the long-term:

- Move to the credit system in defining qualifications. The knowledge and skills learned and/or taught must be measured in order to be transferred from one university/country to other. This issue is increasingly critical given in the context of globalisation when internal markets are merging with those of neighbours and barriers are diminished for labour, particularly those with high levels of qualifications.

- Identify intermediate qualifications at each level of study. Since obtained knowledge and skills gives students certain HE credits it would be necessary to acknowledge the achievements of students in each level of study, i.e. evaluate their cumulative credits and award a qualification appropriate to the completed level of study.

- Move from educational standards of specialisation to the educational standards of qualification. The UK QAAHE (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education), a government body for maintaining and enhancing the quality and standards of HE in the UK, has developed 'Qualification descriptors'. Based on this document SEEC (South England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer) developed and thoroughly described the credit level descriptors. This document explains the criteria for knowledge, competence, transferable and practical application skills for obtaining/assigning certain level credits. The principal use of the credit descriptors for further and higher learning is for (a) curriculum design, (b) to guide the assignment of credit, (c) to provide guidelines for validation panels, (d) to provide guidelines for recognition of the level of learning from experience in non-formal settings, and (e) for the purposes of staff development.

  In Uzbekistan HE, the requirements for HE qualification and each specialisation are firmly set as normative documents (educational standards). This requires that the MHSSE and universities operate within the national standards and officially approved specialisations. Introduction of the qualification standard instead of the specialisation standard would allow universities to swiftly respond to market needs in human resources by introducing courses as demanded.

- Certify each qualification level.

Curriculum

The curriculum of studies must be also developed gradually. In the following figure we recommend a model for curriculum development over two stages:

Recommendation for the subject block ratio

Percentage in overall teaching
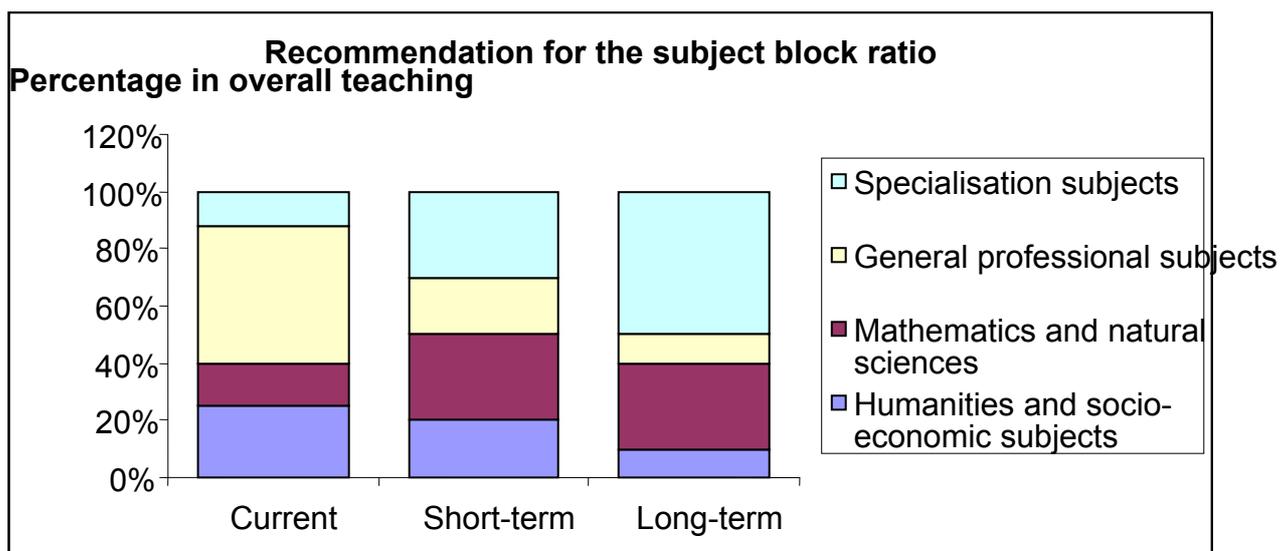
As can be seen from the figure, curriculum content and design strategy in undergraduate courses should be developed in the way such that the proportion of specialisation subjects would increase over a period. We suggest a short-term plan for hours allocation among subject blocks as stated in the following table:
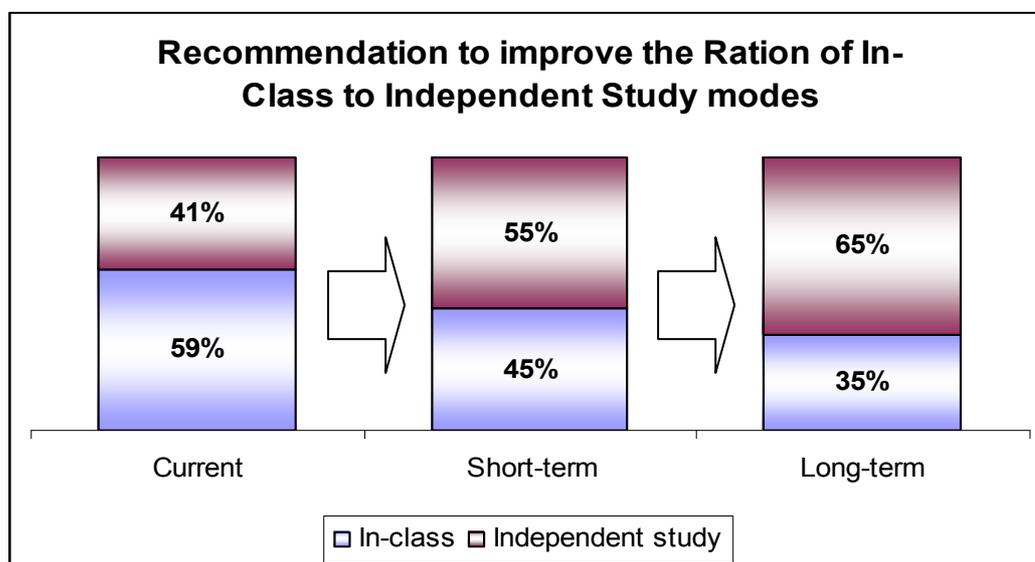
Subject Groups	Hours		
	In-class	Independent learning	Overall
Humanities and socio-economic subjects	576	704	1280
Mathematics and natural sciences	864	1056	1920
General professional subjects	576	704	1280
Specialisation subjects	864	1056	1920
	2880	**3520**	**6400**

Our long-term suggestion requires even more attention to the allocation of more specialisation subjects in the curriculum. Specialisation subjects could be taught starting in the 3rd year of studies in undergraduate courses.

To following table outlines the dynamics of changes in terms of subject content:

Subject Groups	Current	Short-term
Humanities and socio-economic subjects	25%	20%
Mathematics and natural sciences	15%	30%
General professional subjects	48%	20%
Specialisation subjects	12%	30%
	100%	**100%**

The ratio of Independent to in-class study hours should be also changed. Currently 59% of studies are done in classes with a teacher. In the log-term plan 65% of study hours must be independent and only 35% taught in classes. As with the other suggestions, such changes should be made gradually. The following table clearly demonstrates our suggestions on how to increase the independent learning time within the curriculum:

Recommendation to improve the Ration of In-Class to Independent Study modes

	Current	Short-term	Long-term
Independent study	41%	55%	65%
In-class	59%	45%	35%

☐ In-class ☐ Independent study

Workload of staff and students

The organisation and structure of the workload of academic staff and students must me revised and changed accordingly in order to promote independent learning practices. According to local experts, lecture classes should not exceed 28 / 22 academic hours per week in the short-term. As a consequently more independent study hours should be included in the student's timetable. At this stage, the teaching load of a lecturer must be not more than 16 hours per week with 650 active and 1200 overall passive academic load workload per annum. This workload can be kept in the long-term too.

External learning and distance or e-learning mode of studies should be also considered.

In the long-term plan, out of a weekly student study load of 54/50 hours, 18-20 should be in-class –hours and 32-34 for independent learning.

In the allocation of workload for academic staff quality and professional experience factors should also be considered. Academic personnel involved in active research should have less teaching hours. Active scholars usually create a positive reputation to any university and at the same time may involve other students in that research.

Subject specifications may also determine the structure and content of the academic work load. In general, we suggest that in-class and independent study hours ratio should be unified, i.e. kept the same in each module.

For example, for sports teachers the project experts suggested allocating additional time slots to deliver independent study activities as stated in the following table:

#	Type of activity	Scale of activity		
		University wide	Town-wide	National-wide
1.	Preparation to a sporting tournament:			
	- design regulations of a tournament	1-2 hrs	2 hrs	2 hrs
	- invitation of teams (6-7)	1 h	4-5 hrs	4-5 hrs
	- preparation of the tournament venue	2 hrs	4 hrs	4 hrs
2.	Preparation of documentations for a tournament:			
	- arranging the teams	1 hr	2 hrs	2 hrs
	- develop the calendar of a tournament	1 hr	2 hrs	2 hrs
	- list of referees	0.5 hr	1 hr	1 hr
	- tournament time table	2 hrs	2 hrs	2hrs
	- credentials committee	2 hrs	2 hrs	2 hrs
3.	Delivery of a tournament	4-6 hrs/day	6-8 hrs/day	6-8 hrs/day
4.	Tournament 3-4 days	12-24 hrs	24-32 hrs	24-32 hrs
5.	Tournament conclusion, referees' meeting, award preparation etc	2 hrs	2 hrs	2 hrs
6.	Reporting	2 hrs	2 hrs	2 hrs
	TOTAL	**23-30 hrs**	**45-50 hrs**	**45-50 hrs**

The allocation of academic working hours for the organisation of students' independent learning sessions would be to some extent a reward and, at the same time, a guide in developing/maintaining the independent learning environment.

System of Assessment

For increasing the effectiveness of the present assessment system it is important to change the perception of both academic staff and students about assessment. Assessment should not be considered an extra burden, but as a tool that motivates students to continuously improve their knowledge and skills, and that informs staff on how well they and their students are doing. Some of the recommendations that PIT proposes to make improve the current assessment system are listed below:

Weighting of assessment components. The methods and weightings of assessment should be specifically designed to take into consideration the nature of each module. Otherwise, the assessment would not reflect the solid knowledge and skills obtained from a module. To make the rating system work better, it is important to establish a more flexible distribution of weighting, so assessment be more focused in assessing module specifics rather than testing surface knowledge and information recall.

Assessment workload. The load of assessment should be decreased in order to increase its overall quality. When designing the assessment system, the use of staff time and resources should be taken into consideration. Particularly, the burden on staff should not be excessive, nor should be the demands on students undertaking the assessment tasks. Under the existing assessment system it is debatable whether all assessments are strictly necessary, and whether it is possible to combine some of them and completely remove others. With a reduced number of assignments, diversified methods of assessment can be applied, higher quality feedback can be provided, and the overall interest of students and staff in assessment can be raised.

Methods of assessment. Currently assessment lacks diversity in terms of the methods. Essays (referat), tests, written closed book exams are typically used as tools of assessment. When continuous assessment is repetitive in format (too many tests, or too many referats) students may become better able to deliver in given formats, but their overall learning may not be deepened. Therefore, it is important to constantly apply different methods of assessment in order to sustain students' interest in assessment, develop diversified skills and widen the scope of learning. Another reason for applying diversified methods of assessment is that all methods of assessment disadvantage some students, whether they are slow writers, poor orally, less able graphically etc. Therefore, trying to build up a range of methods of assessment to ensure that the same students are not disadvantaged all the time is crucial if one wants to achieve a quality assessment.

Feedback. In the British educational system, feedback is considered to be a fundamental process underpinning successful learning. According to research done for the project, it is revealed that very little attention is paid to providing individual feedback on assignments in the HEIs of Uzbekistan (47% of interviewees claimed that this is due to the assessment burden and plus complexity of mark allocation). It is important to note that a single mark cannot tell where exactly a student needs improvement. When feedback accompanies the mark, it can direct students and foster higher quality learning. However, it is worth mentioning that not all types of feedback can be helpful. Developing the culture of providing quality feedback - a feedback which is concentrated on what to do to improve rather than being heavily judgmental - is essential before demanding academic staff to write any type of feedback.

Resource based learning. The research has shown that around 50% of students read lecture manuscripts when preparing for exams. This is not very healthy, since students heavily rely on that portion of information that they had time to write during a lecture. To raise the effectiveness of learning, especially independent learning, students should be trained to use a variety of resources, such as electronic materials, sources from Internet, newspapers and magazines, to be able to compare and analyse information from different sources. It is no longer possible to cover all of the information in a subject area in lectures and seminars, and in any case information itself does not bring knowledge to students. The most productive way of providing students with information is through enabling them to use a variety of learning resource materials and guiding them on how to use the resources.

Academic Regulations

Based on the experience of the British Educational system, some suggestions on academic regulations are as follows.

Regulations on attendance. According to the British Educational System, attendance is not compulsory. They believe that a student is a mature person and should be able to manage his educational process himself/herself.

WIUT applied the same approach in the first three years of operation. However experience showed that many students abused the freedom of attendance and afterwards suffered from failures. WIUT introduced compulsory attendance of seminars, although attendance of lectures is still free. Moreover, the attendance policy allows a student to miss up to 1/4 of all seminars per semester, admitting the fact that some unexpected circumstances can happen in the life of a student. If a student misses more that 1/4 of seminars in one or more modules, then there is a penalty system in place, where the University reserves a right to suspend or exclude a student.

Assessment Regulations. According to the UK practice (UoW in particular) assessment administration is a separate unit at the Undergraduate (Postgraduate) School office, the main responsibilities of which are the following:
- To accept students work at an appropriate deadline. (Late submission are subject to penalties, which are discussed later on)
- To keep a record of submitted works (Sign in sheets are used for every assessment)

Once all the students submit their coursework, a module leader can pick these up from the Office, where it is also recorded by the signature, stating the number of scripts collected.

When the Module Leader finishes the marking process, he/she is not allowed to publish the marks. In turn, he/she should return the marks to the School office where the marks are entered to the computer based student record system and published by the administration staff.

Referrals. Where a student does not meet the threshold of assessment criteria to pass the module (overall mark of 40), but obtained at least 30% in an overall module mark, he/she should be given an opportunity of retaking necessary assessment components in the summer. This is called an opportunity to have referrals.

In this case, students are given another task, similar in its structure to the original assessment.

The penalty of such an additional opportunity is that the overall module mark is capped at 40%.

Course Committee. The Course Committee provides a forum for debate and feedback between the staff and student representatives from all the courses, and will deal with general matters of policy and course management and development. It is also the forum for dealing formally with matters concerning consistency and co-ordination across the various programmes. Student representation comprises of at least two students from each of the main subject areas. The Committee meets twice a semester.

Students' role in Course Committees

The main way in which students may become involved in the management of the course is through the Course Committee.

The Committee plays an important part in the running and continuous development of the course. The student members have direct input into course management and are able to help overcome any problems and to initiate longer term changes

Cheating. While studying at the University, students' academic performance must be assessed on the basis of his/her own work. Students who cheat are trying to gain an unfair advantage over other students.

Students must not communicate with other students during an exam or test. They must not take into the exam or test room any materials, notes or aids other than those officially authorised in the examination paper. Invigilators must follow the rules strictly. If an invigilator observes a student with any prohibited materials, notes or equipment, or observes a student communicating with another one, he/she must report on this case. The case must be

investigated by a group of colleagues and an appropriate decision must be made, it can either be treated as a minor offence or a major offence, hence the penalty should depend on the nature of it.

Plagiarism. Plagiarism is a particular form of cheating. Plagiarism must be avoided at all costs and students, who break the rules, however innocently, should be penalised. It is the students' responsibility to ensure that they understand correct referencing practices.

Plagiarism is defined as submission of material (written, visual or oral) originally produced by another person or persons, without acknowledgement, such that the work could be assumed to be the student's own. If students use text or data or drawings or designs or artefacts without properly acknowledging who produced the material, then they are likely to be accused of plagiarism. This can be avoided by making clear the sources of information used (e.g. books, articles, interviews, reports, WWW reference, or government publications). All must be properly referenced not only in a bibliography but also in the text or in a footnote.

Learning resources

In accordance to the Presidential decree "On supplying with information and library services the population of the Republic" (June 20, 2006) PIT prepared a set of recommendations for implementing this decree and thereby promoting independent learning in Uzbekistan.

The proposed recommendations could be implemented stage-by-stage according to short term and long term objectives.

The main idea of the proposed changes and one of the most important issues for IL development **is to change the philosophy of library organization.** Libraries should be client oriented and include a wide range of information resources, offer open access to stock and provide users with information assistance regarding searching and verifying of information. Academic libraries should be transformed into Learning Resource Centers.

On order to fulfill this ultimate objective the following activities should be performed:

Updating library stock. Plans for updating library stock should be based on a book order made by academic staff. This would provide the library management with a better understanding of what kind of books should be purchased in the first place, which subjects are covered fully and which have a book shortage. At the present time such information is not available. As a result, some modules are covered by excessive quantity of learning materials, while some do not have any.

Learning environment. In many libraries, it is necessary to improve the learning environment, provide suitable furnishings and resources such as tables, computers, sound equipment, lock-away spaces, etc. In addition, discussion areas for carrying out group work should be organized.

Library Catalog. Introducing electronic library catalog in all libraries will help users to search and find necessary resources in a short time, and at the same time will be helpful for library staff in managing the library stock.

Library resources should be diversified by offering electronic databases, a sufficient quantity of periodicals, international subscriptions, video and audio materials media-based resource materials, interactive computer-based packages, and media-based resource materials.

A training program for new library users should be conducted in a more effective way, giving information not only on how to search using the library catalogue, but also on using various sources of information, such as the Internet, electronic databases, periodicals and e-periodicals.

Translation of books from English and Russian into Uzbek is another vital recommendation. If there is software for translation it should be available in all libraries. The task should be monitored by the MHSSE if translating literature is related to the first and second blocks of the curriculum. The translation of literature related to other blocks should be monitored by the Methodological Academic Council within the universities;

Teaching – Learning Support Network. The creation of a Teaching-Learning Support Network among local universities would be beneficial for strengthening more effective information/resources sharing among universities.

IT. Increasing the number of IT resources, improving Internet access and developing an Intranet are important elements of modernising all libraries of local educational institutions. In addition, each library should develop its own web-page for better use of its resources.

Exhibitions on new book arrivals should be constantly organized so that both students and academics know the type of books the library has. The library web-site can also be used for such a purpose.

Training for library personnel should be more efficient and include information about latest innovations in Library Sciences. For this purpose Special Training Centers should be organized

Remuneration. To attract young and qualified personnel to work in the library and improve the prestige of this profession, the motivation of librarians should be improved.

Professional Development

Staff Development System. One of the major recommendations of our project in this regard is decentralizing the system of Staff Development down to individual universities. The rationale behind this is the fact that no other body is as aware of the training needs of the staff as the university itself. Although most of the universities provide developmental sessions for their own staff to some degree, much more work should be done in the direction of creating a more extensive range of training sessions related to the universities' own specialization. This arrangement on its own, however, will not be effective unless a system of training exchanges is established between universities.

Perception. Another very important factor to consider in this regard is the presently not-so-positive association of staff with the need to go through Staff Development training. However, some are more valued than others – particularly trainings in their subject areas and ICT skills. The management's role is crucial here. It should take all measures necessary to make the trainings perceived by teaching staff as a benefit, as the university's care for them and help in their own professional development, as opposed to something compulsory that they have to undertake in order to keep their jobs. Meetings and discussions with staff regarding this matter should be led in a way that ensures that teachers come as the ones responsible for their own development.

Training needs. The management should ensure that staff know about the central provision for trainings. It is worth thinking carefully about how to publicize these training programs and events, so that the relevant material reaches all staff. The training provision which is offered needs to match carefully with the local and central needs of the institution. Trainings needs are best analyzed by visiting each department and talking to key personnel. These needs would come to light through the operation of an effective institutional staff appraisal system.

Intra-institutional trainings. Much more attention should be paid even on the intra-institutional trainings. The needs of all categories of staff should be recognized. Traditionally,

the emphasis has been placed on the needs of academic members of staff. However, technical, secretarial, administrative and maintenance staff are all players in an organization, and the morale and ethos of the institution is enhanced by treating all staff as worthy of investment through training. It is important to ensure that they are all introduced equally at training events, and given the opportunity to get to know people from other departments. Training should be a process which helps to break up departmental or functional cliques.

Away days can be effective since taking staff away from the institution for important training events not only removes them from the everyday distractions which can interrupt a home-based training event, but makes staff feel more valued, and gives a sense of added value to the topic of the training event.

Training can be a vehicle for demonstrating good teaching and learning processes. A well designed and effectively facilitated training workshop can provide an example of practices and methods which staff can take away from the training event and apply in their own work with students. Sometimes, the techniques used by a good trainer are more memorable (and useful!) than the actual subject content of the training event.

INTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL

Student Mobility

In suggesting certain measures for increasing student mobility we have to take into consideration the socio-economic-cultural factors of the country. Thus the following suggestions were made to develop student mobility:

- Enhance the optional module list with several pathways within the main subject;

- Additional (or extracurricular) modules for personal and professional development of students (foreign languages, research methods, communication skills, sports, etc.);

- Possibility of continuation of study in other universities with credit transfer.

Personal Tutorship

Relationship between tutors and tutees. First of all and most importantly, the management as well as Personal Tutors should do whatever it takes in order to remove the sense of obligation in the association and relationship between tutees and tutors. Mutual trust, reliability, dependability, honest and creating a very open atmosphere between the tutor and tutee is a priority. It is absolutely crucial that students do not feel burdened by this system. They should see their Personal Tutor as someone they can turn to whenever there is a need - someone they can trust and open up to without any hesitations. Confidentiality in this relationship is a priority. Too often the tutor chasing the student, and endless guidelines and instructions, undermine the student's sense of responsibility for his or her studies. This becomes especially unhelpful and destructive when the University is seeking to implement Independent Learning. The fact that students regularly skip Personal Tutor activities is a very good indicator that something has gone wrong and should be reviewed.

Although various discussions may help the Personal Tutors to encourage their tutees to participate in different activities, students' willingness and even enthusiasm in this regard can be ensured more effectively when these initiatives come from the students themselves, i.e.

when students feel ownership of these activities, and Personal Tutors come as someone who can help to organize these activities **for the students**.

This leads to the conclusion that every meeting of a Personal Tutor with his/her tutees is very valuable, should be cherished, and therefore needs very careful preparation in order to make the most use of it while at the same time preserving the informality which underpins the tutorship system.

Induction week. Although the value and necessity of induction at every level is another major topic to be discussed, this period is one of the best and most important ones for Personal Tutors to take advantage of. This is the time when Personal Tutors can and should be in a very close contact with their tutees, establishing mutual expectations and getting to know each other.

Who should be assigned as a Personal Tutor? Although this is a very sensitive question to which there is no single answer, especially when considering the large number of students to be assigned a Personal Tutors in some big universities, enthusiasm and willingness to be a Personal Tutor and work with students must be a priority. Obviously, this is not the case with every lecturer. However, management, with careful consideration, can bring up that sparkle in staff. At times, though, even when a lecturer is very eager to be a Personal Tutor and is full of enthusiasm, this does not always mean that he/she takes a very professional approach. This brings up the necessity for those chosen to go through Personal Tutor training before assuming these responsibilities.

Administration and Personal Tutors. The management's role in ensuring the effectiveness of the Personal Tutor system should be considered separately. As mentioned above, the initial as well as on-going enthusiasm of the Personal Tutors to a significant degree depends on the management, specifically, their support and coordination. The system of Personal Tutorship must by all means be coordinated in order to ensure university-wide consistency. Indeed, out research found that Personal Tutors receive only a small addition to their salaries for carrying out their responsibilities. Moreover, considering the continuous demands and pressure from management regarding the Personal Tutor activities and responsibilities, not to mention the cases when tutors are told off for related reasons, the situation has to change.

Student career development

Although there has been some progress in aligning market demand and graduates there has been a lack of a coherent and consistent strategy. There is a recognition that a significant gap still exists between the supply side (the graduates) and the demand from employers in the industrial, business and government sectors. This gap has resulted in graduates who often lack the specific and generic skills and attributes required by employers. At the same time, new graduates are often ignorant about the employment opportunities which exist and the career development potential offered by different employers. The result is a considerable waste of human resources, lost business opportunities and continuing graduate unemployment.

The followings are recommended:

- Organize Career Advisory centres in universities
- Create websites to support communication between employers and universities
- Train students to plan their career
- Government support of integration of HE with business.

Learning environment

The learning Environment is a very important component of organizing Independent Learning. Our team visited several local HEIs and found out that the current learning environment in the universities is not sufficient for the development of IL in those universities. To improve the situation we make the following recommendation:

Physical Environment. MHSSE has to develop a definition of the 'university study room' and provide a list of minimal standards for such rooms (physical environment, technical equipment, audio –video and other type of materials). It is important to note that the university study room should be different from a classroom at school and along with appropriate furniture, light, and social space should be equipped with whiteboards, facilities for Power Point presentations, and an OHP projector (minimal standards). Additionally, rooms for academic staff should be furnished well and have all the necessary facilities and equipment.

According to the recommendations of the MHSSE all higher educational establishments will set up study rooms, which will meet the requirements of modern educational standards.

Additionally is very important for all universities to be:
- wheel chair accessible for disabled students
- Improve conditions of toilet facilities
- To create sufficient conditions for academic staff to function effectively

Social Environment. A considerable effort should be made on changing the attitude of academic and administrative staff in the way they perceive students. Staff should be more student oriented, offering students support, being open for discussions, and providing assistance in difficulties.

Technology and Resources. As IT resources are getting outdated very rapidly, they have to be used intensively for educational purposes and should not be kept away from students' use. Academic and administrative staff should take IT courses in order to develop better IT skill and better use available technological resources.

Scientific environment. To create a scientific environment in order to encourage academic staff to do research;

Social Life of students

Student social activity develops proactive attitudes and initiative in students. This is a key factor for independent learning. Active communication encourages discussion of the covered and new material, exchange of ideas and motivates them to acquire new knowledge. There is a need to try generate a virtuous circle in which the more the student is active socially, the more interested he would be in learning new material; and the more he learns the more active he becomes socially. The following recommendations are proposed for attracting more students to be involved in university social events:

Social Events. For developing team working, interpersonal, communication and other skills necessary for further personal development of students, it is important to systematically organize various social events outside the university. Going to the mountains, theatre or a concert can be good examples of that. Such events can also assist in raising students' commitment to studying as well as to other university activities.

Halls of Residence. Improving conditions in the Halls of residence of students, particularly, creating comfortable conditions with well-equipped kitchens, bedrooms, TV rooms, computer rooms, library and other premises, and internet access can further motivate students to better concentrate on their studies and not be disturbed by poor living conditions.

Students' interests and abilities. Before assigning students to participate in social activities, relevant departments should take into account their particular interests and abilities.

It is important to have **face to face contact between the student and lecturer,** no matter what kind of problem the student has: academic or social.

Marketing of education

The marketing department of any HEI should work on raising public interest in the given university, since it is proved that public interest greatly influences the overall prestige of the HEI. This department should specifically be responsible for:

- Cooperation with the market to be informed about the current needs

- Monitoring the overall quality of taught courses and their applicability in the market

- Providing information to the public on latest university news through sources of mass media

- Organization of promotional campaigns to attract more and more applicants willing to study in the given HEI.

PART 4. ACTION PLAN TO ACHIEVE IMPROVEMENT AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF INDEPENDENT LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF UZBEKISTAN

Based on the analysis of the current status and proposed recommendations, the PIT designed an action plan for further developing Independent Learning within Higher Education of Uzbekistan. Specific actions are proposed, both in the short and long run, that could be taken by all the stakeholders of Independent Learning – university academic and administrative staff, students, and particularly, the MHSSE. As with other sections, we structure this section based around the distinction of external and internal locus of control.

EXTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL

Educational Standards
Short term plan:
- Form expert groups for educational standards development involving academics, educational specialists, and potential employers
- Decrease the number of modules to 40% of the current total through:
  - Introduction of integrated, inter-disciplinary modules
  - Introduction of pre-requisites and inter-level linking of modules
  - Identify learning outcomes for each module with requirements in knowledge and transferable skills with relevance to the level of study
  - Gradually extend the option list at higher levels of study and pass marks of progression

- Clear statement of independent learning components and their teaching/learning strategies in the curriculum
- Identify generic learning outcomes for each level of study and specific learning outcomes for each module as a set of required knowledge and transferable skills.
- Introduce at least one intermediate degree.

Long-term plan:

- Move to the credit system in defining qualifications.
- Identify and adopt intermediate qualifications at each level of study.
- Move from educational standards of specialisation to educational standards of qualification.
- Certify officially each qualification level.

Curriculum

Short-term plan:

- Make independent study hours uniformly allocated for each module at 55% of overall learning time;
- Optimisation of overall learning hours for undergraduate programme to 6400 hours wherein humanities and social-economic subjects are up to 20%, mathematics and natural sciences 30%, general professional subjects 20%, and specialisation subjects 30% of the overall learning workload.

Long-term plan:

- Make independent study hours uniformly allocated for each module at 65% of overall learning time;
- Optimise further overall learning hours for undergraduate studies reducing the study hours to 5200 wherein humanities and social-economic subjects would be 10%, mathematics and natural sciences 30%, general professional subjects 10%, and specialisation subjects 50% of the overall study hours.

Workload of Academic Staff and Students

Short-term plan:

- Weekly student learning time of 54 hours;
- Overall student in-class hours shouldn't exceed 26 hours;
- Teaching load of a lecturer should be not more than 16 hours per week with annual 650 active and 1200 overall academic work load;
- Allocate academic work load for staff research and consultancy.

Long-term plan:

- Overall learning time of a student is around 50 hours;
- In-class teaching is 18-20 hours per week with 30-32 hours for independent study.

System of Assessment

Short term action plan:

- The table below reflects the present number of assessments carried out during the semester presently and the suggestion proposed by the PIT:

	Day to day (average)	Mid term	Final
Present model	4	2	1
Suggested model	2	1	1

As an initial step, we suggest the reduction of the number of day to day assessments from 4 to 2, as well as mid term assessment from 2 to 1. Thus, students will be assessed 4 times in a semester instead of the existing 7. Staff will have the opportunity of giving more complex tasks and have more time for marking as well as providing feedback. And students will be given more time for working on assignments and learning independently.

- Set up identical weighting of assessment components for each of 4 blocks, instead of the existing general weighting for all blocks. In other words, each block would have its own distribution of weighting for assessment components. Thus assessment can be more challenging and encourage students to go deeper into the module material.

- Apply assessment methods that match with the learning outcomes of the module. There should be a clear link between learning outcomes as described in the module documentation and the assessment criteria used for assessing the students' work.

- Apply assessment methods that maximize the level of engagement of both staff and students. Taking into consideration the conditions of the present assessment system, there is a great need to apply those assessment methods which raise the interest of both teachers and students in assessing and being assessed, as well as requiring relatively less time for marking. A clear example for such types would be peer assessment, group coursework, and oral presentation. It is worth mentioning that 18% of interviewed administrative staff suggested introducing/encouraging oral types of assessment as they let students develop their speaking and presentation skills, as well as the ability to express and defend their own opinion. In addition, oral assessment would reduce cheating and motivate students to search for further information.

- Use informal methods of assessment. When almost everything that students do, as part of their learning, is measured, they naturally adapt strategic approaches to their learning, and only concentrate on those things that are going to be assessed. Therefore, it is worth sometimes applying informal methods of assessment, such as giving questions to students during the seminars. In local HEIs, the system of asking students questions on covered material is widely practiced. However, this usually goes as part of assessment for which students get mark. It is worth rethinking the role of such oral question-answer methods of assessment. Maybe it would be better if they are considered as informal assessment methods for which students **do not** get mark, but have an opportunity of expressing their

opinion. This will also reduce the burden of staff and at the same time enable them to better understand the level of student's progression.

- Provide training to academic staff on how to write feedback. Academic staff should first of all be trained to write quality feedback. As WIUT staff has quite extensive experience in writing feedback, they could be involved as trainers for such trainings.

- Give feedback only to some assignments. Taking into account the excessive number of assessments, at the beginning it would be better to provide feedback only to some of the assignments carried out during the semester. It should also be noted that not all methods of assessment need individual feedback. In other words, if a teacher gives tests to students, there is no need to write individual feedback on each student's work. Course works, on the other hand, do need to be commented upon. Because course works assess a range of student's skills, it is important to guide and let students know where exactly they need to concentrate more and where they did well.

- Provide access to computers for all students. It's worth mentioning that almost all universities of Uzbekistan now have computer rooms for students' use. It is true that the quantity of computers may not be sufficient for satisfying the needs of all students of the university. However, this should not be a reason for computer rooms being available only for the use of the "best" students of the university. If a fixed schedule of using computer rooms for each students group is designed, more students will be able to work with computers. Connecting computers to the Internet would be an additional advantage for attracting more and more students to use computers and develop IT and information search skills.

- Organizing induction weeks for newly admitted students might serve as another way of encouraging students to use university resources. The induction week is the first week of an academic year, when students get acquainted with the various issues related to their studies including the university structure, rules and regulations, program of study, assessment system and resources available for students. During this time, students should be informed about all resources in the library and faculty as well as learning to use them in the most effective way.

- Set up challenging assignments. Assignments should be set so that students do not limit themselves with only one source. For that, more diversified methods of assessment; the ones that could attract the interest of students' to use other learning resources, should be employed.

Long term action plan:

- The decision on the quantity of assessments carried out for each module should be made at the university level. The proposal on the quantity of assessments should come from the Module Leader and then be confirmed by the department or faculty.

- When the load of assessment is reduced, more complex tasks, such as research projects, reports, portfolios, open note exams should be given as assignments to students.

- Introduce a special section on writing feedback into the syllabus of a module on "Teaching Methodology" of the Staff Development Trainings curriculum.

Academic Regulations

Short term action plan:

- There must be regulations on attendance. It is suggested to allow 30 hours of non attendance per semester. The reason behind such a suggestion is that the administration should respect a student as a mature person, and accept that some unforeseen circumstances may happen which would make a student miss a class. At the beginning of each new semester each student should begin with a clean slate. It will not only give the students a bit of freedom, but also reduce situations in which corruption is a temptation.

- A special module on academic writing must be introduced across all courses. The syllabus for the writing module must be carefully designed. WIUT can act as external advisor to the team who will be developing it.

- Lecturers who will teach it must go through a training session to ensure a consistent approach to teaching it.

- All other lectures who assess students essays (referat), courseworks, or any other type of written assessment must go through a comprehensive training on how to detect plagiarism.

- The experts believe that teaching students how to reference properly will help solving the problem of plagiarism. It will take a year to change the culture regarding plagiarism. Only after these steps are implemented should strict regulations on plagiarism be enforced.

- Cheating can be solved very easily! All that is needed is the commitment of the teaching staff during the invigilation. They must be strict and consistent. At the moment the problem of cheating exist only because staff let it happen. Regulations for offenders must be developed and applied strictly.

- The system of expressing students' views can be piloted at one Faculty or University. Experts at WIUT can act as advisors on setting this system up.

- Each module should clearly define the minimum level of achievement within the stated learning outcomes.

- The "pass" and "taken" rates should be set. (e.g. if a current pass mark is 45, then the taken mark could be 40-45.)

- The timing of referrals should be carefully reconsidered. It can be argued that if a student managed to achieve just a taken during the whole semester, he/she can not improve significantly within 2 weeks that are currently given for referrals (hvostichka). But, if it is decided to move all referrals to the summer, one issue that should not be overlooked is that the administration workload will increase.

Long term action plan:

- Regulations on plagiarism must be developed. They should include the negative consequences for continuous offenders.

- The process of accepting assessments at a specified deadline must be developed. This should include working out the regulations for cases when assessments are not submitted on time.

- System of expressing students' views should be set up at all Universities.

Learning Resources

Short term action plan:

For the organization of open-access to the library stock in the reading rooms (or reference sections) the following steps are suggested:

- To appropriately furnish reading rooms (big windows, enough light, well heated as well as tables, chairs, book shelves);

- To put the most popular books in a reference section;

- To develop special regulations for the open access section and guarantee equal access to all users;

- To elaborate security measures in order to protect the library stock from misappropriation;

- To hire 2 more members of the library staff (including IT specialists) to provide assistance to users;

- To place copy facilities into the reference section;

- To set up several computers with Internet access and electronic subscriptions.

For improving the library stock update system, the following actions are recommended:

- The library manager and executives should ask all heads of departments to provide them with a list of literature which they have recommended to their students;

- To check how much of this list is already in the library stock;

- If these books are not available to order them;

- After getting books provide all academic staff with information regarding their availability.

For introducing an electronic library catalog it is necessary to undertake several steps:

- To choose and to buy the most advanced electronic catalog, which will give a possibility to library staff to search and find the necessary resources in a short time, and at the same time will be helpful for library staff in managing the library stock

- To hire two IT specialists to do the work.

- To transfer from the manual library catalog to the electronic catalog stage by stage. Because the library stock in some universities is very big (around a million items) it is very difficult to record all of them into electronic format in a short time

- The first priority is to input those books into electronic format which will be valuable for first year students. At the same time these first year students should be given electronic ID numbers. The following year the same should be done with the second year students. In 4 years all textbooks would be inserted into the electronic library system. Finally fiction and other categories not directly related to the modules should be entered into the electronic catalog.

All others recommendations do not need stage by stage implementation and could be immediately introduced in accordance with Presidential Decree.

Staff Development System

Short term action plan:

- Reconsider and redefine the responsibilities of the Staff Development Departments. Put an additional emphasis on the necessity and quality of carrying out a needs analysis within the university.

- Identify the potential of the university in terms of all the expertise for providing various trainings.

- Assign the Staff Development department to create a team of trainers from among the university staff for each training.

- Create a list of all the trainings the university can provide and make this list accessible for all other universities.

- An optional recommendation would be to establish a staff exchange program between the universities.

Long term action plan:

- Decentralize the system of Staff Development down to the university level

- Get rid of the negative association with being sent to Staff Development sessions. The effectiveness of this initiative very much depends on the management. This can be done purely by emphasizing the benefits of these trainings and *encouraging* (as opposed to assigning or even ordering) the relevant staff to participate in them. Lists of individual staff being called to these trainings should be avoided at all costs. Discussions of an advisory nature should take place between individual staff and faculty/course/module management on a confidential basis whenever necessary.

INTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL

Student mobility

Short-term plan:

- Enhance the optional module list with several pathways within the main subject;
- Additional (or extracurricular) modules for personal and professional development of students (foreign languages, research skills, communication skills, sports, etc.).

Long-term plan:

- Move towards creating the possibility of continuation of study in other universities with the credit transfer.

Teaching style of lecturers and learning style of students

Short term action plan

- Create a professional development team (initially trained by WIUT trainers) coordinated by the Staff Development Department to organize rotational trainings on:

- Interactive methods of delivering lectures and tutorials

- Effective use of IT equipment for academic sessions

- Effective presentation skills

- Effective ways of giving feedback

- Organize a week-long Induction for the new student intakes with the purpose of introducing them to:

  - the idea of Independent Learning and rationale behind this principle

  - the academic process/system of Higher Education

  - the modules they will be taking

  - lecturers and tutors they will be working with

  - people they can contact/turn to when in need of guidance/advice

- Establish a peer observation system within and across the courses/faculties

  - Although the purpose of these activities should be viewed as being purely developmental, the outcomes of these should be recorded and coordinated by the Staff Development Department

- Run quarterly "best practice" discussions among the academic staff

Long term action plan:

- Review the role of a lecturer/tutor in the process of educating the student in terms of the extent to which they should be pulling/pushing/directing the students to study

- Review the curriculum to give the lecturers more flexibility in running their modules in terms of their content.

- Adjust the assessment system to the extent that students are awarded marks only for a certain number of major assessment components, rather than attendance, and many minor or even some initially/previously unannounced components.

Personal tutorship
Short term action plan:

- Review the efficiency of the job responsibilities of a Personal Tutor

- It should be emphasized and put into practice that Personal Tutors are just people who can provide guidance and support, but absolutely not responsible for any actions of the student.

- Group meetings of students with their Personal Tutors should be brought out of the timetable and should be spontaneous and mutually agreed, otherwise these meeting will be perceived as just another academic session, and Personal Tutors will be perceived no differently from other lecturers and tutors. The spontaneous character of these meetings should contribute to an informality of the relationship between Personal Tutors and tutees.

- Personal Tutors should do support activities that are the result of the students' own initiative, in order to ensure students' willingness to participate in them as well as make more use of these activities.

- Reconsider the basis on which Personal Tutors are selected. They should not be selected based mainly on their academic experience because good academic experience and performance does not necessarily imply that their interpersonal skills as well as their abilities of working with students are sufficient for being a Personal Tutor.

- Personal Tutors should not be coordinated by the Dean's administration unless the administrator has the relevant qualifications

- Personal Tutors should record any group or individual meetings, or any activities carried out with their tutees

- The motivation of a Personal Tutor is a critical factor in carrying out his/her responsibilities effectively and with integrity. Personal Tutorship should be remunerated in terms of additional working hours rather than just a small percentage of the lecturer's overall salary.

Long term action plan:

- Consider the ethnic, religious, and national differences when creating/revising the list of topics to be discussed with tutees.

- Make it less ideological and more academic and personally developmental

- An optional recommendation would be to establish a system of feedback from students about their Personal Tutors.

- The records of Personal Tutors' performance should be used for appraising them in terms of "Best Personal Tutor" practices, but not for telling them off for underperformance.

Student career development

- Organize job fairs in universities, which will help to strengthen the link between employers and graduates
- According to the new legislation, all grant students have to work in government organizations where they have been appointed by universities for 3 years. Information on this new legislation should be provided by admission officers during the admission period to all university entrants, especially before signing contracts with students awarded state grants
- The opinion of graduates should be taken into consideration when they are allocated to different organizations

Learning environment

- We recommend using efficiently the already existed facilities. Our team found out that computers and other IT resources were considered to be a very valuable commodity, and so restricted access for fear of damage. This attitude should be changed. Computers are becoming outdated in a very short period of time, and so have to be used intensively and be fully accessible for students.

- Develop design criteria for university facilities, highlighting the difference between school study rooms and university study rooms. Also specify basic standards for class-rooms for various learning purpose;

- The learning environment should encourage students to study, at least there should be enough light and the heating system should work properly;

- Instead of blackboards, all auditoriums should be provided with whiteboards, flip charts and markers.

- Not all furniture in the university study room should be stationary. The lecturer should be able to move it around according to the specific aim of a lesson (round-table discussion, role game, small group activity);

- IT facilities should be set up in each auditorium. Every department should have their own lap top, LCD projector and screen, which lecturers could share.

- Every department should have their own printing and copy facilities, to multiply and disseminate handouts and other materials related to the subject.
- All lecturers must have their own working place: individual table, chair and book case;
- Paper, pens and other writing-materials should be provided by the department administration;
- Each department has to have an appropriate board for teaching and flip charts that lecturers can use while preparing the lessons;
- At least two computers with Internet access in each department (kafedra) should be available for teachers to use the Internet.

Social life

- The social department in the Universities should be responsible for defending students' interests first. They should not obligate students to be involved in any activities but to search for ways of encouraging them to be involved. The Social Department also could help students to organize any activity and help find sources of funding for this activity.

- Student support departments should not impose volunteers or staff from other department with additional duties. The quality of work can only be achieved by stimulating people through financial reward.

- Defining students' interests and abilities can be done through conducting research. The Social Department, with the help of marketing department, can work out an enquiry form to know who the students are. This will help them in organizing events with the involvement of students.

- The creation of good conditions does not just mean purchasing 'luxury' itemrs; students must feel responsibility for the place where they stay. The practice of some universities, such as organizing various competitions in the Halls of Residence, can serve as an example of a good stimulator for students to keep their living area in a good condition.

- Once a year the universities should organize a **parents' day**. This event makes students feel proud of their university and make parents proud of their children. Social events also should be organized in the Halls of Residence: it will help city and regional students to cooperate.

- Organizing summer schools where students can combine education and work (in the schools, in the fields etc.) would be mutually beneficial for the university, organization and student.

- Tutors should participate in the social life of students but at the student's discretion. Especially the first year of study in the universities can be a difficult period for students and they need an adult person to listen to their problems. Access to professional

psychologists must be provided in each faculty, if the faculties are located in a different area.

- The student support department has to cooperate with different organizations and agencies which can help organize various social programs, for example, medical insurance and work and travel programs.

- For assigning students to participate in social activities one must remember that students need motivation: it can be money, present or the trip. Strong competition and good stimulation will ensure active participation.

Marketing of education
Short term action plan

- As part of its promotional campaign, universities should constantly visit schools and secondary specialized educational institutions, and give presentations on all programs and activities the university offer as well as how they are different from those offered in other institutions. Additionally, students will have a chance of asking questions regarding the university which may influence their decision on whether to choose this educational institution or not.

- Open Days will give an opportunity for prospective students and parents to see the university and its resources, classrooms. Visitors can talk with academic staff and students.

- Participation in Educational Exhibitions is becoming more and more popular. University staff together with students can participate in such events. An Educational Exhibition gives an opportunity to share information about the universities. Prospective students can see several universities and compare.

- It was pleasing to find out that quite a large number of Uzbek universities have their own web sites. However, they constantly need to be updated and include full information regarding the admission process.

- Every educational institution should have its marketing literature. Brochures or prospectus should be with lot of colorful pictures and easy to read.

- The marketing department of a university should work closely with the mass media as well. It should put advertisements in local newspapers, hold TV and radio programs to once again increase public awareness and interest in the given institution.

- To meet the requirements of educational standards, the marketing department has to conduct surveys among the students, academic and administrative staff and applicants. It will help to control the quality of education and to make a needs analysis of the university for application of any changes. Students should also be involved in this process.

Long term action plan:

- Establish online submission of documents for admission.

- Constantly update Uzbek educational portals which should include a detailed description of all educational institutions

- Creation of Marketing Research Centers is also essential for the University. All research and necessary expenditures must be included into the budget of the university.

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Appendix 1. Report On Visits To The Universities Of Uzbekistan

Analysis of students' questionnaires

The questions from the questionnaire can be logically divided into several categories, which are teaching and learning process in general and resources available to support it.

Teaching and Learning

It was important to find out what type of information is given out to the students at the start of every module. It is important from the IL point of view, since a good student can plan his/her own studies. That is why the question "What kind of information did you get at the beginning of the classes?" was asked.
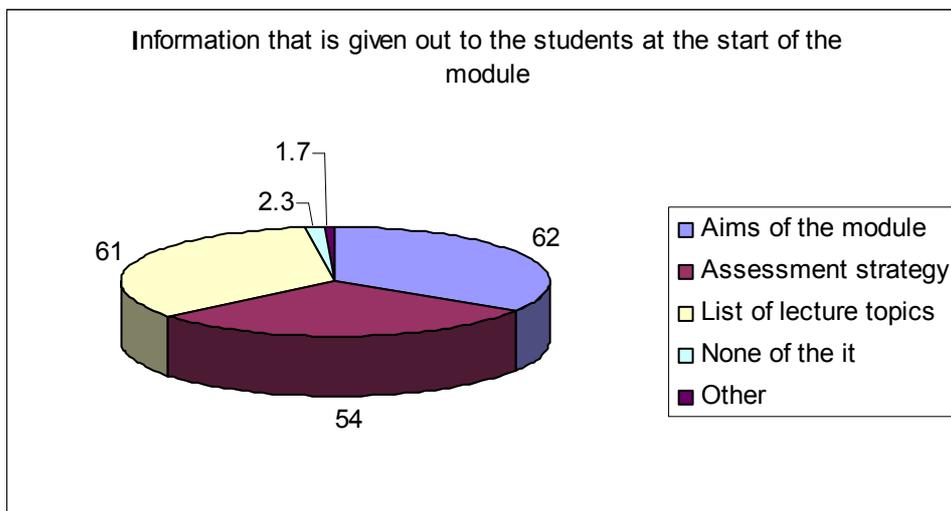
Figure 1

One more question was asked about the type of information provided.
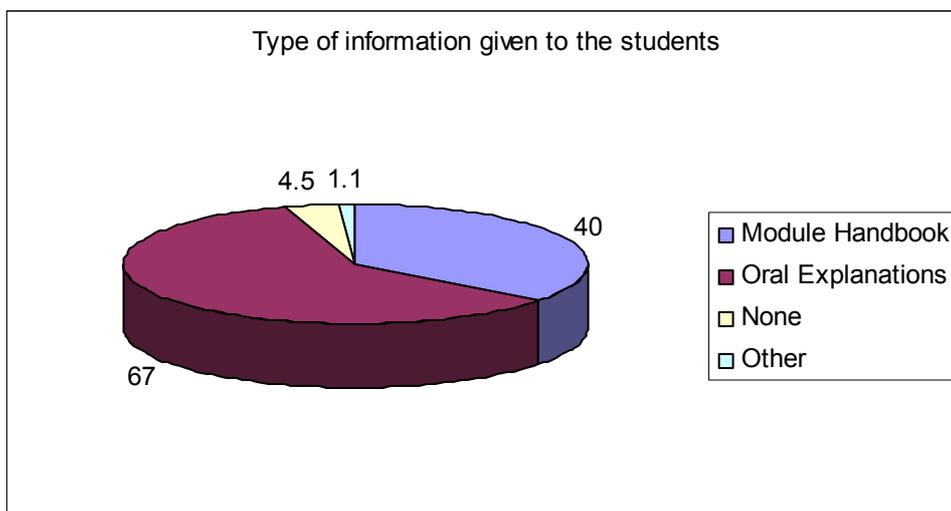
Figure 2

52

Resources

Literature is vital for studies, and it is pleasing to see that 83% of the students were provided with the list of recommended literature.

32% of students indicated that they can find all necessary resources in library (figure 3), however here we should state that this might be because lecturers give to students only the list of books which are available in the library (which may not be enough for acquiring knowledge in a particular module). This statement can be supported by the fact that 45% of respondents stated that only 20-50% of books can be found in the library. 24% of respondents stated that the availability of books depends on the module. Library observation supports this finding that there are enough resources in the library for science modules and a lack of resources for social sciences (i.e. subjects which have been introduced since independence).
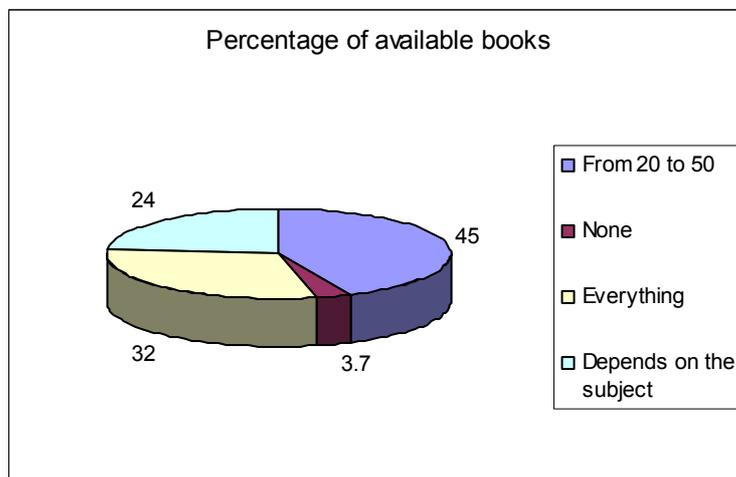
Figure 3

Since library and computer labs provide the main resources for students to study, it is important to know how students used these resources and how well the University is equipped with them. The analysis of the question about which facilities students use during and after classes gives us the following information:
  -   44% of respondents use computer labs and library during and after classes (figure 4).
  -   Only 13% of respondents use only computer labs and 39% only library.
This finding also shows that local universities lack computer labs and the computer per student ratio is still very low
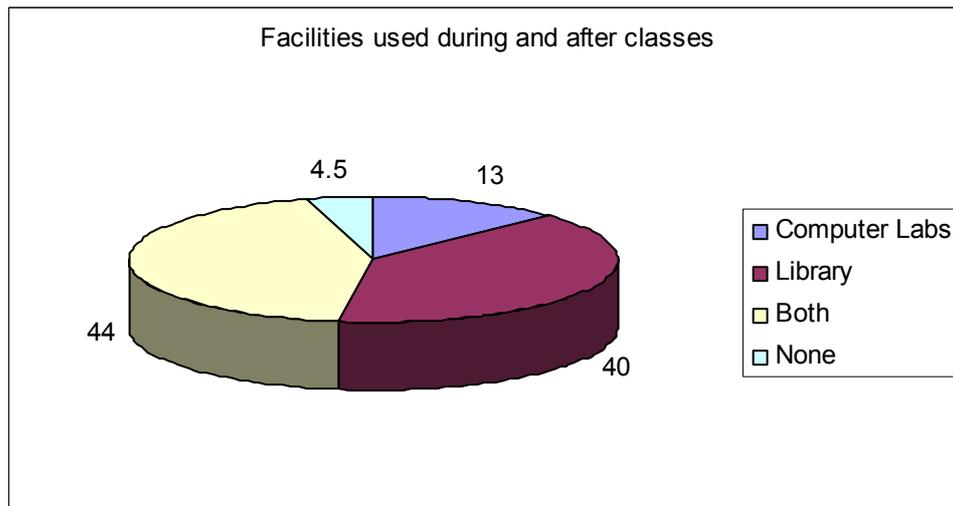
Figure 4

Figure 4 show that slightly more than 50% of students use computer classes. It is important to know where students have got access to this resource. The results can be seen at Figure 5.
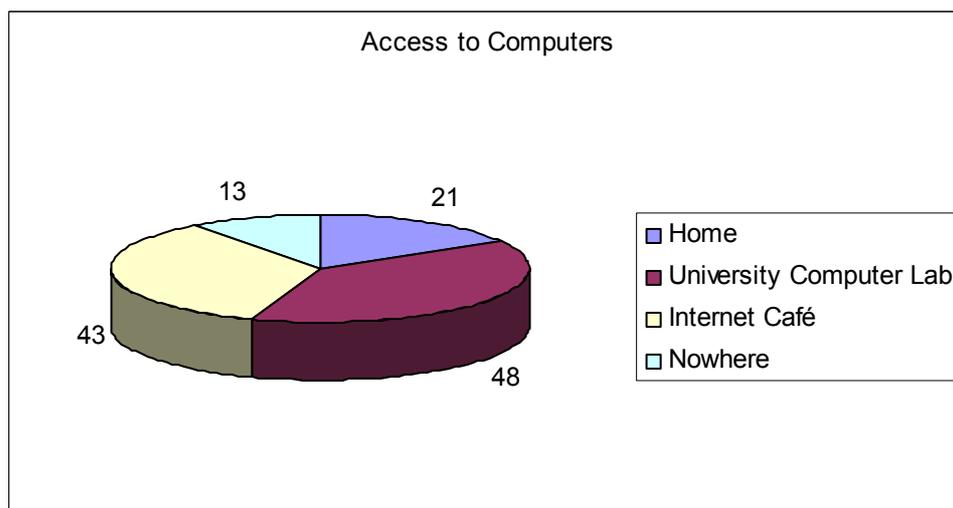
Figure 5

48% of respondents show that they have access to computers at the university, 43% in internet cafes, 21% at home and the remaining 13% don't have access to computers anywhere (figure 5). However, observation of the library and internet facilities show that in some universities students have access to the Internet for 1 hour/per week and in some universities students don't have access to the Internet at all. Also students complain that due to the high price of internet in internet cafes they cannot properly use the internet for educational purposes

Students can use computers for different purposes, for example, searching for information on the internet, typing up the coursework, practicing programming skills, etc. Also, the Internet can be used for educational purposes as well as for entertainment. A separate question was asked to find out how often students use the Internet for educational purposes. Analysis of this question shows that students use internet only when it is necessary, i.e. when they should write course works (figure 6).

54

The frequency of using Internet in educational purposes

24   28

29   26

□ Only when I have time to go to Internet Café
■ Only when I need to write a coursework
□ Once a week (Every week)
□ Rarely
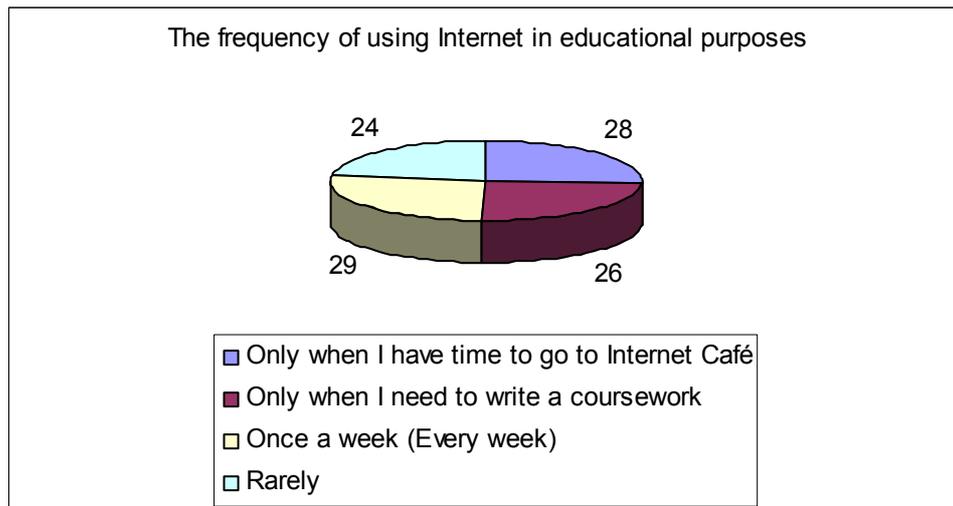
Figure 6

One of the typical approaches to writing a coursework is to download it from the Internet. www.referat.ru is one of the popular web sites from where many students find a ready coursework. Having this fact in mind a question was asked to find out how students write courseworks. It is pleasing to see (Figure 7) that only 13% of respondents stated that they download it from the Internet. Just above 50% of the students write it themselves using books and the internet. 40% said that write it themselves using several books.

The way students do courseworks

2.3   13

55   40

□ Download it from the Internet
■ Write myself using several books
□ Write myself using books and Internet
□ Other
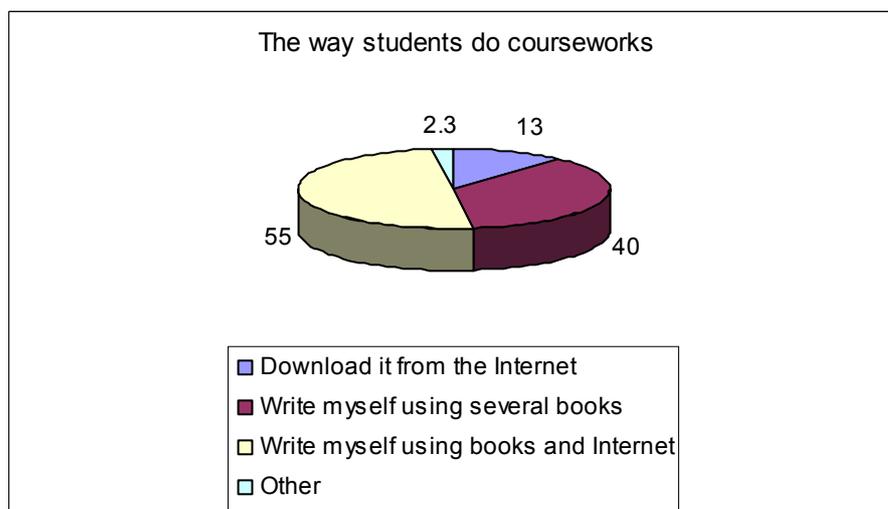
Figure 7

The analysis shows that almost 60% of students wish to have more new books. 29% of the students are completely satisfied with the resources, and only 16% are not satisfied at all.

Some students answered that they are satisfied with available resources and at the same time they ticked the next option, which is whether it would be better to have more resources. This tells us that students still wish to have more resources in the library.

Teaching and Learning Process
Teaching occurs during lectures and seminars, that is why questions were specifically aimed at finding out what happens during those sessions.

The first logical question to ask within this section was "What types of handouts are provided?" The answer can be seen from Figure 8.
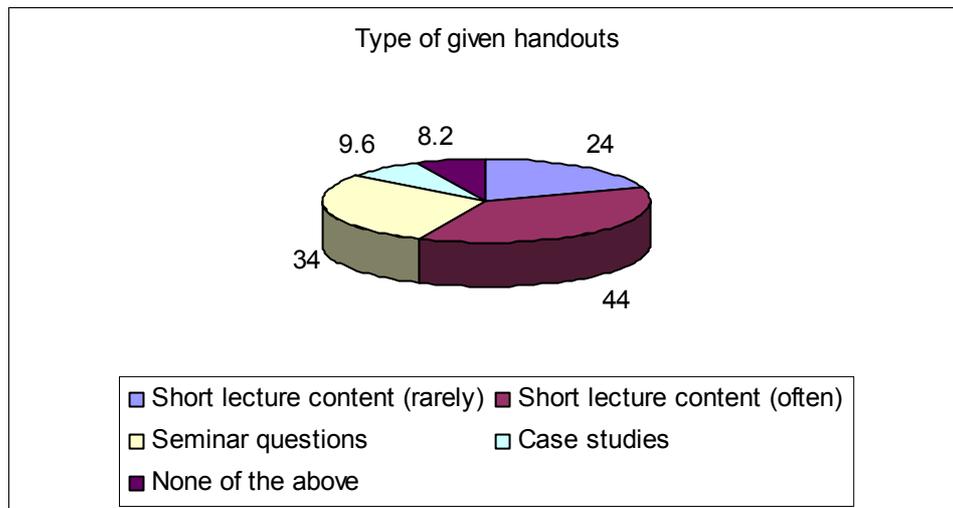
Figure 8

44% of respondents indicate that they have been given outline of lectures (figure 3) and 34% also admit that seminar questions are given beforehand. Only 9.6% of respondents say that they receive case-studies and 8% stated that they receive nothing. This also indicates that students receive very few materials from lecturers

Delivery
The following questions allowed us to analyze how lectures and seminars are delivered. It is a pity to see that 64% of students said that lecturers dictate and students have to write down everything very quickly. Only 18% of lecturers use visual aids. There is an attempt to be interactive during lectures, because 33% of students said that a lecturer explains the topic, and then asks questions which students should answer.

The situation with the delivery of seminars is not very promising either. In fact, 82% of students said that typically a lecturer asks questions, and students answer those and get the marks. Only 17% stated that they work in groups during seminars. Less than that, 13% said that lecturers give examples.

Exam preparation
Two questions from the questionnaire are aimed to find out how students get ready for the exams.
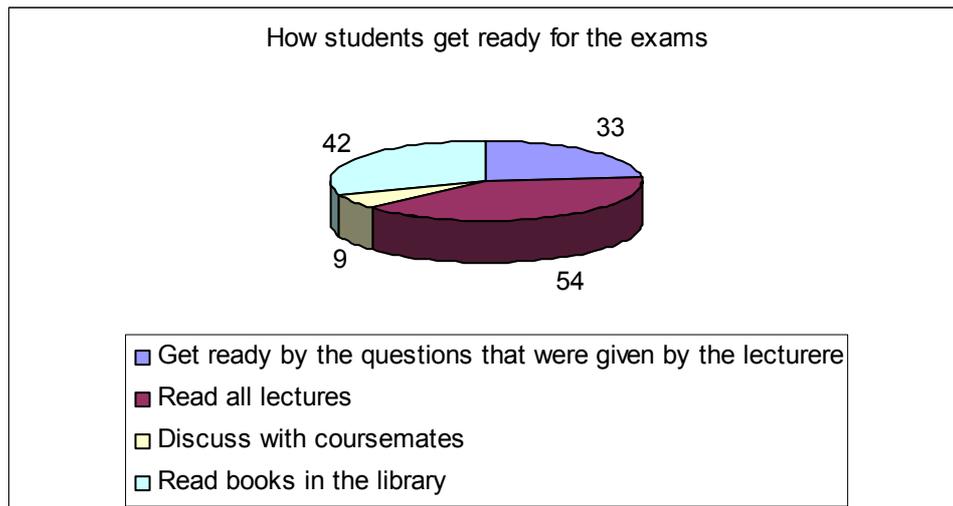
Figure 9

Slightly more than 50% of the students simply read lecture notes. It is obvious that students are not learning from each other, since only 9% said that they discuss the covered material with course mates.

There was a similar question about exam preparation, but aimed at finding out what sources of information students use when preparing for the exam.
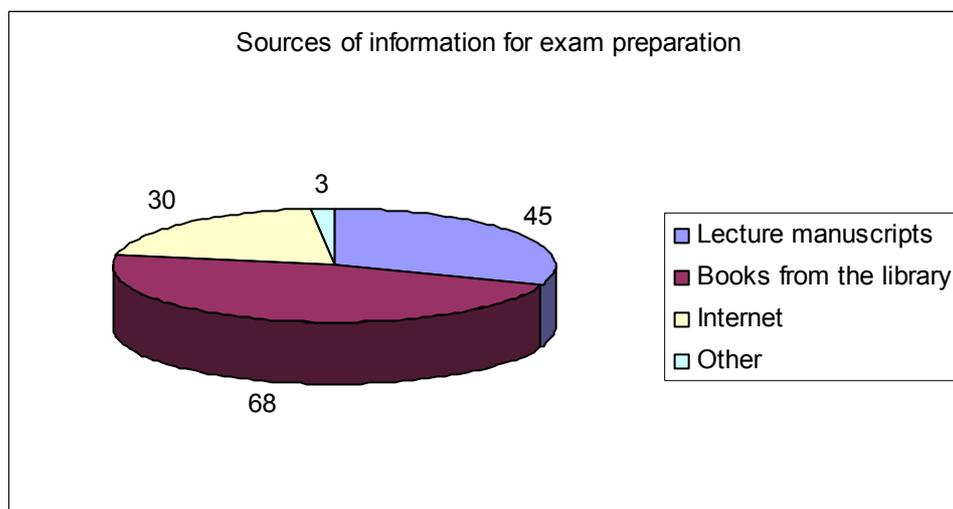

Figure 10

Both figure 9 and 10 show that around 50% of students read only lecture manuscripts. It is not very healthy, since students only rely on that portion of information that they had time to write during a lecture.

As can be seen from the analysis of Figure 9, only 9% of students prepare for the exams together. However, there was one more question in the Questionnaire which asked specifically whether students learn from each other or not. It is pleasing to see a better picture in terms of students' cooperation and sharing of knowledge, since almost 50% of the students stated that they learn from each other when they discuss case studies during a seminar.

It is good to find out that students do actually learn from each other at least during seminars, but the answer contradict what has been stated already about the delivery of seminars (82% of students said that typically during a seminar a lecturer asks questions, and students answer those and get the marks.)

The answers to the questionnaire, although sometimes unreliable (Q8 is a direct question which cannot be used to extract a truthful answer, Q10 give indistinguishable answer options, and Q7 and Q11 are somewhat contradictory), still gives us some insight into the student-teacher relationship.

Teacher exercises overall control giving students concrete and similar tasks which may limit their initiative in independent learning. Students see the lecturer as an instructor rather than a guiding partner. There was no use of the phrases "individual approach" all of the lectures are a mass event, despite the fact that each student has different abilities and skills. In a huge group of students the lecturer looks at the average student which make the faster student get bored and lose interest and the slower student fall behind and lose interest. The question-answer format also limits the student to the scope of topics given by the teacher without an attempt to go beyond it. The grades are given for memory recall rather than the ability to find material and analyze it. The whole process is controlled by the teacher from the beginning to the end.

All of this makes the whole process as an obligatory and boring chore rather than a creative process.

The partnership relationship between the student and the teacher is extremely important as it is much more efficient; however it requires additional effort on the part of the teacher and understanding and willingness on the part of the student. Independent teaching is also expensive as it requires smaller groups of students per teacher so that the teacher can study each of his students and guide him or her to the best of use of their abilities.

Analysis of interviews with academic staff

During the visits to the universities of Uzbekistan, 28 members of academic staff were interviewed. The following section gives the details as well as the results of these interviews.

Background

To get a range of opinion, academics teaching in various fields and with different lengths of experience were invited for interviews. Figures 11 and 12 provide details of interviewees:
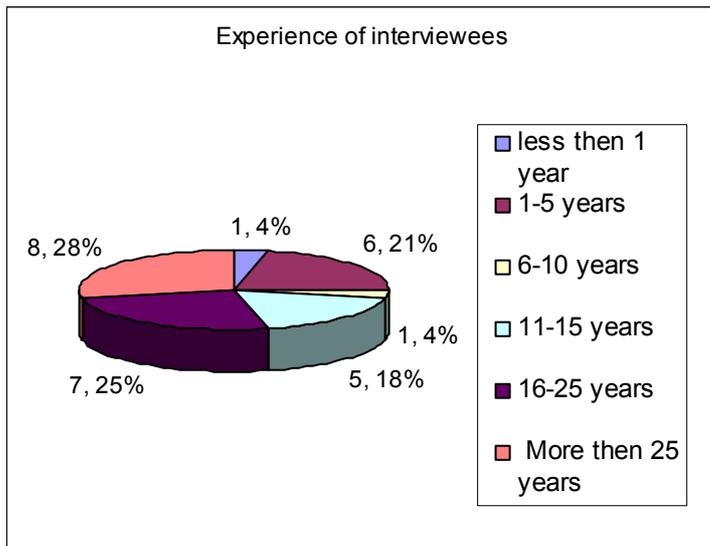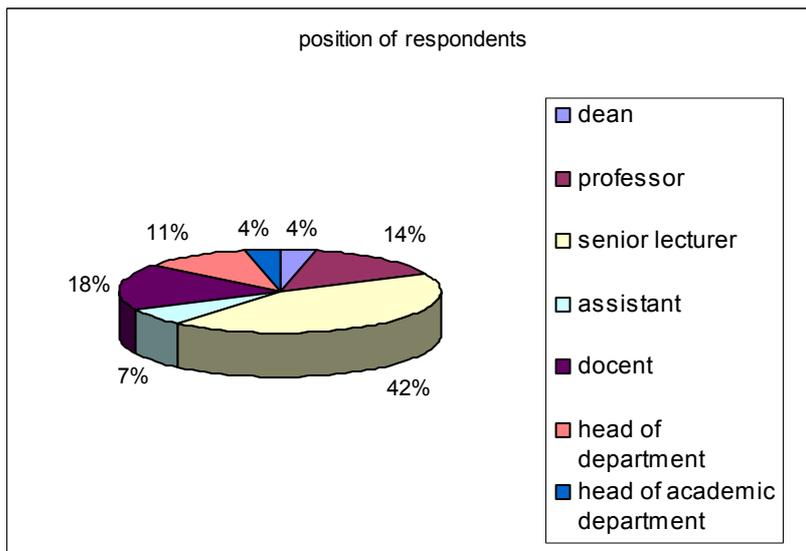
By years of experience:

Figure 11

By position:

Figure 12

The respondents have been teaching a range of different subjects including**:** Physics of semi-conductors, Mechanics, General Physics and Physical Electronics, Political Philosophy, Philosophy of Culture, Social Philosophy, Russian Language, Slovenian Culture, Microeconomics, Organization and Financial Investment, Labour Economics and Sociology, Audit, Corporate Finance; Money, Banking and Finance; Macroeconomics; Maths; Programming, Odd numbers Theory; Information Technologies; Pedagogy; Agro engineering; Methodology of Employment Education; Statistics; Economic System of Foreign Countries; Law; Innovation Management; Management; Organization and Financial Investment; Business Accounting and Auditing, Engineering Mechanics; Analytical Chemistry.

General Questions

As an introductory part of the conversation, several general questions were asked, such as: 'What do you consider to be a good teacher?'

According to the responses there are three types of answers to this question: The first group thinks that a good teacher should be closely involved in the educational process and conduct research together with the students and possess knowledge in the subject he/she teaches;

The opinion of the second group is that a teacher should be able to explain different topics in simple and accessible language and with the use of practical examples. The lecturer should give a clear picture of the subject, be very well prepared and able to motivate students to study.

The third group of respondents stated that a good teacher should be a kind person, good methodologist; good psychologist, and be able to achieve students' recognition.

By summarizing the interview results we can consider that there is still an old perception of the role of the teacher in Higher Education. The role of the teacher is still viewed as information or knowledge distributor. However, more recent theories suggest that the teacher be considered as knowledge facilitator. It means that the teacher should develop adequate skills and abilities so students could find, store, and process information themselves, and more importantly be able to apply it in the decision making process. In short, the teacher should develop independent learning and critical thinking and analytical skills in students.

Another general question given to academic staff was what positive things they could say about their current students and which were the areas they could improve. The general level of students' motivation to study, according to opinion of interviewees, is reflected in the figure below:

level of students' motivation to study

32%

47%
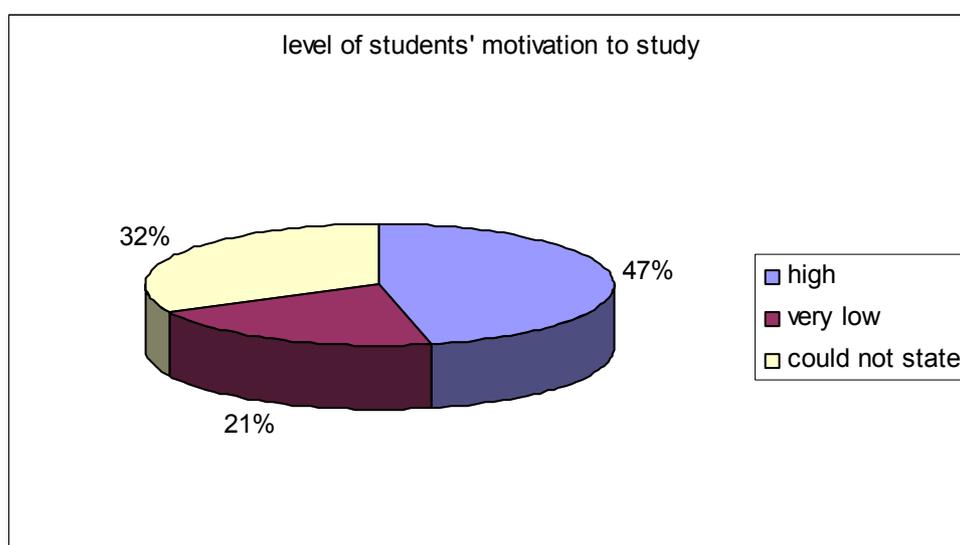
21%

■ high
■ very low
□ could not state

Figure 13

Interviewees believe the factors which affect students' motivation are: necessity to run their own business, no clear idea of why and what they are studying, too many subjects to study, low practical applicability of subjects, lack of good quality books in Uzbek, teaching style, and difficulty in finding a job

One of the interviewees stated that the level of knowledge of students entering the university is getting worse year by year.
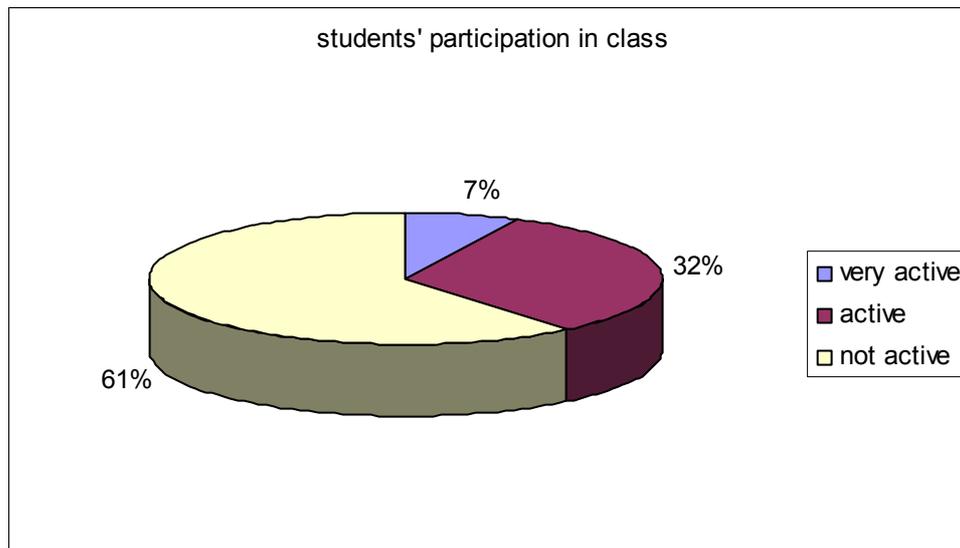
General level of participation

Figure 14

The affecting factors listed were: worsening of school education; lack of Physics and Math teachers in schools and universities (for example only in Tashkent 130 teachers of physics in schools are needed today)

Module Delivery

The following questions were given in the course of discussing the issue of module delivery: What are the learning outcomes of the module he/she teaches? In the case of a module being delivered by a module team, are module team meetings organized? Who creates the seminar questions? What type of means of teaching does he/she usually use?

The figure below indicates the extent to which interviewed candidates were able to clearly define the learning outcomes of their module:
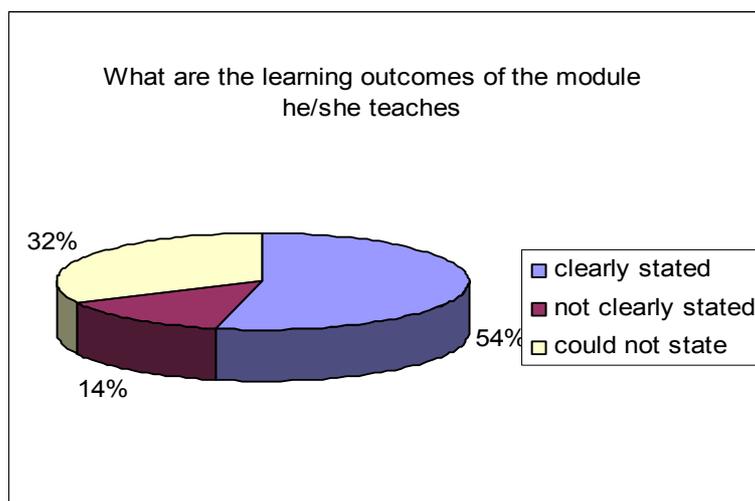
Figure 15

If a module is delivered by the team, team members meet in the beginning of the academic year and discuss all issues related to the subject. The module leader leads lecturers and s/he prepares seminar questions. In many cases team members discuss teaching and learning strategies, coursework assignments, and exam papers and mark them collectively. One third of respondents said that the module is delivered individually.

Approximately 12% to 15% of academic staff conduct teaching using modern pedagogical and information technologies. However, the traditional way of lecturing using board and chalk still prevails. The low level of computer literacy and language barrier makes it difficult for staff to use new facilities. For information and technological subjects lecturers use computers or old equipment. Universities located in Tashkent city are better equipped than those in the regions.

Lectures and Seminars

The questions asked from interviewees on lectures and seminars are: Please describe types of activities which you do during the lectures/seminars? Do your students come prepared to the seminars? If not, what do you think is the problem? When do you give tutorial questions? In what form do you distribute seminar questions? How do you prepare for seminars, and lectures? Which internet resources do you usually use during your lectures and seminars?

We observed the following: the teachers orally explain the lecture and then dictate information to the students, trying to give as much information as possible. Only about 5% of teachers use some elements of interactive lecturing.

The respondents stated that during seminars they give individual tasks to students, solve problems together, discuss case studies, ask questions, and check the overall understanding of learning outcomes, make debates and experiments. They use different activities during seminars; discussions sometimes are very boisterous and rapid and tutors should manage them

Figures 16 and 17 give information on the extent to which students come prepared to class and possible reasons for students' not coming prepared to class
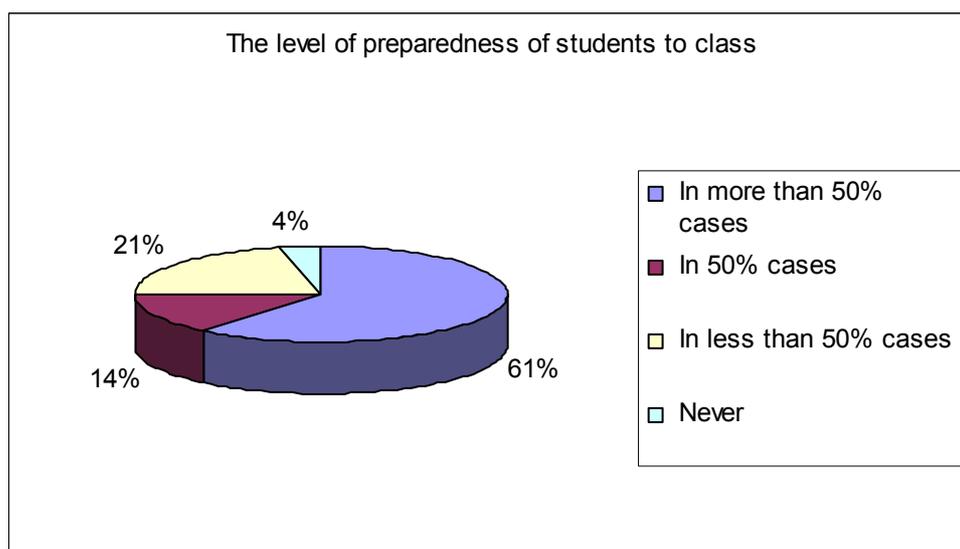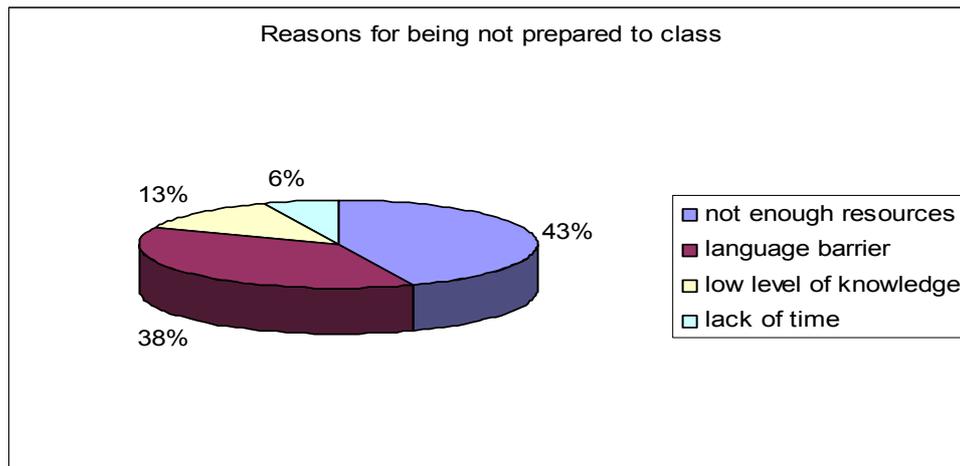

Figure 16

Figure 17

To the question when seminar questions are given, most academics answered they do it in the beginning of semester. However there were different answers too. This can be seen from the chart below:
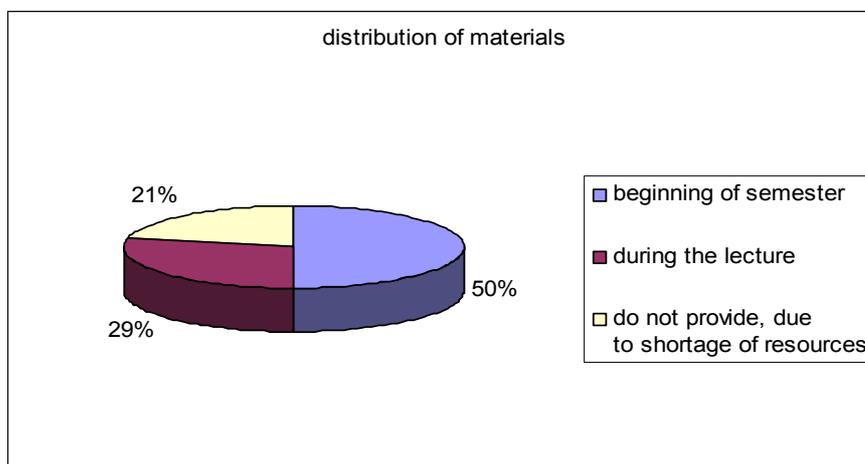

Figure 18

There were some respondents who said that there is no need for preparation because the subject is taught for many years (4 respondents). Most of them said that they spend in general 2-3 hours for each coming lecture or tutorial to read books or solve problems (3), search for news on internet

which i-net resources do you use for lectures

43%

11%

32%

14%

- uzbek & russian sites
- google & yahoo
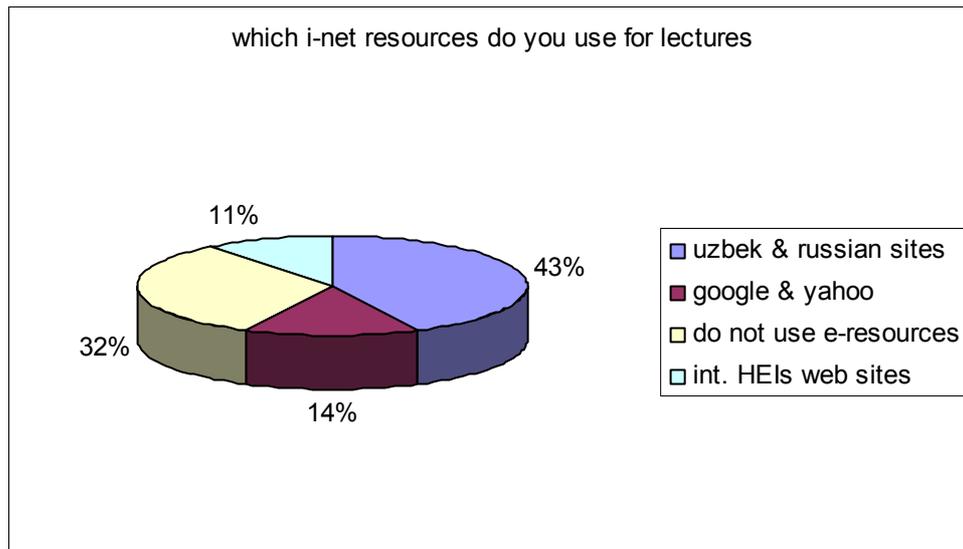- do not use e-resources
- int. HEIs web sites

Figure 19

Nobody commented on the procedure and structure of preparation. It is natural because tutorials, seminars and lectures at local universities are delivered traditionally focusing mainly on giving to the students as much information as possible.

Homework

Questions asked: Do you give homework? Do students complete homework on time? How do you tackle the problem of unprepared students?

Is homework given to students
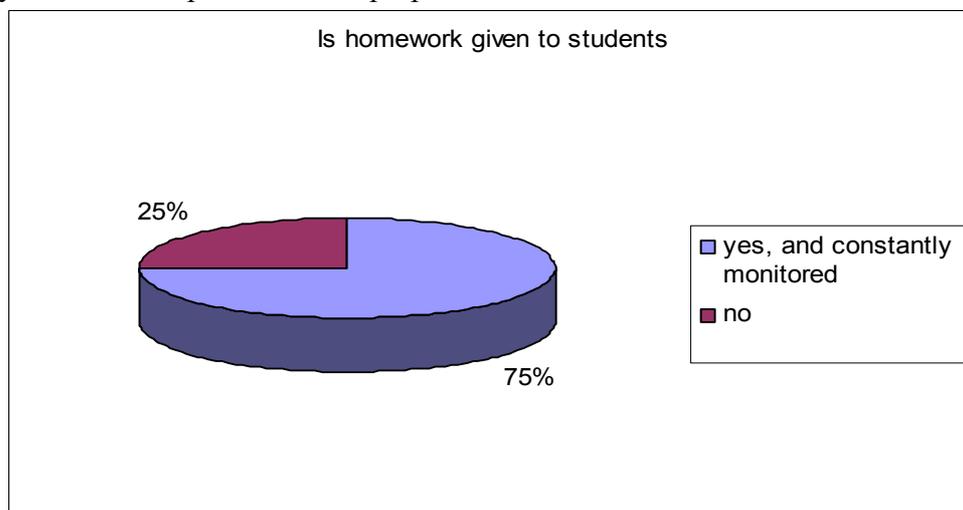
25%

75%

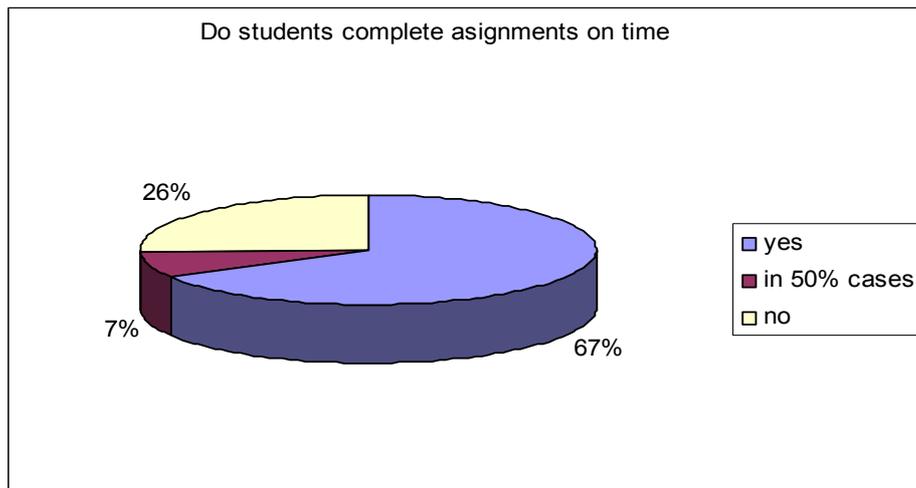- yes, and constantly monitored
- no

Figure 20

Figure 21

The reasons for not completing assignments on time: some tasks might be too difficult; some may overlap with coursework deadlines

In local universities the problem of unprepared students is tackled in several ways:
- Unprepared students have to prepare missed topics independently and improve their marks through solving 5-6 quizzes, or viva
- They are given additional tasks
- Some teachers tackle this problem by merging active and passive group of students or by motivating them to acquire knowledge
- By talking with the students and finding out the reasons

Workload

How many hours do you teach during a week? Do you have other activities during a week? Do you have office hours? If yes, what are they?

According to the existing regulations the work load of academic staff in HEIs is accounted for 1560 hours per year, which in turn is usually divided into two parts: teaching (educational) or methodological work and research-social work. Depending on the character of the subject and teaching semester, the teaching work load at local universities ranges from 8 to 24 hours per week. Natural science teachers in general have more contact hours then social-economic subject teachers.

In the frame of so called individual plans each staff has to carry out additional social and research activities, lead the department or some club, be a personal tutor in student's dormitories, supervise diploma projects, participate in research or methodological conferences, publish articles, attend retraining courses, visit student's dormitory, do some additional work as assigned in departments or uchebnaya chast;

Regarding office hours, it is worth to mentioning that the meaning of office hours at local universities is different from that in Western countries. Lack of resources, especially, rooms from one side, and overloaded teaching schedule from the other, do not allow for having a fixed day and time for office hours. But academic staff in general are available during the

semester for communication with students outside class. In some regional universities it is compulsory to sit at departments from 9 a.m. until 17:00 p.m. on Monday through Saturday. Instead of office hours academic staff have so called duty time in departments. Unfortunately, during the semester, as respondents said, students rarely come to consult with lecturers/tutors.

Analysis of interviews with administrative staff

To find out the opinion of administrative staff on various issues concerning the educational process, 18 respondents from different universities were interviewed. All questions from interviews with administrative staff are divided into several categories.

Curriculum

The questions in this category are aimed at identifying the level of flexibility and effectiveness of the present curriculum. The following questions were asked in the course of the interview: What is the procedure of introducing or removing a particular module\subject? Do you have any suggestions on improving the procedure? Do you think curriculum needs improvements?

From the answers of interviewees the following general information on curriculum is concluded:

Any course consists of 5 blocks and total 70 modules on average. Most of the modules are not directly related to the specialization of the students and mainly directed at explaining current government policy and building a sense of patriotism among students. Description of blocks as follows:

1- Block, Humanitarian- social and economic modules- in total there are 22 modules and this block is compulsory for all courses, none of them can be removed from the curriculum. All the material covered in these modules is also taught at school level, thus these modules are a repetition of school material. **2- Block**. Mathematics and natural subjects- 6 subjects- compulsory for all students of all courses. None of them can be removed from the curriculum. These subjects are taught at school as well. **3 - Block**. General specialty subjects 17 subjects- cannot be changed. **4- Block**. Specialty subjects – 9 subjects **5-Block**. Optional modules total 5 subjects. Although subjects within this block are called optional modules they are all chosen by teachers on the basis of availability of resources. Furthermore, since students are not provided with the course handbook and detailed description of the subjects they are not able to make informed decision.

Although some changes can be introduced into the curriculum, it can only be done in block 4 and 5. The MHSSE alone has the authority to introduce changes in the first 3 blocks.

The procedure of updating curriculum, in other words introducing changes in Blocks 4 and 5, is considered to be too time consuming and has got following structure:

1st stage: Subject teacher identifies the need for the subject and prepares indicative syllabus. **2nd stage**: Subject is discussed at the department level, then the sample of the syllabus for the concrete subject should be found from the benchmark university. Then the suggestion of the department is passed to the Academic Council of university.

3rd stage: Academic Council discusses the need for adding/removing the subject from the curriculum;

4th stage: Suggestion is passed to the MHSSE and it makes the decision on accepting or rejecting the proposal.

Curriculum revision and content update – the curriculum is tightly regulated by the MHSSE and only 10 percent of the curriculum can be changed, within individual block not more than 5 percent.

The figure below shows the opinion of interviewees on whether the curriculum needs improvements or not:
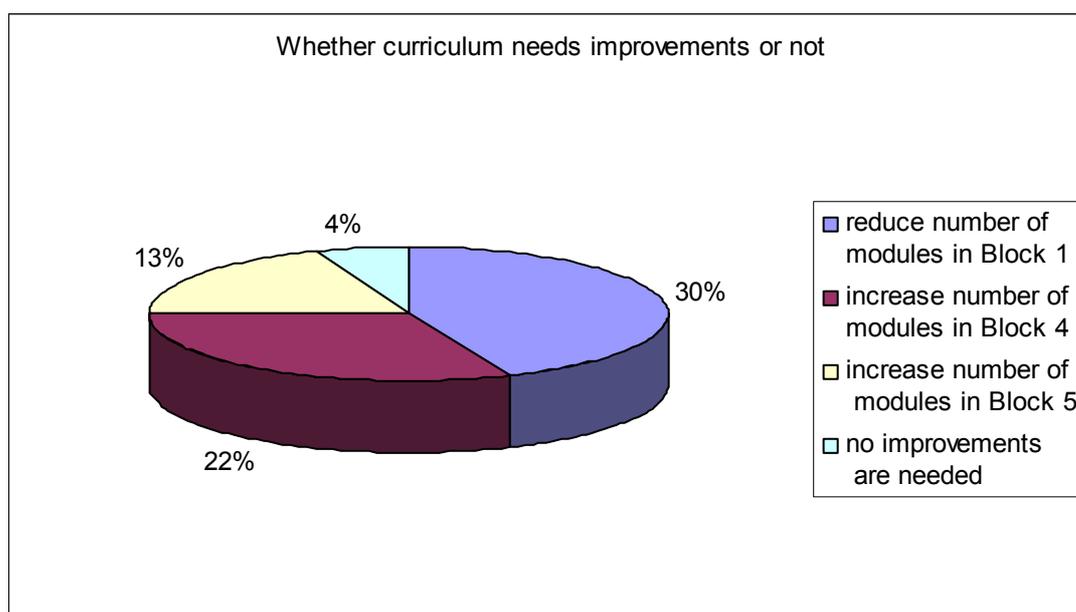

Figure 22

Assessment

The questions related to this category helped to identify the opinion of interviewees on the rating system. Particularly, the following questions were asked: What methods of assessment are used by the teachers? Which one is the most popular, and why? Is there anything that should be changed in the assessment approach? Who sets methods and number of assessment? In what form do students receive feedback on their work?

It was discovered that written forms of assessment, such as tests and written assignments, are considered to be the dominant methods. Interviewees stated that these methods of assessment have been practiced for many years and are therefore are easier to evaluate than other methods. In addition, they are chosen because they require relatively less time for marking.

The figure below summarizes the view of interviewees on suggestions they would recommend for improving the rating system

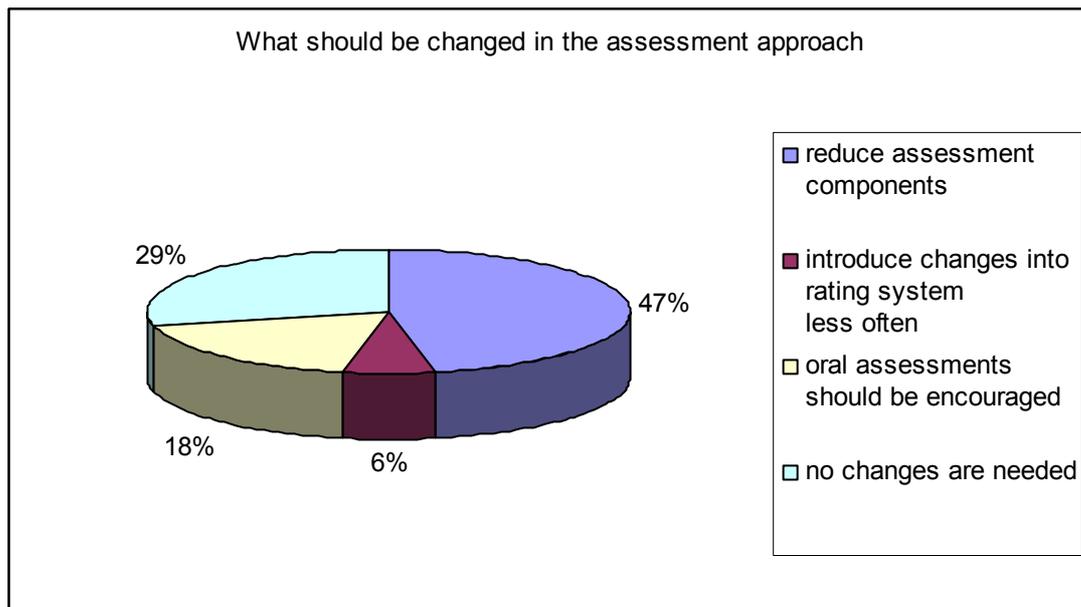What should be changed in the assessment approach

Figure 23

The given figure stresses the need for reducing the number of assessment components (according to the opinion of administrative staff), in other words, decreasing the quantity of assessments within the day to day, intermediate and final assessments. The fact that 18% wished oral assessments to be encouraged would also be possible with a reduced assessment load.

The following figure gives mixed picture of the option of university staff on who should set the methods and the number of assessments.
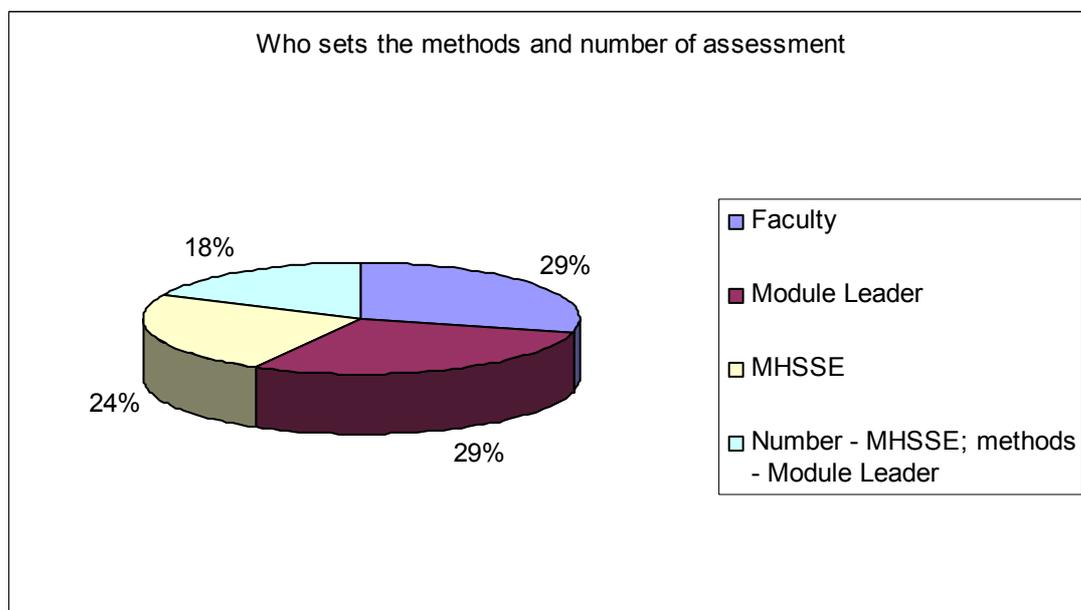
Who sets the methods and number of assessment

Figure 24

The system of providing feedback is also not well developed since 35% of interviewed administrative staff stated that it is not provided at all and another 29% stated that only the oral form of feedback is *sometimes* given. The other 24% just confirmed that feedback is provided, but failed to give any details. (please see the figure below for details)
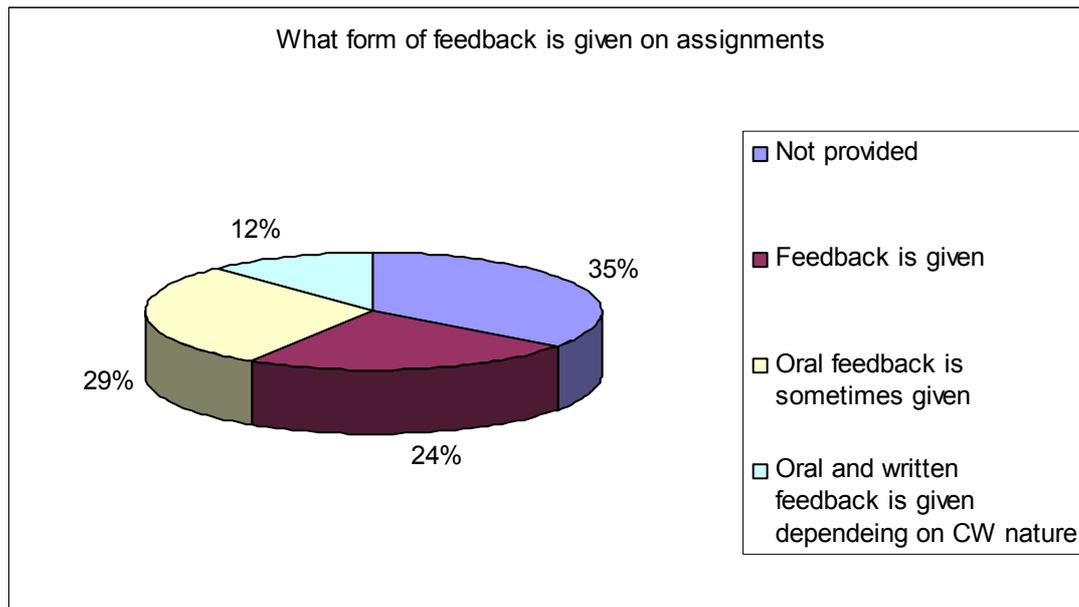
What form of feedback is given on assignments

- Not provided
- Feedback is given
- Oral feedback is sometimes given
- Oral and written feedback is given dependeing on CW nature

35%
24%
29%
12%

Figure 25

Trainings

Questions asked: Does the faculty/department organize any professional training for teachers? What kind of trainings? How often? How effective are these trainings (if organized)?

Usually trainings for academics are organized internally and by the benchmark university. They are mainly related to introducing and upgrading the knowledge and skills of academic staff on pedagogical and IT technologies. Other types of trainings are on economic reforms, the president's books, new regulations and the rating system.

The type of Professional Development trainings organized

- on pedagogical technologies
- on informational technologies
- on President's books
- failed to name the type of trainings
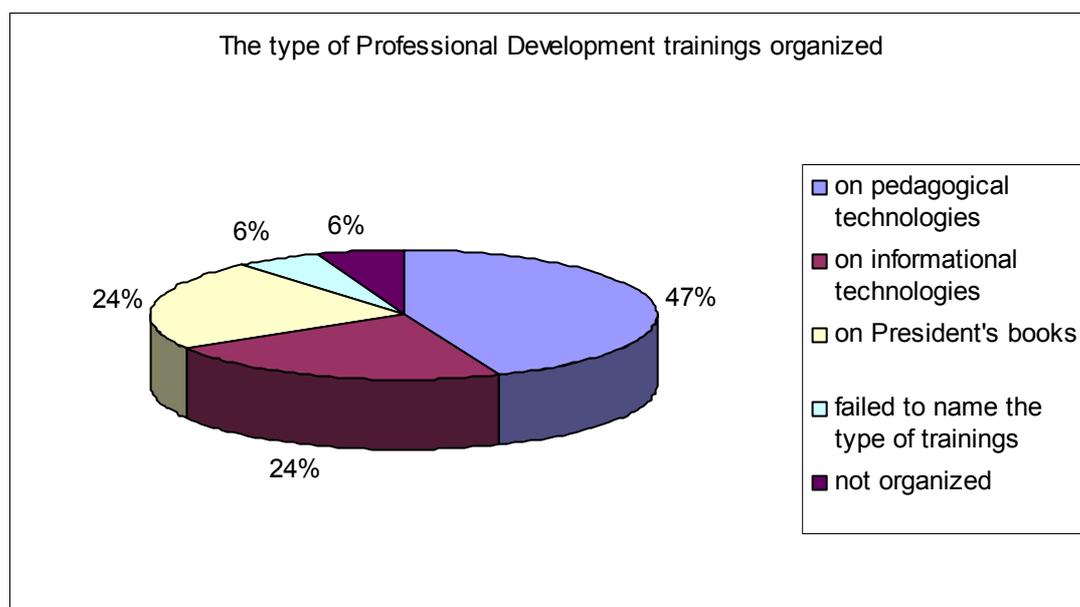- not organized

6%   6%
24%
47%
24%

Figure 26

The frequency of trainings is different across universities. Some staff claimed that they have trainings twice a month, some once every semester, and some couldn't remember when the last training was conducted.

The opinion on the effectiveness of trainings is also diverse. Some think that these trainings are effective, some effective in special cases, while some believe that they are ineffective. However, it is notable that quite a large percentage of interviewees preferred not to answer this question.
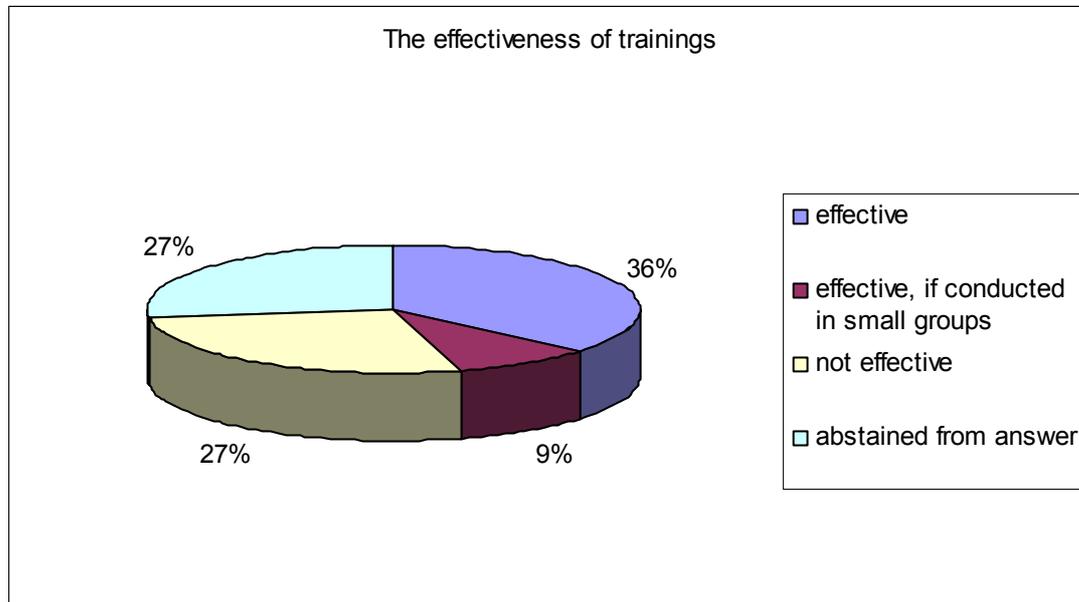

The effectiveness of trainings

27%   36%

27%   9%

- effective
- effective, if conducted in small groups
- not effective
- abstained from answer

Figure 27

Student societies

The questions given to interviewees on this matter are as follow: Are there any student societies or clubs? Do students organize any academic events (round tables, projects, debates, etc)? What is the procedure if students would like to organize an event?

Although all universities have some kind of student societies, such as language clubs and debate clubs; they are not considered to be very active. Most of the interviewees claimed that students do organize different academic events, but of them, 29 % failed to name exactly a recent event held by students.
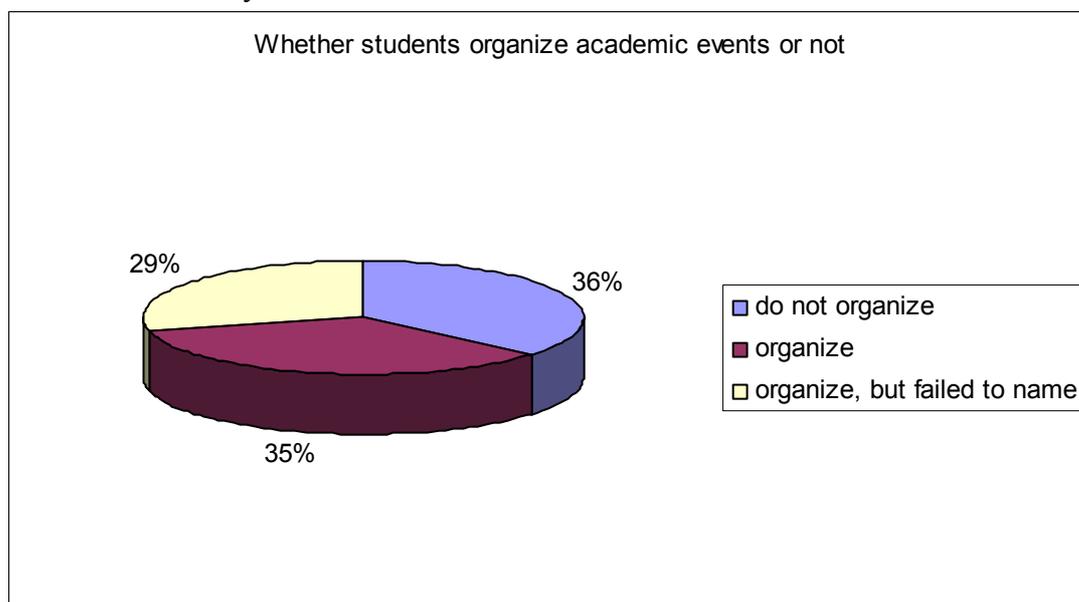

Whether students organize academic events or not

29%   36%

35%

- do not organize
- organize
- organize, but failed to name

Figure 28

70

Any initiatives students propose, are normally considered and approved by the administration.

The procedure of of organizing event by students

17%

83%

- should be proved by administration
- students never ask for anything like that

Figure 29