The Role of Universities and Organizations in Fostering Future Skills in the Digital and AI Era: The Experience of ANAFAE in Afghanistan

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Abstract

In the present era, societies are transitioning to a stage where digital skills, particularly artificial intelligence, are no longer optional but an inevitable necessity for survival and economic growth. With its young population and high unemployment rate, Afghanistan needs more than ever to equip the younger generation and adults with these skills. This paper examines the experience of the ANAFAE Institute in implementing AI educational programs in 2024 and 2025. The results show that universities and educational organizations, even under difficult conditions, can play a decisive role in empowering the next generation.

Introduction

Afghanistan, like many developing countries, faces a serious challenge: how can we prepare the younger generation and adults for today's realities and a digital future that is rapidly changing?

Given the high unemployment rate and limited resources, the need to equip students and trainees with digital skills, especially artificial intelligence, is increasingly evident. At ANAFAE, we believe that AI is not merely a modern technology but an enabling tool for learning, innovation, and creating economic opportunities.

Challenge

Afghan society today faces a young and unemployed population actively seeking job opportunities. However, the shortage of resources and lack of access to quality education have created a major barrier. Therefore, training in future skills "particularly in digital and artificial intelligence" is essential for:

- Strengthening self-learning systems,

- Increasing individual skills and capabilities,

- And fostering creativity and innovation in the national economy.

ANAFAE's Strategic Response

In 2024 and 2025, ANAFAE took important steps in this direction by designing and implementing diverse educational programs in four provinces. ANAFAE's strategy was based on three main pillars:

1. **Empowering managers and instructors:** Training instructors and managers of 15 educational centers in applying AI in administration, marketing, and management.

2. **Collaboration with universities and technical/vocational institutes:** Organizing seminars and lectures to demonstrate the practical applications of AI in teaching, research, and content production.

3. **Developing partnerships:** Strengthening cooperation between ANAFAE, universities, educational institutions, and NGOs through joint agreements for implementing AI training programs.

Operational Points

In early 2025, these initiatives were put into practice across universities (both public and private), technical and vocational training centers, as well as adult education centers in several provinces. In these programs, students and instructors became familiar with the basic concepts and applications of AI, received hands-on training, and worked with real examples of AI tools.

These activities were not merely theoretical; they included practical workshops and specialized discussions on the real-world implementation of AI in education, management, and even economic planning.

Lessons Learned

Several key outcomes emerged from these initiatives:

1. **AI is a bridge for collaboration:** This technology connected universities, technical/vocational centers, and adult education institutions around common goals and challenges.

2. **Capacity building is vital:** Many institutions were interested in using AI but lacked the necessary knowledge and practical experience. Targeted training quickly filled this gap.

3. **Adaptation to local needs is essential:** For success, AI must address the real needs of society, including academic research, labor market analysis, and institutional management.

An important point was that after these seminars, young people and adults were not only encouraged to use AI tools but also motivated to innovate within their own fields of expertise.

The Way Forward

Based on the results achieved, ANAFAE plans to:

- Expand the scope of AI education in collaboration with universities and vocational centers,

- Integrate youth and adult education programs with digital and AI skills,

- And promote innovation so that education contributes not only to learning but also to entrepreneurship and economic empowerment.

Conclusion

The Afghan experience shows that even under difficult circumstances, universities and organizations can play a fundamental role in preparing the next generation. Focusing on practical training, building effective partnerships, and sharing resources can transform AI from a global trend into a local opportunity.