

Interview with Aryana TV about Textbooks



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Sahar Zhwand (Morning Life) program is broadcasting with host Khoshal Asifi. It is the second part of the program. It is my pride that a knowledgeable Afghan, as usual, is my guest in today program; Dr. M. Yahya Wardak who has accomplished great works for higher education that are really valuable. You see the books in front of me, putting on the table. Who has written, compiled and published these books? Today I wanted to invite Dr. M. Yahya Wardak to the program and talk with him about his life and works.

Thank you Mr. Wardak, and welcome to the program.

Yahya Wardak: I offer greetings to you and audience of Aryana TV.

Khushal Asefi: Thanks, I will give you the tea and start questions from beginning: Where were you born? Where did you study the primary school? Which university did you get higher education in? And tell us about your works, initial job and other tasks regarding the books that I mentioned before.

Yahya Wardak: I was born in Wardak province. I studied until 12th grade in Speen Kali School, Shash Darak, Kabul, and I studied Harbi Showanzi High School (Military School) for four years. After that, I got a scholarship to Czechoslovakia; I studied Medicine there. Later, I went to Germany where I have been for twenty years. In Germany, I studied about Public Health, Health Management and Health Education; in addition, I have worked there. For five years, I have been working with the Ministry of Higher Education. The main task I accomplish is to publish textbooks with the cooperation of lecturers of Afghan universities and the Ministry of Higher Education.

Khushal Asefi: I visited Dr. Ehsanullah Arianzai yesterday at his home. We talked about your works of publishing textbooks that you really tried for it. Who has written and printed these textbooks? And what is your role regarding it?

Yahya Wardak: Before talking about the textbooks, I would like to show you some chapters that I saw five years ago, surprised me and made me work for the publication of textbooks.

Khushal Asefi: These are too old.

Yahya Wardak: Yes. Some of them were even written with hands. These were used as the only materials, and unfortunately such old lecture notes, written 10-20 years ago, are still used in some subjects. Therefore, I decided to start struggle for the publication of textbooks because the outdated books should no longer be used in 21st century. They are not only old, yet they are not standard as well; however, they are taught. I have some such chapter notes in my office that...

Khushal Asefi: These notes motivated you.

Yahya Wardak: yeah, yeah. Even that time, seeing the old notes, made me tearful.

Khushal Asefi: Then you started the work?

Yahya Wardak: Yes, when I saw that some lecturers had written textbooks, but they couldn't publish them or had problems in printing, typing and designing. Thus, I discussed this issue with the ministry, universities and lecturers, and I gradually encouraged them. We first published five textbooks, then twenty and later on thirty. The publication of those textbooks encouraged the lecturers to write more textbooks and send to us for publication, for they noticed their books have been published well and distributed throughout Afghanistan.

Khushal Asefi: You have published all these textbooks?

Yahya Wardak: Yes, we have published them in the Ministry of Higher Education.

Khushal Asefi: With your own fund?

Yahya Wardak: No, with my cooperation and management.

Khushal Asefi: You did the main work; you encouraged them.

Yahya Wardak: Actually the honorable lecturers have done the main work. It is the achievement and outcome of their experience of ten, twenty or thirty years. We just collected the translated or written textbooks, took them to the printing press, and found fund for their publication. After publishing, we have given them to their authors, their faculties, and all medical faculties of Afghanistan.

Khushal Asefi: How many new matters do they involve?

Yahya Wardak: There are many new matters in them.

Khushal Asefi: For example?

Yahya Wardak: I can show you. Give me those two books, please. This one is an international standard textbook, about anesthesia, written by an American author.

Khushal Asefi: Basic Guide to Anesthesia for Developing Countries (English/Dari).

Yahya Wardak: Yes. This textbook is taught in many universities in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Khushal Asefi: These are new matters.

Yahya Wardak: This book has been translated into twenty three other languages; as well as, Afghans have translated it into Dari. You can turn the page and see that we have published it in both languages. There is English text on one side and the translated Dari text is on the other side. It has been published in two volumes. It contains the very recent achievements and lessons. We encourage the lecturers to update their lecture notes according to new books, type them and send to us for publishing. As well as, the publication of their textbooks encourage the lecturers to modernize their lessons, share with us to be distributed all over Afghanistan.

Khushal Asefi: Mr. Wardak, What are the CDs (DVDs) of?

Yahya Wardak: We usually publish the textbooks in 1,000 copies while those are not enough for about 20,000 students of medicine in state and private universities. Therefore, we record (please take a textbook) all the contents of each book in PDF format on a CD. The students can store them in their computers and share with others in order to be distributed to many people. In addition, we send the softcopies of all the books to Bochum University in Germany for uploading to www.ecampus-afghanistan.org, so anyone can download them to their computers. Three days ago, an Afghan student from Tripoli, Libya sent me an email that he had gotten information about our published textbooks, so I informed him he could download all of them. You asked about the DVDs; there are the softcopies of all the 140 published textbooks in two DVDs.

Khushal Asefi: Very good.

Yahya Wardak: The textbooks have been arranged according to the students' lessons semester by semester: chemistry, physics, biology, anatomy, histology and so on step by step. If a student has the DVDs, it is like he has complete medicine in his pocket or computer.

Khushal Asefi: As a next question, since diagnosis in Afghanistan is not correct, Afghans go to Pakistan for treatments; that is, Pakistan is still medical source of Afghanistan. You, I and all the people know it. What is the cause of being so? Is it because of that students study old notes in universities, always theoretically, they don't work practically, and don't get new information? A student at least should know what modern knowledge in America and the neighboring countries is. A doctor with 20 years ago studies now can't be a good one.

Yahya Wardak: You are right. As you said, it is a main factor that unluckily students of medicine, neither theoretically nor practically, are trained well. I would say that it is very important to prepare new materials for the students of first and second classes in a language and form that is known to them in order to strengthen their base theoretically. Materials in English are available on internet, but unfortunately not all the lecturers and students know English. Besides textbooks, training hospitals should be prepared for the students to practically work for three to four years beside

bed of patient and diagnose heart or pulse. The doctors this way can better be trained.

Khushal Asefi: Another good characteristic of these textbooks is that they are in Pashto, Dari and English languages; so one who knows Pashto can use the Pashto textbooks, and another whose mother tongue is Dari can use Dari. As well as, English is useful for them because they may have conferences in English in other countries or take advantage of others' experiences with English. Did you want the textbooks to be in all three languages, Pashto, Dari and English, or the authors?

Yahya Wardak: No, we have not translated the books; their authors have. There is a lecturer in Kandahar University who has written Infectious Diseases textbook in English, and we have published it. Another lecturer, for example, from Herat University has written in Dari, we have published it as well. Similarly another from Nangarhar University has written in Pashto, it has also been published. After printing, besides the related province, we send the textbooks to other provinces too. If a book on a subject is written in one province, lecturer and others of the same profession in other provinces should get awareness of it and take its advantages.

Khushal Asefi: To come to another question, I will take another textbook by your permission, for example Pediatrics volume II. How many copies of it were printed; five, hundred, or thousand? The question is that how many copies of each textbook are printed.

Yahya Wardak: This book, in your hands, has been printed in 1,000 copies.

Khushal Asefi: It is used in all universities of Afghanistan?

Yahya Wardak: Yes. And this book has 1,000 CDs, one with each copy. Some of the textbooks are given to their authors: we used to give them 50 copies, but now we give them 100 copies of their books. I should mention that we don't pay money to the authors; rather, they offer their experience of many years to the ministry for free. They intend to convey their knowledge to the people and serve their society. We printed some books in 2,000 copies with 2,000 CDs. It is my desire that each subject should have a textbook.

Khushal Asefi: How do you deliver them to all the universities?

Yahya Wardak: My office is in the Ministry of Higher Education. We are in contact with the universities. Their responsible staff or representatives come to my office, and we submit the books to them. This way we deliver the textbooks to the eight governmental medical faculties: Nangarhar, Khost, Paktia, Kandahar, Herat, Balkh, Kapisa, and Kabul.

Khushal Asefi: How about the private universities? Do their representatives come?

Yahya Wardak: Yes, we give them one or two copies of each book because they also train the doctors for the country; however, there are many private universities and are getting more and more.

Khushal Asefi: Do you give them free of charge?

Yahya Wardak: Yes. Most of them are given to the state universities. Meanwhile there are many private universities, and some of them have medical faculties. As I got information, there are twenty seven private medical faculties throughout Afghanistan.

Khushal Asefi: Excellent. Have you written anything regarding your profession?

Yahya Wardak: I have written, during studying in Germany, on public health of Afghanistan.

Khushal Asefi: Was that a master's or doctoral thesis or a book?

Yahya Wardak: Yes, that was a thesis.

Khushal Asefi: Master's or doctoral?

Yahya Wardak: I have not gotten PhD, so that was a master's degree thesis for a university I studied in; however, that was in German language. I have written on higher education; I can give you, here you are.

Khushal Asefi: Thank you. I will benefit from them. Thank you, Dr. M. Yahya Wardak for accepting our invitation. We are proud of you; the nation is proud of you for you have done a great work. In reality, it should be mentioned in the history of Afghanistan as an important phenomenon because everyone does not do so. I, as an Afghan youth, on behalf of the nation, appreciate your thoughts, ideas and motives based on which you carry out the work of publication of the textbooks. Thank you.

Yahya Wardak: Thank you. I would like to again say that the authors have done the main work; we just paved the way for their works' publication.

Khushal Asefi: Yet there is no sympathy and motive to collect the books, print them in new format and distribute to the people; this is also the great effort.

Yahya Wardak: OK. God willing, those who are in charge will pay attention to providing more new textbooks for the students of medicine and also other fields like engineering, science, and so on.

Khushal Asefi: Thank you very much.