

## **A university without a modern library is a pseudo-university**

A university without a modern library is a pseudo-university. While this statement may seem harsh, it reflects the reality of the challenges facing higher education in many parts of the world, including Kyrgyzstan. In a global academic environment where knowledge and information are constantly evolving, libraries are not just repositories of books but hubs of intellectual activity. Unfortunately, in our country, libraries often remain underfunded and underutilized, overshadowed by administrative buildings and offices that receive more attention and resources.

During my two years of study at the University of Massachusetts, I witnessed firsthand the central role that the library plays in academic life. The university's 26-story W. E. B. Du Bois Library, open 24/7, was always bustling with students and faculty, deeply engaged in their research and study. This library was not just a building filled with books—it was a vital center of learning, where modern resources and technologies were available to everyone. The atmosphere of independent learning and inquiry was palpable, with students choosing to spend long hours exploring and expanding their knowledge.

Similarly, while working as a visiting scholar at New York University, I observed a similar dedication to learning. The Bobst Library, which spans 12 floors, is a remarkable example of how a well-equipped, accessible library can serve as the backbone of a university. The president's office, located in the library, further symbolized the institution's commitment to academic pursuits and the prioritization of knowledge over administrative grandeur.

In contrast, the situation in Kyrgyzstan is disheartening. University offices and administrative buildings shine with newness and luxury, but the libraries remain modest, with limited content and resources. This isn't just an issue of infrastructure—it's a question of priorities. Building impressive offices is easy, but filling university buildings with knowledge and creating spaces where students are motivated to learn independently is far more challenging and essential.

In universities like those in the U.S., no one forces students to study—they do it voluntarily, driven by the resources and environment provided by their institutions. This is a key difference. Where modern libraries and educational resources are available, students don't need constant reminders of their educational goals.

The educational system in Kyrgyzstan needs a profound reassessment. We must make knowledge the highest priority, not the prestige of administrative buildings. This means attracting people with international experience and education who can bring new ideas and methods to the table. I have been advocating for these changes for over twenty years, but my calls have often gone unheard. Time is running out, and if we want to ensure the future success of our universities, we need to start with libraries—true centers of knowledge that make a university real and not just a facade of learning.