



June - 2012

THE STATE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Political Problems, and Future Prospects

With a Few Policy Initiatives for Literacy Expansion in India



Courtesy: Paula Bronstein

Aqil Zahirpour

VIF MONOGRAPH

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1 Master of Public Policy

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to the Vivekananda International Foundation India (VIFI), particularly Hon'ble Ajit K. Doval, the VIF Director and Brig Vinod Anand, Senior Fellow and Research Coordinator, for helping and advising him in publication of this work. The author is also thankful to the Centre for Civil Society, especially, Mr. Parth J. Shah, the CCS President and Mr. Shantanu Gupta, the Senior Advocacy Coordinator, for providing the sources dealing with the educational policy initiatives in India.

Equally indeed is the author thankful to the Willy Brandt School of Public Policy (WBSPP), and the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD) for approving his internship visit to India, and at a non-summer season which is otherwise an unusual period for scholars to embark on their practical training. The author also expresses his gratitude to Ms. Nupur Behl of the University of Delhi for her review and editorial contribution.

However, no work of this kind could have been accomplished without the moral support, and the encouragement of the author's parents, and particularly of his brother, Adil Zaaherpour who has not only been an Architect by profession, but also, an architect by shaping, and designing the author's every vision and ambition for life.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABL	Activity Based Learning
ACE	Academic Council on Education
AGEI	Afghanistan Girls' Education Initiative
AIE	Alternative and Innovative Education
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
AMDG	Afghan Millennium Development Goals
ANDS	Afghan National Development Strategy
AP	Andhra Pradesh
ASER	Assessment Survey Evaluation Research
CARE	Child & Adolescent Resources & Education
CBE	Community Based Education
CBS	Community Based School
CCS	Centre for Civil Society
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSS	Centrally Sponsored Scheme
CTD	Compilation and Translation Department
DAAD	Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst
EBB	Educationally Backward Bloc
EFA	Education For All
EGS	Education Guarantee Scheme
EL	Education Law
ELA	Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan
EMDG	Education Millennium Development Goal
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ERTV	Education Radio and Television
FDI	Department for International Development
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GE	General Education
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GGSS	Galli Galli Sim Sim
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IE	Islamic Education

IECWG	Inclusive Education Coordination Working Group
IIEP	International Institute of Educational Planning
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IP	Interim Plan
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LAND-A	Literacy and Non-formal Education Development in Afghanistan
LIFE	Literacy Initiative for Empowerment
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
MCI	Ministry of Commerce and Industries
MCN	Ministry of Counter Narcotics
Millie	Mobile and Immersive Learning for Literacy in Emerging Economies
MLSAMD	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Martyrs and Disabled
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MOWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MP	Member of Parliament
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NCT	National Capital Territory
NA	Northern Alliance
NDSA	National Disability Survey in Afghanistan
NEIP	National Education Interim Plan
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NESP	National Education Strategic Plan
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NPNSPE	National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education
NRVA	National Risk Vulnerability Assessment
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
NTEA	National Teacher Education Academy
OLPC	One Laptop Per Child
PACE-A	Partnership Advancing Community-based Education in Afghanistan
PED	Provincial Education Department
PERE	Public Expenditure Review of Education
PLP	Performance Linked Pay

PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PSE	Pre School Education
PTA	Parent Teachers Association
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
SMC	School Management Committee
SS	Security Shuras
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
TI	Transparency International
ITCPI	Transparency International Corruption Perception Index
TTC	Teacher Training Centre/College
TVET	Technical, and Vocational Education Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNO	United Nations Organization
UP	Utter Pradesh
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VIF	Vivekananda International Foundation
WB	World Bank
WBSPP	Willy Brandt School of Public Policy
WFP	World Food Programme

PREFACE

Many successive regimes and governments in Kabul have historically, left the Afghan education sector in pandemonium, and prone to misuse. However, upon the collapse of the Taliban extremist regime, the new government committed itself to a broader policy to fill in the gaps and address the challenges inflicted by the past, particularly, the internecine conflict, and the reign of the Taliban. Girls, who had suffered the most, resumed their education, and many other necessary measures, such as adoption of a new Education Law, and development of various strategies for rectification of the hardships were taken. Over a period of time, the number of educational institutions, literacy rate, and level of human capital and development as everything else, changed. The extent and the quality of change however, moved in accordance with the level of the security conditions prevailing for over a decade or so.

With less than a million students in 2001, the schools have now been swarming with over an eight-fold increase across the country. In a span of ten years, over 9,000 new schools have been established increasing the number from 3664 in 2002 to 14,465 in 2011.² However, this fact demonstrates merely the quantitative aspect of the development. The qualitative one, in tandem with further description of the former, will be examined in this paper. It is nevertheless, worth noting that in spite of the rapid exponential change, around 4.2 million school-age children are out of reach of education.³ Even those, who are in the reach are said to suffer either from inadequate learning resources, or unqualified teachers, insecure environment, and from the problems of schools' remote locations. More so, the female students constitute the most vulnerable section in these respects.

Considering the exorbitant amount of money spent on the public education sector, particularly on the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, it would be useful to study this national dimension meticulously. The Government of Afghanistan (GoA), along with the international aid agencies have spent millions on schools, and other educational institutions, and confining our focus on this very sector, would therefore, be worthwhile.

With the new Education Law in 2008, Afghanistan added more to its atmosphere of providing education freely and inclusively. But, despite such rigorous efforts towards development,

2. Mohamed Salim Hayran, A Study of Afghanistan ICT in Education Regional Conference on Promotion of Good Practices in ICT for Education in Central and Western Asia Region (Ministry of Education, 2011), <http://english.moe.gov.af/attachments/084_Afghanistan%20ICT%20Study%20Report.pdf> [accessed 20 May 2012].

3. Ibid., online.

political and social problems have persisted and have since been playing an obstructive role in moving towards a fully democratized educational environment.

Beginning from 2006, the security situation, in major areas of South and South eastern parts of the country deteriorated. The unprecedented deterioration in security situation impacted the education sector adversely. Threats were issued to parents to stop sending their children to school. Many students and teachers lost their lives, and many educational institutions were shut, mostly between 2006 and 2009, and some, in recent times (see Chapter III for details).

How and why, the security situation deteriorated after a successful installation of a committed government, remains a question that impinges on every concerned individual's psyche. Hence, there is a need to analyse the problem based on Afghanistan's political situation. Meanwhile, for the purpose of encouraging the governmental institutions, aid agencies, donor countries, more importantly, the entrepreneurs, and the citizens of Afghanistan themselves for involvement in education development, a few educational policy initiatives have been picked from India which could be of use for improving Afghan education sector. The discussed policy initiatives are sample studies, and are expected to create a sense of motivation for creativity and innovation for the readers concerned when it comes to dealing with the enhancement of literacy in a war weary country such as Afghanistan.

June 2012

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PURPOSE

Afghanistan's Education Millennium Development Goals (EMDG) have envisioned a 50 percent literacy rate by 2015, and 100 percent by 2020. The EMDG document envisions all Afghan children, boys and girls to be able to complete a full course of primary schooling by 2020. To reach this goal, the MoE has aimed at a net enrolment rate of at least, 75 percent for boys and 60 percent for girls by 2014.

The National Educational Strategic Plan I (NESP-I 2006-2010) followed by (NESP II, 2010-2014) was a starting point to aim at the strategic development of the sector leading to setting more goals as above. With an overall aim to uplift the capacity of the administrative staff as well as the scope and the quality of education, hundreds of educational institutions ranging from primary to tertiary levels were given the space to function. New methods of imparting education such as exercises with workbooks, and conducting unique class seminars were born in mind and put in practice that helped bear some fruitful results.

However, further necessary steps are needed as there is much more to be done. The main objective is to see Afghanistan as any other prospective country, prosper with inclusive literacy. This cannot be achieved over night. Neither can it be enjoyed by setting mere goals, and keeping oneself aside. It can instead, be obtained through a long term process that too accompanied with an undeterred, and consistent effort. Moreover, it is rare and challenging to meet the target without support from the public. Participation of every stake-holder including ordinary citizens is therefore needed for a prosperous and sound existence of a society. Thus, the vision of EMDGP to ensure 50 percent literacy rate by 2015, or 100 percent by 2020 would remain a distant possibility if the public itself does not contribute. However, the government has the responsibility to lay the groundwork for the society to help social entrepreneurs and encourage civil society forums to function in conjunction with the government, and the other organs concerned, to be able to successfully achieve the targets/goals set out in the NESPs.

This paper is written in light of the above observation, with a purpose to consider education as one of the most important pillars of the society. It considers the involvement of all stakeholders, particularly of the citizens themselves as imperative to help achieve the set goals. It therefore, draws a clear description of the history, political problems, and the current status of the education sector in Afghanistan, and gives the social entrepreneurs the hand to track the very current position of the sector for future precautions. The paper however, excludes its focus from the tertiary or above bachelor's level of education. It confines itself to the studies of

schooling including grade 14 of technical and teachers' training only because, these levels constitute the base for a society to go forward with an effective higher level of studies.

This work thus, aims at looking at the existing educational scenario at mentioned levels from close quarters, and offers a historical account of the same in Afghanistan. It consists of four chapters that constitute two different, yet very much inter-related parts. The first part entails the initial three chapters that aim at drawing as mentioned earlier, a picture of Afghanistan's history of education, its political problems, present status, the achievements, and the challenges, while the second part which only covers chapter four, will put forth some suggestions, and the way forward for Afghanistan. By drawing some sample policy initiatives from India, we will encourage the entrepreneurs, and the adherents of education sector to take part in a sound literacy campaign and educational policy development.

It is worth noting that, the sample policy initiatives laid herein are not considered as fixed and fit cases for every situation, yet their presentation may be of great help for generating new ideas. In other words, some of the policies, or initiatives practised in India may have already in some form, been in place in Afghanistan or elsewhere, or may not even be appropriate in the Afghan environment as many social and cultural contexts in these two countries differ. But based on the notion that ideas beget better ideas, the description of each initiative will play its respective role, and importance. With the due help of the sources in India, the situation of some educational policy initiatives have been carefully read and herewith included.

CHAPTER I

Education in Afghanistan: Historical Perspective

Afghanistan has been a crossroad of civilizations, and an abode of people of different origins, where art, sciences, and literature have flourished. Written languages existed for thousands of years, and poetry stood as the country's spiritual asset encapsulating within it, notions of love, aspirations, and wisdom. Likewise, "Islam came to Afghanistan during the seventh century and ever since it has provided the spiritual, philosophical and cultural context for the Afghan people. Islamic tradition permeated every aspect of the Afghan society and way of life. Religious leaders have since been able to influence the political, social, cultural life of the community. Thus, educational development during much of the twentieth century reflected the religious and traditional nature of the society. The nature and form of education and its expansion have also been influenced by the changing political context in the country and by the social and economic policies of successive regimes and governments, as well as by parents' aspirations for the education of their children".⁴

Being a cradle of ancient civilizations, the country has thus witnessed great and flourishing eras of learning and enlightenment. Its inhabitants have contributed immensely to the enrichment of the culture of their region. Many centres of learning were established in cities such as Balkh, Herat, and Ghazni that produced great scholars, philosophers, and scientists who served the region, and the world. For instance, the medical treatise written by Ibn Sina Balkhi (Vicenna) in 10th century was adopted as part of the academic curriculum of the European Universities until the end of 19th century.⁵

Afghanistan has also enjoyed a plethora of eminent poets and philosophers such as Abu Rayhan Biruni (10th century), Hakim Sanai (11th century), Khwaja Abdullah Ansari, and Maulana Jalaludin Balkhi/Rumi (13th century), and many others whose works are believed to have enriched human thought and civilization. Said Jamaludin Afghani, an erudite political philosopher of the nineteenth century was a paladin of knowledge. Having a number of disciples, he travelled in Asia, Africa, and Europe and expounded the nexus between Islam, Science and Development.⁶

4 Saif R. Samadi, Education and Afghan Society in the Twentieth Century, (UNESCO, Paris 2001)

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

Formal Education in the 20th Century

Historically, two systems of education are said to have outlined the academic structure in Afghanistan; the traditional and the modern one. The former was the set of religious education taught in the mosques and at home. This revolved around variegated disciplines of reading the Holy Quran, learning philosophy, ethics, and writing arithmetic. The latter however was introduced in the beginning of 1900s with the aim of developing global expediency. This juxtaposition of the traditionalist mode of instruction with the more modern way of learning was considered beneficial for the growth of the ethical and secular prudence of an individual.

The establishment of the first secondary school named Habibia in Kabul in 1903 marked the beginning of modern education in the country. A Board of Education to approve the school curriculum and textbooks, and to supervise education was set up, and upon the independence of Afghanistan in 1919, King Amanullah (1919-1929) gave high priority to the development of the sector. A Minister of Education was appointed for the first time in 1922, and in the course of time, a number of primary and secondary schools including the first high school for girls, and an adult education centre for women, and many other vocational institutions in agriculture, art, and crafts, and public administration were created. Cultural relations with foreign countries, such as Germany, France, and Turkey were established, and scholarships for Afghan students were made available.⁷

Education in that era was formally placed as a literacy campaign and free of charge for all. Children, adults – both men and women were urged to take part. Additionally, King Amanullah initiated many other modern social reforms such as adopting solar calendar, approving western sartorial, discouraging the veiling and seclusion of women, introducing secular education etc. His notion of modernity was however, considered heretic, unwelcome largely by rural areas causing the collapse of his reign. The female education was thus, abated for a while, and the concept of burka veiling re-emerged.

Education Policy of 1930s

Following the collapse of the King Amanullah's rule, trends in education had become tortuous and unpredictable, particularly for women as they had faced challenges for seeking formal education. Nevertheless, in 1930s, the education system revived to appropriate certain new productive norms. In addition to the first modern institution of higher education, faculty of Medicine (1932) in Kabul, a number of other secondary schools, coupled with more

7 Saif. R. Samadi (Paris, 2001).

educational institutions including Kabul University (1946) were established, and traditional religious centres were incorporated into formal structures⁸

In 1931, a constitution was promulgated, Articles 20 and 22 of which made primary education compulsory for all Afghan children, and held the government responsible for the supervision of educational institutions. Later in 1948, a new Constitution made primary education compulsory for every boy and girl, and the state reserved the right for the administration of all educational institutions from primary to university level. In 1964, democratic reform was adopted by appointing an elected House and Senate, executive and judicial branches in the context of constitutional monarchy. Article 35 of the new constitution declared education as the right of every Afghan individual. The constitution declared the primary education to be free as it was, it issued an edict for elements of patriotism, loyalty to the crown, and equality of education to proffer. It also permitted foreign institutions to establish their schools in the country⁹

Policy of the First Republic 1970-78

The Monarchy of King Zahir was overthrown by his cousin, Mohammad Daoud in 1973, and following the establishment of the Republic of Afghanistan, a new constitution was charted in 1976, the fundamental objective of which was to develop free general secondary, vocational and higher education, which was inspired by the education law of 1964 but the earlier doctrine expostulating loyalty to the crown in education curricula was banned.¹⁰

Policy of the Democratic Republic 1978-92

In April 1978, Marxist zealots executed Mohammad Daoud, (the first president of Afghanistan) along with his family, and established the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. The new regime aimed at transforming the Afghan society into a modernized one. Conversely, the people of Afghanistan, particularly in rural areas, favoured adherence to the traditional norms and considered it a threat to Islam. They consequently, did not stand aloof and led a revolt. When the revolt followed the communist coup, USSR invaded the country in the following year and installed a stronger puppet regime. The new regime adopted educational reforms that were influenced by the ideas of communism.¹¹ The government formulated an education policy,

8 Saif R. Samadi, (Paris, 2001)

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Pia Karlson, and Amir Mansory, Islamic and Modern Education in Afghanistan - Conflictual or Complementary? (Stockholm Univeristy, no date).

which adapted to the education system to the Soviet model, and instituted national literacy campaign throughout the country. It also instituted the medium of instruction in the mother tongue of the minorities besides, mandating Dari and Pashto with some influence of Russian and English. "Some textbooks were changed to include the occupational needs and age-related interests of participants in the literacy campaign. Literacy courses for both youth and adults, male and female, were established in the capital and in the provinces. Every year, 18,000 persons were said to have learned how to read and write"¹² but with a range of criticism from the public for practising Soviet ideology.

The teaching and learning were however, limited to the urban areas as the period was accompanied with severe conflict that caused more than 870,000 Afghans death, three million maimed and wounded, 1.2 millions disabled, a million internally displaced, and over five million forced to flee the country. More than half of the country's irrigation systems were destroyed, and agricultural production just fell.¹³ This was the most crucial damage inflicted upon the education sector that put the literacy developmental efforts, if not totally obliterated, at least in abeyance.

The Islamic State 1992-96

The struggle against Russian presence in Afghanistan persisted until the Soviet troops withdrew in 1989. Nevertheless, the fight continued until Najibullah's government collapsed (1986-1992). The Islamic State was established in 1992, but coincided with the disunity as the civil war (1992-1996) among the very same Mujahedin groups who fought Russians broke out. The education system was consequently in shambles; the education situation got compounded with the persistence of the internecine conflict.

The government of the Islamic State did not have a national education policy. It was, however, clear that the cultural aspects of educational programmes would be developed, and any material reflecting the communist ideology would be removed. The Islamic state emphasized on the eradication of illiteracy, and providing training of manpower for reconstruction of the country. It is nevertheless, noteworthy that the last moments of the communist regime had brought the education curriculum a bit closer to adapt to the culture and tradition of Afghanistan.¹⁴

12 Torpekai Sultani, *The Current Situation of Basic Education in Afghanistan* (Japan, no date).

13 Oxfam International, *The Cost of War: Afghan Experiences of Conflict, 1978 – 2009* (Afghanistan, 2009).

14 Saif R. Samadi, (Paris 2001)

The Taliban Emirate 1996-2001

The Taliban, who until their fall (late 2001) ruled nearly 90 percent of Afghanistan, imposed the darkest era for the education sector of the country. They enforced a strict rule debarring women from education and confining the phenomenon for men within the realms of their own version of Islam. This, primarily marked their educational agenda, and their regime proved to be the most disastrous period ever, particularly for women. “The impact on women, especially in urban areas, was severe: 81% of women surveyed in Kabul reported a decline in their mental condition, 42% met the conditions for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and 21% said that they 'quite often' or 'very often' had suicidal thoughts”.¹⁵ There was no expectation whatsoever of their educational development at all.

Although education for girls in Afghanistan, has remained a sensitive political and religious issue for many years as many religious and tribal leaders considered it unnecessary, and a cultural threat to themselves and their society, yet the treatment of women and their regress at the hands of the Taliban (1996-2001) was draconian, something which was never witnessed before. The Taliban reign however, did not last beyond 2001. It collapsed with the launch of the U.S. led Operation Enduring Freedom, in tandem with its international allies, and the Northern Alliance (NA), the most capable Afghan enemy of the Taliban.

Conclusion

Afghanistan is one of the many developing countries; that ranks the poorest in terms of modern education enrolment and adult literacy. Retrospectively, the intellectual development of the country was in a static condition for a while and because of political changes the development of education sector had been badly hampered. Historically, the country's educational curricula have been vulnerable to changes based on the changing regimes, and their idiosyncrasies. In 1930s and 1940s for example “[...] the main political concern of the textbooks was developing reverence for the royal family, and a number of national heroes”.¹⁶

The first President, Mohammad Dauod (1973 – 1978) for instance, adopted a system in which he initiated instructing the children the geographic boundaries of Pashtunistan. “Characteristically in the 1970s, Pashtunistan was described as if it was a de jure state; the language of [its] people was described as the same as that of Afghans”.¹⁷ Likewise, the communist regime (1978 - 1992) imparted students a communist jargon viz a vie revolution,

¹⁵ Oxfam International, (Afghanistan, 2009).

¹⁶ Dr. Antonio Giustozzi, Nation Building Is Not for All, The Politics of Education in Afghanistan (AAN 2010).

¹⁷ Ibid.

people's democracy, and rights of the workers, and some issues that contradicted the Islamic notions.

When Afghanistan had become a front line state in the cold war, the political groups had built their own schools inside and outside the country, mostly in refugee camps through the international aid and assistance. They nurtured and catered to the political/economic principles which interested their agenda.¹⁸ School books were prepared by Mujahidin in conjunction with the University of Nebraska, with the USAID funds that contained militarized and ideological languages. In arithmetic exercises for example, the undertones of violence against Russians were evident and could be very much sensed. It would for example go, 'if there are eight Soviet soldiers and you kill two, how many are left? These materials were however soon taken out from the books after the UNO and other NGOs lobbied¹⁹ but the religious and other military involvement in the academics, nevertheless remained the same.

Reflecting on the historical situation of education in Afghanistan during the twentieth century, the period 1956 and 1973 was marked as a golden chance for not only a better literacy enhancement, and quality education, but also, an overall development, as the country fairly enjoyed a peaceful political condition. Compared with the situation, and the contribution of the UNO's agencies to education, the pace of development in this sector was slow. In a nutshell however, the Afghanistan of twentieth century witnessed a tortuous trend of schooling and learning, yet it was able to survive pitfalls, and continue to exist and expand.

18 Jeaniene Spink, Education, Reconstruction, and Statebuilding in Afghanistan (Journal, no date), <<http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/EducationSupplement/09.pdf>> [accessed 20 May 2012].

19 Niloufar Pourzand, Education in Afghanistan, A Gendered Ideological Terrain (Journal, 2004) <<http://www.wluml.org/sites/wluml.org/files/import/english/pubs/pdf/wsf/03.pdf>> [accessed 20 May 2012].

CHAPTER II

Afghanistan in the 21st Century: Education Background

The advent of the 21st century marked a unique era for Afghanistan. Presumably, an end was put to the wearisome conflict in late 2001, and a new chapter full of unprecedented and complicated pages was opened. Surviving every hardship in the last moments of the 20th century, the education sector of the country, like the other sectors, became the focal point of the international communities and aid agencies. In other words, following the immediate installation of the new government in 2002, high priority was given to the education sector. Flow of funding and strategic planning was initiated all over the system. However, the country's past legacy of violence had left nearly an indelible impact, making extant scenarios incredulous, as the infrastructure was torn apart. Seventy percent of schools were reported to have undergone severe or partial damage, there was fragmentation in the society, disruption in commerce, and fragility in social fabric, poverty and lack of basic care in health and social sector; these were among the many other pressing problems.

In addition, millions of Afghans were killed, millions displaced, and millions more deprived of literacy. Even today, the living standard is challenging. “[...] Nearly half of the population lives below the poverty line, more than a quarter of a million individuals remain displaced inside the country, and nearly three million remain in Pakistan and Iran”.²⁰ Moreover, the agricultural production is low, the administrative infrastructure has almost broken down, corruption in the system is as rampant as it sounds, and security in many rural areas, has remained volatile to date.

Despite these facts, the education sector has witnessed some positive change. The MoE accompanied with other NGOs and aid agencies, started a mission to bring the sector to normalcy, and to carry it forward towards the path of development. UNICEF, and the MoE, with the support of other related agencies for example, implemented 'Back to School' campaign in 2002. Gradually, schools started swarming with thousands of students. UNICEF delivered more than 7,000 tons of learning materials such as textbooks, notebooks, pencils, blackboards, chalks, school bags, tents, and other teaching and learning materials. According to the US State Department International Programmes Section, four million textbooks were parcelled across Afghanistan.²¹ In addition to these materials, the World Food Programme

20 Oxfam International, (Afghanistan, 2009).

21 Torpekai Sultani, The Current Situation of Basic Education in Afghanistan (No date),
<http://www.criced.tsukuba.ac.jp/pdf/04_Afghanistan_Sultani.pdf> [accessed 20 May 2012].

(WFP) distributed food stuff to some of the students with the objective of encouraging the academic participation of every family, and child. Consequently, there was a drastic change in the number of children going to school. This change, however, levied more burden on the involved agencies that engendered the need for more serious initiatives to ensure success in the completion of the various projects pertaining to the sector. Laying down a fresh academic curriculum became inevitable. The MoE, along with UNICEF, and UNESCO became more involved on the curriculum development. The curriculum was planned, and the Compilation & Translation Department (CTD) of the MoE, was given the onus of dealing with these modifications. In early 2003, the Academic Council on Education (ACE) was entrusted to revise and finalize it. The document came into effect in June the same year, but was said to have contained objectives of a new education policy, rather than an outline of curriculum.²² It was nevertheless considered a good start for the years to come.

Current Status

The first comprehensive school survey was carried out by the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) in 2007, and was further updated in 2008. The enactment of a new Education Law (EL) for Afghanistan coincided with the survey update, and was inspired by the provisions of articles 17, 43, 44, 45, and 47 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.²³ The Education Law was adopted in 2008, which has 11 chapters and 52 articles (see appendix I).

Studying the period under the Taliban rule, an incomparable change has now been actuated in the education sector. Starting from 2002, the country enjoyed a gradual increase in students' ratio. In 2005, nearly five million students were enrolled in grade 1 to 12, which was more than twice the number of children in 2002. From less than a million in 2001, the students numbered to over 7.3 million in 2010/11. More than 9,000 new schools have been established to facilitate access to education.²⁴ Enrolment in technical and vocational education has increased from nearly 9,000 (2006) to 16,000 in 2008. Similarly, other categories of education met with remarkable change.²⁵ However, despite this progress, Afghanistan still has 4.5 million children out of the reach of school.²⁶ According to the MoE Security Department, 481 schools

22 Yumiko Ono, et al., Supporting Teachers to Educate Marginalized Children: Teachers and Teacher Education in Afghanistan (2007)

23 Ministry of Education, The Development of Education, (National Report 2008), <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/afghanistan_NR08.pdf> [accessed 20 May 2012].

24 MoE Afghanistan, Education for All Global Monitoring Report (Kabul, 2011).

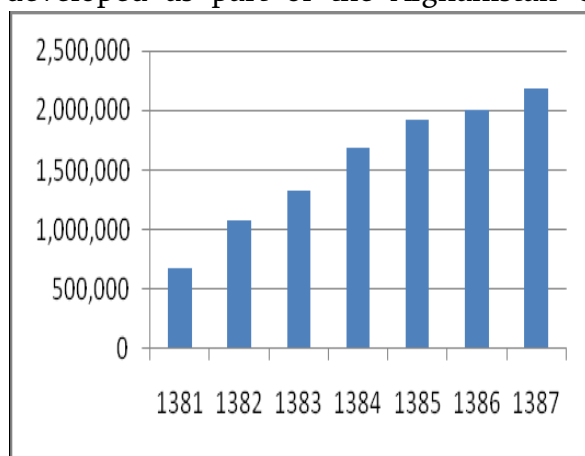
25 MoE (National Report, 2008).

26 MoE, EFA Global Monitoring Report of (2011).

were either closed or burned by the insurgents in 2009, and consequently 300,000 children have lost access to education.²⁷

Girls' Education

Taking cue from the catastrophic history of women, particularly during the Taliban reign as discussed, the MoE seems to have given paramount importance to the education for girls. “Public awareness activities have been conducted through seminars, posters, and the media to encourage girls’ education. A communication strategy on girls’ education is also being developed as part of the Afghanistan Girls’ Education Initiative (AGEI). According to the



Ministry statistics, the number of girls enrolled has increased from 674,000 in 1381/2002 to around 2.2 million in 2008 [as shown in the figure I] but 60% of girls are still out of school. The gender parity index varies from province to province. The status of girls’ education is better in the provinces of Badakhshan and Herat (8 girls to 10 boys). It is the worst in the provinces of Zabul, Uruzgan and Helmand (1 girl to 10 boys). [...] girls’ education suffers the most in insecure provinces”.²⁸

Fig. I. Courtesy: MoE Statistics (2008)²⁹

Private and Cross Border Schools

“Regulations on private schools have been developed and ratified. So far, 159 private schools have been established and 37,180 students are enrolled. A private and cross border schools unit has been established to facilitate the process. In addition, 153 cross border schools in Iran and 338 schools in Pakistan have been registered with the Ministry [of Education] and 131,240 students in those schools are using the Ministry’s curriculum”.³⁰

Inclusive Education

It was estimated in the 2006 National Disability Survey in Afghanistan (NDSA) that 37.5 percent of children from age 7 to 13 were excluded from formal schooling for reasons such as

27 MoE (National Report 2008).

28 Ministry of Education, National Education Strategic Plan, NESP II (Kabul 2010 - 2014).

29 The dates in fig. 1 demonstrate solar system, 1387 of which is equivalent to 2008.

30 Ministry of Education, NESP II (Kabul 2010 – 2014).

disability, vulnerability of the parents, or family economic barriers. The report also showed that only 32 percent of the children with disabilities aged between 7 and 13 were enrolled in formal schools.

“Following the 48th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) in November 2008, the MoE committed to support inclusive and child friendly environments for all children. The Ministry of Education has [thus] developed a Road Map towards Inclusion in Afghanistan in collaboration with members of the Inclusive Education Coordination Working Group (IECWG).”³¹

Moreover, attempts have been made to rehabilitate the physically and emotionally displaced citizens to a formalized system of learning. Clearly, the pernicious effects of the war in Afghanistan are reminiscent today in the forms of poverty and unemployment. These factors have been the compelling causes for the subjection of the Afghan youth to hopelessness, narcotics, and many other physical and mental aberrations. Hence, The Inclusive Education programme of the MoE is making efforts to encourage participation of these affected groups including even those children belonging to parents who had taken political sides during the civil war. The programme ensures their right to education under the chamber of the new constitution, and education law.

Right now, “there is only one school in Afghanistan (in Kabul) for the students with visual impairments. The school is administered by the Ministry of Education that accommodates 150 students. There are four schools for students with hearing impairments (two in Herat, one in Kabul and one in Jalalabad) accommodating 900 students in total. The Ministry of Education, with support from the UN agencies and international organizations, is running 29 pilot general schools in Kabul for inclusive education (where children with disabilities and without disabilities are learning together). More than 2,600 children with disabilities (mostly with hearing and visual impairments) are learning in inclusive education pilot schools throughout the country”.³²

These steps have however, been pared to an extent because of the shortage of resources. There has been a shortage of trained pedagogues in the inclusive education and a shortage of learning sources, and materials for students with special educational needs. These are considered as the serious hindrances in the development of inclusive section in the country.

31 Ministry of Education, NESP II (Kabul 2010 – 2014).

32 Ibid.

Distance Education

The Ministry of Education also disseminates educational programmes for teachers, children, and adult learners through its Education Radio and Television (ERTV) section. The programmes include “domestic affairs”, “School Time”, “Learn and Teach”, and “Voice of Education”. The Education TV is broadcast for six hours daily in Kabul, while the educational radio has round-the-clock programmes. The MoE has planned to expand its programmes to all provinces. It has also decided to increase the time of the programme to 18 hours, and cover Technical Education, and Vocational Training (TEVT), Islamic Education, pre-schooling etc. by 2014.³³

Levels of Public Education

Basics, Intermediate, Secondary, and Technical

There are four levels of education for schooling, which serve as the very kernel of the entire educational operation in Afghanistan. Although, these have existed in the country prior to the newly designed developmental schemes, yet their examination herein is important for a fair understanding of the education system in Afghanistan. These levels of school education comprise of Pre-Primary, Primary, Junior Secondary, and Upper Secondary. The primary starts after kindergarten, from grade first to grade sixth. The junior secondary starts from grade seventh and ends at ninth, and likewise, the upper secondary starts from grade tenth and ends in twelfth. The whole system however can be summarized as done in Education Law, into two major levels- intermediate or basic level (from grade one to nine), and secondary level (from grade nine to twelve). From grade twelve to fourteen it comes to deal with the category of teachers' training, and or technical studies. However, the improvisation in the pre-primary education level had been opaque, and so, this level of education had been confined to learning at mosques; further a limited number of pre-schools had existed since long. Only recently, has the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) expanded its pre-schooling programmes to be structured within the formal system.

Categories of Education

Public Education in Afghanistan is divided into five categories: General Education (GE), Islamic Education (IE), Teachers' Training (TT), and Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET). In addition, Community-based (CBE), and Private Education, are also parts of the

³³ Ibid.

Afghanistan Education Sector that may literally include systems from the aforementioned schools.³⁴

The Ministry of Education (MoE) provides formal General Education, Islamic Education, as well as Technical and Vocational Training, and Community Literacy Programmes through its 34 Provincial Education Departments. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Martyrs and Disabled (MLSAMD) is responsible for skill development, labour, kindergartens, orphanage, and welfare of the disabled and the families of martyrs.³⁵ The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) also primarily plays a coordinating role across government to promote parity, equity and equality at all levels of education for females. The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) is responsible for tertiary level of studies which is not an issue of focus in this paper.

According to the EMIS summary report of 2009/10, there are around 6,693,966 students in all categories of schools, of which 4,240,415 are males and 2,453,551 are female students. Among all categories, the General education has the largest number of students covering 97% of the total number. There are over 12081 schools, of which 94 percent are for General Education (GE) and 4 percent for the Islamic Education (IE). Of over 12081 schools, 82 percent belong to the rural areas, and 17 percent to the Urban areas. The General Education and the Islamic Education schools have thicker concentration in the rural areas with 83 percent, and 67 percent respectively. Conversely, the Teacher Training Centres/Colleges (TTCs) and Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) schools (71 percent) are mostly concentrated in urban areas. The problems of dilapidated infrastructure are nevertheless rampant, as out of 12081³⁶ schools, 68 percent do not have surrounding walls, and 15 percent are in need of severe rehabilitation.

General Education (GE)

The General Education as mentioned constitutes the largest category in the country. This category covers the grades from one to twelve, and sometimes until grade ten as students may happen to opt for technical or teachers' training which can often admit students from grade 10.

According to a latest report, there are now 14,465 schools for general education.³⁷ According to the EMIS report of 2009, of 12081 schools, 94 percent are for General Education, with 45

34 EMIS Afghanistan, 2009/10 Summary Report of Education Situation, (Kabul 2010).

35 Ministry of Education, Afghanistan 2011 - 2013 National Education Interim Plan (Kabul 2011).

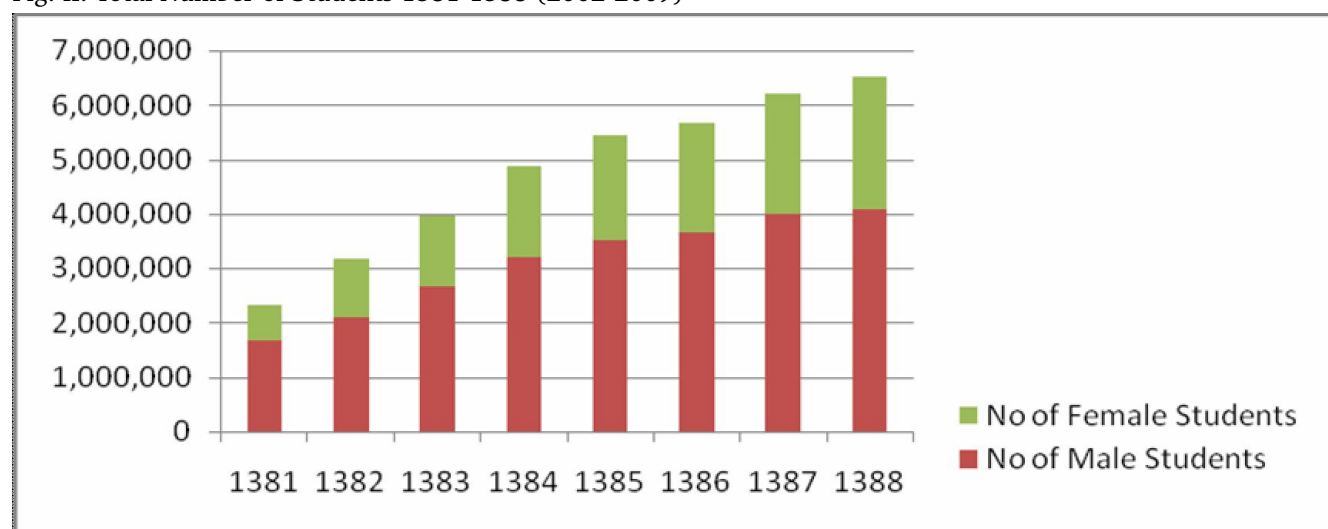
36 Based on Education Regional Conference on Promotion of Good Practices in ICT for Education in Central and Western Asia Region (Ministry of Education, 2011), the number increased to 14,465 by 2011.

37 Mohamed Salim Hayran, (Ministry of Education, 2011),

percent for the Primary, 32 percent for the Lower Secondary, and 24 percent for the Upper Secondary. In these schools, there are in total, 6,504,715 students, of which 62.75 percent are male and 37.25 percent are female students. 75 percent in the Primary, 19 percent in the Lower Secondary, and 6 percent are in the Higher Secondary level.³⁸

Also, the number of students enrolled in general education has increased from 2.3 million in 2002 to 6.5 million in 2009, out of which 4.1 million constituted girls, and 2.4 million boys. The figure ii is although an update from 2009, it will yet help us in the articulation of the pace of change that took place in the last years.

Fig. II. Total Number of Students 1381-1388 (2002-2009)



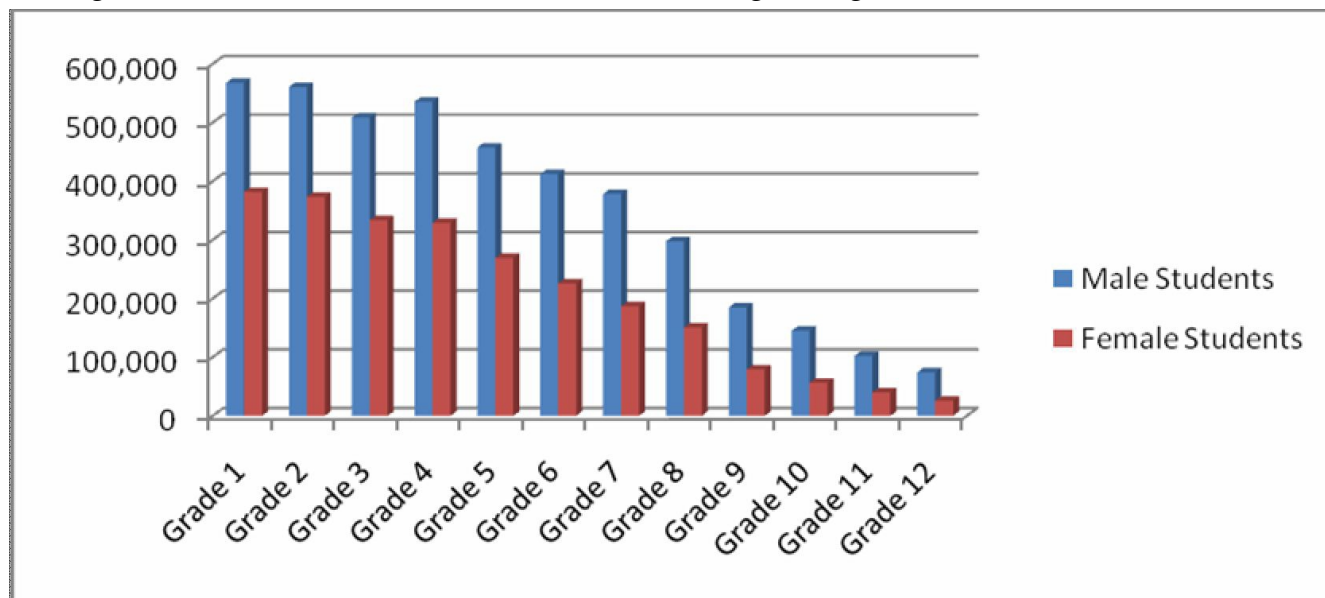
Courtesy: MoE EMIS Directorate, 1388 (2009)³⁹

The net enrolment rates (NER) in basic education account 68 percent for boys, and 44 percent for girls, while gross enrolment (GER) rates for the same were estimated at 82 percent for boys, and 52 percent for girls in 2009.

38 EMIS Afghanistan, Summary Report of Education Situation (2009/10).

39 MoE Afghanistan, National Education Interim Plan 2011-2013 (Quoted, 2011).

The figure III, shows the number of students declining after grade 5.



Courtesy: MoE, EMIS Directorate 2009

The Ministry of Education has envisioned to increase the number of schools up to 16,500, to get 50 percent of the general schools equipped with science and mathematics kits, and 30 percent with computer labs by 2014.⁴⁰

Teachers' Training Centre/College (TTC)

The Teachers' training level of education starts from grade tenth and ends in grade fourteenth. The TTCs can usually admit secondary school graduates for two years after completion of the twelfth grade. There are 42 Teacher Training Centres 71 percent of which are located in urban and 17 percent in rural areas. Of 34,020 students 59.65 percent are male and 40.35 percent are female students. 11 percent of their teachers have completed grade twelve, 6 percent grade fourteen, 3 percent are undergraduates, and few have doctorate degrees.⁴¹ Nonetheless, the teachers are said to receive low level of salaries which is known as a hindrance to the development of human resource in the realm of teaching. Their teaching capacity and quality are sometimes susceptible to censure.

Although, the National Teacher Education Academy (NTEA) was established in 2007 to train teachers educators in order to uplift the quality of teaching, yet the Academy does not, carry well developed curriculum and is currently dependent on foreign educators. NESP II has

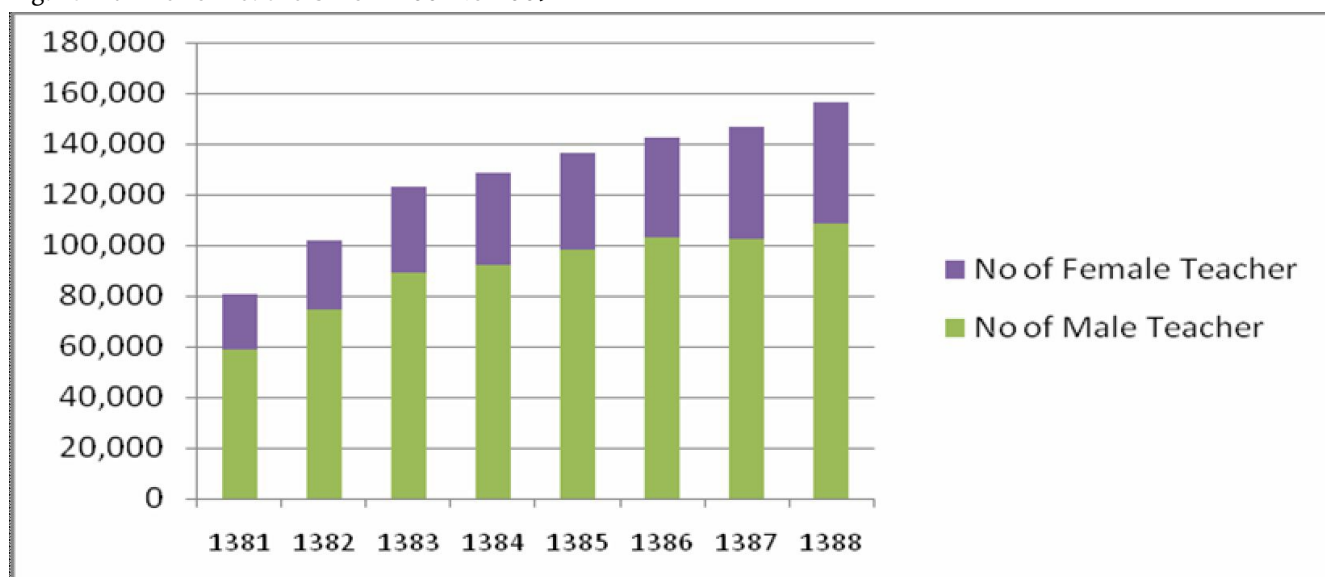
⁴⁰ Ministry of Education, NESP II (2010 – 2014), p-94.

⁴¹ Ibid., p-94

decided to train 50,000 grade 12 graduates (45% of whom will be women from the districts where need for professional teachers are sensed more by the end of 2014. It envisions at least 80 percent of the teachers to have passed the national competency test.⁴²

The figure IV, shows an increase in the number of teachers. It has doubled to about 165000 with 31% of females.

Fig. IV Number of Teachers from 2002 to 2009



Courtesy: EMIS Directorate 2009

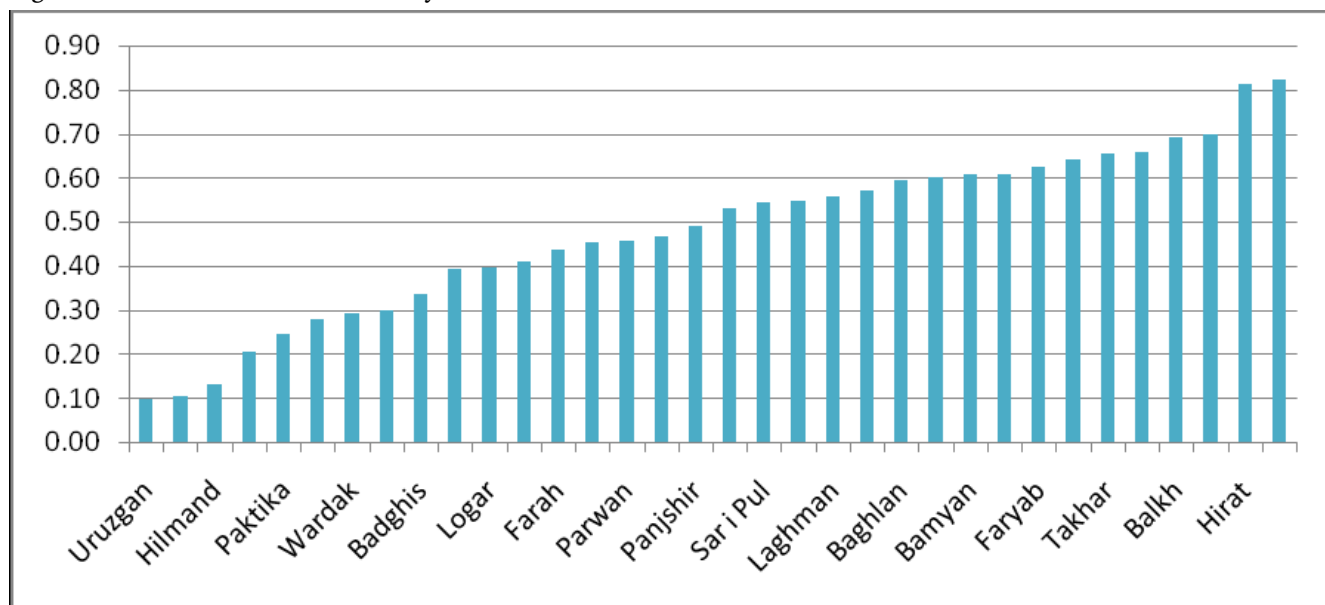
However, the percentage of female teachers varies from province to province. Female instructors constitute only 3 percent of teachers in Paktika, Uruzgan, and Zabul provinces, whereas in Kabul and Balkh Provinces they constitute 60 percent, and 49 percent respectively. Though the number of teachers has increased, yet some objectives set in the NESP I (2006 to 2010) have been reported unachieved.⁴³

42 Ministry of Education, NESPII.

43 Ibid.

Figure V. shows the variance in the number of female teachers in provinces.

Fig. v Number of Female Teachers by Province



Courtesy: MoE Statistics 2008

The MoE has aimed to equip 30 percent of TTCs with computer labs by 2014.⁴⁴

Islamic Education (IE)

The Islamic formal education starts from grade ten to the end of grade fourteen. In *Darulhefazes*⁴⁵, it however starts from grade one to the end of grade twelve. Afghanistan's *madrassas* have served multiple purposes such as imparting basic education, and advanced learning in Islamic studies, and producing many of Afghanistan's political leaders.⁴⁶

There are 518 Islamic Education schools in Afghanistan. 26 percent of them are situated in urban, and 67% are in rural areas. They entail 136,935 students, of which 89.93% are male and 10.07% are female students. Of the 518 schools, 89 percent have school building information that informs about 58 percent to have their own building and 39 percent with out their own buildings.⁴⁷

44 Ibid. p. 94.

45 Darulhefazes, and madrasas refer to Islamic Studies Centres.

46 Ministry of Education, Education Sector for Afghanistan National Strategic Development (Kabul, 2007).

47 Ibid.

The *Madrassas* prefer to admit students for Islamic education from grade 7 onward. In places where general education schools do not function, *madrassas* may take students from grade 1 especially where general studies are implemented until grade 6.

The MoE has planned to increase the number of students in Islamic schools and *Dar-ul-Ulums* to 200,000 with a 40 percent of female students. It has also planned to expand the number of schools to 1,000, and equip 50 percent of schools with science and mathematics kits by 2014.⁴⁸

Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET)

The Technical education starts from grade ten and ends in grade fourteen. Short term courses in this area are also provided by the MoE. In a war torn country like Afghanistan, TVET is said to be badly needed as it helps in poverty alleviation. There is a severe demand for technical labour in the market. The government is thus required to focus, further on this sub-sector of education.

Exponential changes have been tangible. In 2001 there were only 1,500 male students in TVET schools. Now there are 98 schools in 32 provinces with an approximate number of 26,000 students, of which 16 percent are female students.⁴⁹ 29 percent of teachers have completed grade fourteen, 25 percent grade twelve, 37 percent are undergraduates, and 6 percent hold master's degree.⁵⁰ NESPII aims at expanding TVET regional institutes from 16 to 32, provincial schools from 38 to 102, and increase enrolment from 19,500 (2009) to 150,000, thirty percent of which would be female students by 2014. It also envisions to establish 364 TVET district schools, and increase enrolment of children with disabilities to 1,000 students.

Considering the Technical and Vocational Education as important section, the Technical and Vocational Education Department is now headed by a distinct Deputy Minister. The Ministry has planned to work in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to conduct a study of the labour market to make sure that the TVET fields of study are based on the needs of the market. "The Ministry will also support the establishment of private TVET centres and in close collaboration with chambers of commerce will encourage major industries including business, mining, construction, manufacturing to set up training units within the industries where grade 9 graduates can enrol and obtain vocational training. The private sector has for

48 Ministry of Education NESP II (Kabul 2010-2014).

49 MoE Afghanistan, EFA Global Monitoring Report of (2011).

50 EMIS Afghanistan, Summary Report of Education Situation (2009/10).

the first time become involved in the provision of technical and vocational education. Seven private TVET institutes are now operational in the provinces of Kabul and Balkh”.⁵¹

Non-formal/Community-based Education (CBE)

In addition to the formal education and non-formal basic programmes that are being provided either by the government or private institutions, there are various forms of non-formal programmes. Non-formal education has a long history in Afghanistan. Dehati Schools (village schools) emerged in 1949, and were an alternative to the official primary schools in places where the people were deprived of education. The level of education offered by these village based schools was however, cursory. These schools offered education only up to grade 3 with the purpose of preparing the children for entry into the central primary schools. The 'dehati' schools have continued to uplift their level of education, and function in all eras, even in the periods of the Mujahideen and pro-Russian government conflict (1978-1992), and the Taliban reign of 1996-2001.⁵²

During the Taliban regime, small home based schools were operational for boys and girls that offered literacy aptitude. These were supported by the people of the community who valued education for their children. According to the Ministry of Education (MoE 2008), currently, there are around 20,000 community based classes in Afghanistan, and 3 percent of all students have been estimated to have attended some form of Community-based Schools (CBS).

The Partnership for Advancing Community Education in Afghanistan (PACE-A) was created to further expand quality learning for the marginalized communities and their children. The PACE-A consists of four International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) including Community Child & Adolescent Resources, and Education (CARE), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF). “Under PACE-A, the communities are responsible for providing and maintaining a classroom space, ensuring sustained attendance, selecting and compensating a teacher, and the daily management of the school. PACE-A provides training and ongoing support to the teachers and elected School Management Committees (SMC), supplies the teaching and learning”.⁵³

When CBE policy guidelines of the MoE called for a number of strategic changes, the PACE-A designed its second year of implementation which included that all CBSs should be: at least 3

51 NESP II (Kabul, 2010-2014).

52 Saif R. Samady (Paris, 2001).

53 Ministry of Education NESP II (Kabul 2010-2014).

kilo meters away from the nearest MoE school, ensuring that teachers are regularly compensated by the community, having one PACE-A partner rather than many assigned in one province to oversee the implementation of CBE, providing all textbooks free of charge by the MoE, and that the CBE teachers would be included in the MoE payroll. According to NESP II, currently, there are over 900 CBE teachers who now receive salaries from the MoE.

A number of efforts seem to have been made for literacy enhancement in Afghanistan. The Literacy and Non-Formal Education Development in Afghanistan (LAND) also, aims at developing national literacy and non-formal education resources. The LAND Afghan project was designed to support the Afghan Government achieve Education for All (EFA) goals set during the Dakar World Education Forum, and “the project’s main focus [...] has been building up a nationwide network of literacy teachers, trained in modern non-formal education methods. It will also train people in the development and production of teaching materials and provide the necessary equipment for this, including printing facilities”.⁵⁴ The UNESCO led Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) involved all stakeholders to promote literacy in a more effective manner. The MoE's joint programmes for Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan (ELA 2008 – 2013) which is now considered one of the Afghanistan's biggest literacy campaigns, are the initiatives focusing on literacy expansion.

The Community based training also include programmes such as: 1) Life Skills Training including health and hygiene, literacy and numeracy, peace and tolerance, and child development, 2) Productive Skills such as vocational, technical and livelihoods trainings like carpentry, plumbing, agriculture, animal husbandry, handicrafts, and tailoring, and 3) Local Governance and Civic Education. These programmes are offered through a number of NGOs supported by the respective ministries including Ministries of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL), Commerce and Industries (MCI), Counter Narcotics (MCN), Public Health (MOPH), Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), Education, etc.⁵⁵

The EFA has envisioned a 50% increase in literacy by 2015. To achieve this goal, the MoE, has planned to provide literacy education for 3.6 million out of an estimated 9.5 million illiterates across the country through an estimated 140,000 literacy courses at least by 2014.⁵⁶

54 UNESCO Website <http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=9031&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html>[accessed 20 May 2012].

55 Lisa Deyo, Afghanistan Non-formal Education, Global Monitoring Report 2008, Education for All by 2015: Will We Make it? (UNESCO, 2007).

56 Ministry of Education, NESP II (Kabul, 2010 2014).

Conclusion

The government of Afghanistan's strategic goals and plans have sometimes been prone to criticism. It is often said that the country finds it difficult to achieve large goals in short notice. Likewise, there is a growing speculation on whether the educational objectives and goals set by NESP II will be fulfilled by 2014. The NESP II has planned to provide literacy education for 3.6 million out of an estimated 9.5 million illiterates across the country through an estimated 140,000 literacy courses by 2014. It has also aimed at: training 50,000 of 12 grade graduates with 45 percent of women as professional teachers, having 80 percent of the teachers to pass national competency test, equipping 30 percent of TTCs with computer labs, increasing the number of Islamic students to 200,000 with a 40 percent of females, equipping 50 percent of schools with science and mathematics kits, expanding the number of TVET regional institutes from 16 to 32, and its provincial schools from 38 to 102, and its students' ratio from 19,500 (2009) to 150,000 with a 30 percent of females, and increasing enrolment of children with disabilities to 1,000 students.⁵⁷ These goals need to be monitored and achieved by 2014.

With regard to the reports of the MoE, there is a need to scrutinise and verify them. The MoE has thus far, provided reports with more of quantitative surveys and statistical facts on the number of schools, while little has been done on the qualitative part. Less attention has been paid to the effectiveness of the educational institutions. There is also a need to monitor whether a student of grade four can read and write, or whether a student of grade 12 has been taught the necessary skills to successfully embark on further studies, or how far is a high school graduate prepared to successfully qualify in the country's general entrance exam. These kinds of reports would be useful not only for the MoE's upcoming strategic plans, but also for the educational institutions themselves for assessing their strengths and weaknesses and ways to address the shortcomings.

57 NESP II (2010-2014).

CHAPTER III

Problems and the Challenges: Background

In 2002, the Government of Afghanistan had to deal with many hurdles such as lack of capacity in human resources, broken administrative infrastructure/framework, obsolete educational system etc. The Education Sector has been one of the many sectors that suffered the most. Historically, as seen in Chapter I, the very infrastructure of this sector was used as an exploitation tool by various regimes. On top of this, the Taliban had almost destroyed this important sector. In addition to the destruction inflicted upon the quality, its civil servants had little experience in strategic planning and policy making and budgeting. Even the annual plans of the MoE were reported to be based on the Ministry of Finance's (MoF) allocations for some years. It however, was later realized that this budget allocation approach did not at all match the growing demand for learning in the country, and the international aid agencies adopted programmes to uplift the skills of the administrative staff of the MoE besides improving the educational institutions.

UNESCO committed its International Institute of Educational Planning (IIEP) to advise the MoE with necessary Strategic Planning and Capacity Development. IIEP is a permanent institute that strengthens the capacities of education sectors worldwide. Concomitant with this, Afghanistan was encouraged by the UNESCO to introduce Education for All (EFA) programme that later in 2009 laid the foundation for the MoE to aim at the membership in Fast Track Initiative (FTI). EFA is a global movement led by the UNESCO for basic learning of children and adults around the world. FTI works on providing additional funding for the developing countries to enhance and hasten the process of development in education programmes. These projects were financially supported by a number of Scandinavian countries and others. Despite all these efforts, as repeatedly mentioned, around 42 percent of school-age children remain out of reach of school, that constitute 4.5 million in number. "The main reasons for this are the rapid increase in the school-age population, low MoE capacity, and lack of needed financial resources".⁵⁸

In short, it can be said that prior to, and after these commitments many plans and programmes were taken that demonstrated international community's support ranging from 'back to school campaign' to curriculum development, and many other financial, advisory and strategic planning that gradually kept emerging. Despite having received partnerships in various realms

58 Ministry of Education NESP II (Kabul 2010-2014).

of education, and remarkable progress in the sector, there are yet, a number of hurdles, and problems that need to be addressed. Lack of security, lack of skills in the faculty, and at times the issue of the distant locations of the schools, unpleasant method of imparting education to the children are some of the daunting problems.⁵⁹ In addition, economic conditions also prevent parents from sending their children to the school. Some of the major problems connected with the above issue have been outlined in the succeeding paras.

Political Leadership, and Instability

The current political leadership of the country under Hamed Karzai, has been subject to many criticisms by various groups. Political oppositions condemn it for weak and inconsistent decision making mechanisms. Others maintain that the direction of the foreign policy of the leadership is unknown. Many say that national interest is unidentified. Armed oppositions blame it for being a puppet government in the hands of Western countries, and claim that weakness has taken abode within the system of the government, and that it will soon have to collapse and compromise with insurgents especially, upon the complete drawdown of the foreign troops. On this take, the civil society forums, and women groups are afraid, lest the government might consequently fall, and the extremist regime of Taliban might take over again, or civil war might break out.

These assumptions and complications have led to question the national ownership. The society seems fragmented. Even the three branches of the State are in a state of war with each other. Some voices in the parliament of Afghanistan have been the most serious critics of the present leadership. At times, voices have been raised within the House of Representatives asking the President to resign. The parliament has many a times charged the President of violating the laws. One of the most contradictory stage of accusation took place in August 2011, when the President had ordered the Election Commission to finalize the then disputes among the candidates over the seats for lower house. Some at the lower house of Parliaments considered the President's order illegal, and opined that he should step down. The majority in the Senate was however, opposed to this view.⁶⁰

These in-fights, it is claimed, have encouraged insurgency, and violence, which poses a serious

59 Dana Holland, Capacity Building through Policy Making: Developing Afghanistan's NESP (AREU 2010), <http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Cap_Dev_Technical_Assistance/pdf/2010/Afghanistan_National_Ed_Strat_Plan2010.pdf> [accessed 20 May, 2012].

60 Pazhwak News <<http://www.pajhwok.com/node/153358>> [accessed 20 May, 2012].

threat to the education sector. Insurgency is acquiring momentum. Afghan communities in rural areas are largely disinclined towards education, and don't usually trust the formal education system. The Taliban elements take the advantage of this state of affairs, and in turn spread disinformation and carry out propaganda campaign against the western imposed education system in order to create a legacy of distrust among the populace. Confidence building within the system of the government is thus, needed to let educational institutions prosper.

The frequent changes in the leadership of the ministry are also unpleasant for a consistent and undeterred development. As NESP II maintains, "Political instability in general and frequent changes in the leadership of the Ministry may have negative effects on governance and on implementation of the [educational] plan".⁶¹ Patronage within the system is another major problem. The MoE, as many other governmental institutions, has been blamed of being a *reservoir of patronage*.⁶² Each minister newly appointed is alleged to place his own team, and this may have challenging consequences on a smooth growth of the sector.

Corruption

Much as in many other places, corruption is a tangible problem in Afghanistan. The country is ranked fifth from the bottom on Transparency International (TI's) Corruption Perception Index (TI-CPI 2008). According to an Oxfam briefing paper in 2006, teachers were not paid on time or had to pay a bribe to receive salary. Also, there were 16,000 to 20,000 ghost teachers – those who did not come to work, or were registered at two places.⁶³ Although the Oxfam paper reflected the state as of 2006, yet it is a common knowledge that even now, in the administrative as well as institutional structures of the government, corruption in the forms of bribe and illegal practices is wide spread. Low pay for teachers has been considered as a cause for corruption in the education system. The school staff usually can not survive on their monthly incomes, which encourages a culture of corruption within the educational system.

Institutional Weakness

Afghanistan lacks professional and appropriately qualified teachers. Apart from this, curriculum makers also usually do not have access to sufficient modern educational and scientific tools and resources. The capacity for research and international resources is low, as

61 NESP II (2010 2014) p. 134

62 Giustozzi, AAN 2011.

63 Oxfam International, Free Quality Education for Every Afghan Child (Quality Briefing Paper, 2006) pp.10-11

many of the staff do not have adequate language skills, and computer literacy.⁶⁴ Inefficient bureaucracy in the structure of the MoE is yet another problem. The MoE itself has often admitted this fact and has considered it as one of the causes why many goals, and programmes for NESPs remain unattained.⁶⁵

Volatile Security Condition

The security situation in the country, as maintained in preceding pages, has steadily deteriorated from 2006 onwards. The deterioration has particularly worsened in the southern and eastern parts of the country. However, recently larger part of the country is under threat. In many areas, anti-governmental elements have attacked students, teachers, and schools. By 2009, six hundred and ninety schools were shut depriving over 340,000 children's right to education. At least, 140 teachers were killed or wounded.⁶⁶ It made it difficult for teachers to function in insecure places, and had a negative impact on their ability to participate in teaching, and the students in turn to participate in learning.

Lack of security certainly affects the planning and management of the education sector. It creates difficulties in continuing with any constructive work in the areas where situation is volatile. As reported by the World Bank (WB)/DFID Public Expenditure Review of Education (PERE), "in 2007 the Education Management Information System (EMIS) survey was unable to collect data from roughly 200 schools and was not able to verify data on a further 400"⁶⁷ due to security concerns.

82 percent of schools are reported to be in rural areas where most of them suffer from attacks of different nature such as grenades, arson, explosion, and verbal threats to teachers, students, and their parents. Even the MoE itself was threatened, that led its staff to shift to different parts of Kabul in late 2007. The displacement of the ministry's departments was said to have caused stagnation in the functioning of the MoE as many tools, and Internet facilities were absent for a while.

64 NESP II (2010 2014)

65 Morten Sigaard, Education and Fragility in Afghanistan: A Situational Analysis (INEE Research Paper 2009). cited from MoE report of 2008.

66 Marit Glad, Knowledge on Fire: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan (Care 2009).

<http://www.care.org/newsroom/articles/2009/11/Knowledge_on_Fire_Report.pdf> [accessed 20 May 2012].

67 Ibid.

The Most Recent Threats

On 24 and 27 May 2012, 100 and 40 female students respectively, were poisoned in provincial capital Taloqan (Takhar).⁶⁸ On 15 May 2012, nearly 300 students were reported to have been poisoned in Ismail Khil district of southern Khost Province. The students however survived the mishap after being taken to the hospitals. It was reported to be some form of air borne material that causes unconsciousness. Though there was no evidence whether the Taliban or the water in the school premises caused this incident, the case has not certainly been new in the country. Poisoning cases in Rustaq⁶⁹, Bamian, Kapisa and Ghazni have also been recorded. On 17 April 2012, tens of female students, again in Takhar were poisoned. In the years 2009 and 2010 the similar incidents took place in Ghazni and Kapisa. Also, on 23 April 2012, 50 schools in Ghazni were reported to have been shut by the Taliban.⁷⁰ It is unfortunate that the service delivery and service expansion in education sector in such situations remain challenged.

As of the latest report, currently, up to 500 schools are closed due to threats from Taliban in provinces such as Kandahar, Zabul, Nangarhar, Takhar, and Ghazni. Female students are under threat more than the male students. Afghan security officials charge the Haqqani Network, and the Mullah Daadullah Front, the two active insurgency groups for poisoning students and burning schools in Afghanistan.⁷¹

However, the government has initiated some steps to tackle the lack of security for education sector. It established Parent Teachers Associations (PTAs), School Management Committees (SMCs), and Security Shuras⁷² (SS) to ensure security and contribute to the educational institutions' environment. Still mere existence of these mechanisms without a determined political leadership to fight the Taliban and insurgency would be of no avail. Substantive steps need to be taken to provide security and safe environment for students to pursue their studies.

Little Coordination between Aid Agencies and the MoE

During 2005-06 external budget expenditures constituted about 60 percent of all education expenses, and more than 80 percent of the core budget was allocated to the operating

68 TOLO News, Ministry of Education Urges School Attackers to Stop, (Kabul 2012)

<<http://tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/6345-ministry-of-education-urges-school-attackers-to-stop>> [accessed 25 May 2012].

69 Rustaq is a district of Takhar northern Province in Afghanistan.

70 BBC Persian <http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/04/120423_k02-ghazni-schools-taleban.shtml> [accessed 20 May 2012].

71 TOLO News (Kabul, 2012).

72 Shura in Dari means Council.

expenditures, specifically salaries. The MoE therefore, has had little authority over some donor activities. PRTs for example carry out education related programmes with little coordination with the MoE.⁷³ Thus, “interventions by donors, their NGO partners and local communities have been constrained by financial, security and other limitations. These efforts have not been well coordinated with the MoE, with one result being that information is still inadequate for strategic decision making”.⁷⁴

Transit of Textbooks Pending in Pakistan

Apart from the problem of the coordination between aid agencies and the MoE, the transit of the textbooks from Pakistan has recently become a controversial issue. It has been reported that the transit of over 4.5 million text books has been kept on hold in Pakistan since⁷⁵ “[...] the Pakistani negotiators have asked for a fee of \$5,000 for each NATO shipping container and tanker that transits its territory by land into and out of Afghanistan”.⁷⁶ In Chicago NATO Summit of mid-May 2012, the Pakistani President was asked to look into the problem, and let the Afghan school text books transit to Afghanistan shortly.

Ill-equipped Educational Buildings

Of 12,081 schools (however recently reported 14,465), 68 percent, do not have surrounding walls, and 15 percent need rehabilitation of their boundary walls. This problem causes a negative impact especially, on girls' enrolment, attendance and completion of their education as they are bound to adhere to the cultural norms for their protection. A huge number of latrines in these schools are also not properly operational.⁷⁷ Also, of 11,460 General Education Schools, 49 percent do not have their own buildings that may threaten the continuity of education in their respective areas.⁷⁸

The NESP II has however, envisioned 75 percent of General Schools, TTCs and Islamic classrooms, 100 percent of TVET and all education departments to have usable buildings by

73 MoE, NESPI

74 MoE Education Sector Strategy for the Afghan National Development Strategy (Kabul, 2007)

75 TOLO Persian News (Kabul, 25 May 2012).

76 The Nation, Pakistan Seeks \$5,000 transit fee for each NATO Container (17 May 2012)

<<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/17-May-2012/pakistan-seeks-5-000-transit-fee-for-each-nato-container-wp>> [accessed 26 May].

77 EMIS Afghanistan, 2009/10 Summary Report (Kabul 2010).

78 Ibid.

the end of 2014.⁷⁹

Rapid Increase in Demand for Education

As we noticed in Chapter II, since 2001, nearly an eight-fold increase in demand for education has taken place. This rapid increase has significantly exceeded the capacity of supply, and has caused a severe dependence on the international donors. There are almost seven million children enrolled in schools. However, nearly 15 percent of those enrolled are, due to weather problem or security factors permanently absent, and 42 percent of school-age children, as mentioned in preceding pages, majority of them females, are out of school.⁸⁰ The MoE needs to expand its plans in order to be able to accommodate the remaining children into education. This cannot be done unless the NESP II goals and plans are targeted didactically, besides a helping hand from other institutions.

Private schools, vocational colleges, and universities are emerging. More than 360 entities are already registered with the Ministry of Education. These entities may in one way or the other, share the burden of delivery, and help the MoE in meeting the demands, but they simultaneously, have an important implication for education policy of the government to adopt within its system strong fiscal and administrative arrangements to improve functioning of these institutions, especially in the areas of curriculum development, equity, cross subsidization etc.

Disorder and Violence in Schools

Although, there is no recent and comprehensive study available on the functioning of the schools, yet there are anecdotal reports about disorder in the management of these institutions. Norms are not maintained, the methods of teaching are not effective, physical punishment of students by the teachers is in vogue.⁸¹ This problem is multi-dimensional in nature. Some aspects of it may belong to the management of the institutions in-charge, while some may refer to the very responsibility of the people. Violence in schools, corruption in the system for example can not be easily addressed without an initiative from the local citizenry itself. This take, however does not by any means over-look the role of a weak system in the government as a sound public and social policy and administration may easily tackle these problems.

79 NESP II (2010 – 2014).

80 Ministry of Education, 2011 – 2013 National Education Interim Plan (Kabul, 2011).

81 Ministry of Education, Education Sector Strategy for the Afghan National Development Strategy (Kabul, 2007),

Conclusion

We understand the fact that Afghanistan throughout its history, never before, witnessed the level of the international humanitarian aid and assistance that it receives today. However, despite the generous involvement of donors, which has made Afghanistan a focal point for international care, there are questions and growing speculation about the country's backwardness in every sector. Nevertheless, it will be hollow and unjustified if we do not address the challenges thrown up by the education sector. Terrorism and insurgency have been affecting the efforts made towards the development of Afghanistan's infrastructures. The Taliban elements never wish to leave the country purely at the hands of the organizations that are instrumental in ushering in a positive change. The more the Taliban stay away from the scene, the better, stronger, and more effective the country will become. The more the Taliban are kept at bay, the more chances for women and men would be provided to learn, interact, seek knowledge, and defend themselves. The Taliban groups therefore, find it imperative to stay active and not to let Afghanistan fall in the hands of the knowledgeable and ambitious Afghan citizens. Why they do so, is a question that needs to be answered by covering the regional aspects of it such as their safe havens in neighbouring Pakistan.

CHAPTER IV

Future Prospects, and the Way forward: Background

Despite the poor indicators, and the problems already enunciated, there have also been some signs of improvement in recent years. According to the National Risk Vulnerability Assessment report (NRVA 2007/8), 52 percent of children have enrolled in primary schools. Compared with 2005 enrolment which was 37 percent, the proportion of enrolment has remarkably increased. Also, male literacy increased from around 30 percent for those in their mid-twenties to 62 percent for children in their early teens. Correspondingly, female literacy rose from below 10 percent to 37 percent. However, in rural areas, the gap between male and female literacy rates is still maintained.⁸² Moreover, some of the students usually quit their school in the midst of studies and do not complete their studies up to the higher secondary levels.

Prospects

Necessary steps have been taken to address these problems in the future. In addition, the National Education Strategic Plan II (NESP – 2010-2014) has considered using information and Communication Technology (ICT) to improve the working of the MoE, and enhance the quality of education for children. It is observed that application of digital curriculum contents from the experiences of other countries will prove a better educational system for Afghanistan. The NESP II has therefore, targeted to equip 30 percent of General and Islamic schools and Teachers' Training Centres with computer labs by 2014, and has also planned to distribute educational laptops for ten percent of the students enrolled in grade 3 up to the grade 6. Secondary schools are also planned to be equipped with computer labs, which will be accompanied with One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) to 10 percent of the total number of students at the primary education adding to the already distributed OLPC that had targeted eleven schools for grades 4, 5, and 6.⁸³ It was planned that the ICT curriculum be distributed among the 10, 11, and 12 grades in 2012 academic year.

82 National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment report of 2007/8

<http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/documents/afgh_brochure_summary_en.pdf> [accessed 20 May 2012].

83 Salim Hayran, MoE Study, (Kabul 2011).

The Way Forward

As we discussed, the Afghanistan Millennium Development Goals (AMDG), target 100 percent enrolment for primary education. Based on the current demography, around 8.8 million children are likely to require access to primary education by 2020. To meet this demand, 99,000 additional teachers at an annual cost of US\$232 million are required. In addition, even with some drop out rates, upper secondary level (grades 7-12) will also increase by 3 million that will require 112,000 additional teachers at an annual cost of US\$ 263 million.⁸⁴

What could be done to help the AMDG achieve its educational goals? Is it possible to achieve such goals by 2020? Not, alone for sure, can the MoE's NESP projects provide an alternative. As mentioned in the preceding pages, it is imperative to widen the scope of involvement in this important sector in a more inclusive form. In other words, an entrepreneurial environment must be encouraged to flourish and provide the platform for prospective citizens: those, who are prepared and determined to take part in creating new ideas, and new social initiatives.

While the establishment of private schools is important, it is not the only solution. This effort must be accompanied by providing the chance and the platform to those who engender socio-economic progress. A social entrepreneur for example, understands the due importance of physical existence of educational institutions in remote areas, and may also understand security threats that militate against their smooth functioning and even their existence. Such an entrepreneur may come out with an innovative solution that may need financial support. More so, there are chances that the government may itself be occupied with implementation of various other existing programmes such as getting the level of enrolment increased, and the ratio of schools improved, while the quality education, or rural inclusive mechanisms sometimes might get ignored. A huge amount of international financial aid is being provided through the governmental mechanisms in Afghanistan. In such a context the Afghan government can at least allocate, and recommend some amount for invisible entrepreneurial thoughts to help boost quality education in the country.

The government may also initiate educational policies that ensure the development in a useful form. It can offer social status to the question of education to the areas where the very notion of the phenomenon is absent. For example, what kind of programme should be adopted to encourage those who oppose girls' education? In rural areas where traditional form of living is dominant, or where girls' education is resented, there is a need to run motivational campaigns

84 Ibid.

to help them realise the very importance of education for both men and women. And in places where economic barriers stay as obstacles for education, but the parents are inclined towards the education of their children, the government may allow some economic schemes through the international and national aid agencies. The economic schemes may be offered in various forms, a few of which will be discussed in the context of India's policy initiatives in the succeeding pages. This is possible because the international community has stayed committed in Afghanistan. A sound allocation of the flow of aid is mandatory. One of the schemes could be (apart from offering monthly support for the education of children), providing meals as is the case in Indian schools, in addition to scholarship awards. This could encourage the poor parents in sending their kids to school.

Afghanistan is also affected by the low quality of education. The source of this problem as we observed in earlier pages is the lack of qualified and skilful teachers. A few initiatives can be taken to help remove this problem. One of the solutions may be paying teachers according to their performance. The detailed mechanism on how to implement this initiative may depend on the situation and the environment. In India for example, an initiative has been taken to connect the teachers' performance with his quality of teaching. Based on his/her students' level of knowledge the teachers' salaries get an increment. In this case, the teachers are encouraged to pay more heed and attention to the students. This method of quality enhancement would be of no avail if the students themselves, don't make efforts for learning. On the students' part, Remedial Education system can be adopted. This can be achieved by providing the students with in-school extra tutorial classes that could assess their knowledge of reading and writing or arithmetic skills, and then assign them to respective extra classes that could impart them the needed additional lessons.

Another daunting challenge in Afghanistan as discussed is lack of security. This problem has affected the whole system. We already discussed at length the results of this challenge. However, a better way to tackle this problem is to be firm against the Taliban elements. To overcome the deficiencies in the education; two means can be used to ensure learning in the areas where physical existence of school is not possible. Cell phones and the Radio could be of considerable use in such areas. Radio may deliver education from a longer distance. It may adopt the school curriculum for teaching. This can be used in lieu of cell phones since the latter may not usually, be affordable by the communities, and there may be areas where telephone signals are weak.

Most of the above recommendations are based on the educational policies already practised in India. To have a clear picture of these initiatives, let's discuss them in detail below.

India's Policy Initiatives: Background & Assessment

In light of the descriptive take on the situation of the Afghan Education Sector in recent years, this part of the paper studies the Indian government's as well as some civil society's initiatives in the realm of education. In today's globalized environment, it is imperative to be aware of the systems, situations and conditions worldwide in order to adjust one's own development accordingly. This notion offers comparative knowledge, and helps us at least to get to know of the exogenous phenomena in the context of our own countries. That is perhaps the reason that the projects and purposes being implemented in Afghanistan have their international implications. The methods of teaching in the Afghan schools that have been pinpointed to be more different than that of the traditional ones can be one example.

Appreciating and understanding the overall efforts of the international partners as well as those of the Afghanistan's ministry of education in literacy enhancement projects, it is quite evident that much more is required to be done. The reports and narratives about the state of the Afghan public education have usually been statistical. Quantity has been more of a concern than quality. Surveys have taken place and reports have been provided to show the pace of movement in the ratio of students, teachers, educational institutions, but less emphasis has been given on assessing the role of education in changing one's prospects. For example, one could think, how far has the secondary education been successful in changing the future prospects of the students, and where literally these students land up at the end of their studies, and how useful their educational experiences will prove for the society.

Several initiatives below are drawn with an attempt to add more to the present projects and initiatives. Afghanistan is very old, yet a young country in terms of exposing itself to various social, and formal educational complexities. Although since 2002, various sectors of the society have been witnessing several new experiments, there is yet, a long way to go.

It is usually difficult to inculcate some exogenous phenomena in a country where traditional methods of learning have been historically predominant. Many aspects of governance in Afghanistan have been under criticism claiming that these, have had their exogenous elements rather than the endogenous ones. Democracy itself for example, has been pointed out by some that it would need to be institutionalized first and then implemented. The method of teaching,

and system of planning and way of developing curriculum, and method of imparting it to the children have also been pinpointed by some, alleging that these do not match the very nature of the country's traditional environment.

The policy initiatives with regard to creating educational means laid herein are however, not expected to be under any kind of criticism. These sample studies are simple, and may be applied in Afghanistan when necessary. In other words, these schemes may be applicable only when the situation necessitates. A village for example receives encouragement when its children are fed at school besides studies. Or an educational programme through radio may be pleasant for a village where security issues hinder the very physical existence of a school.

It will always be effective to use the lessons already learnt and apply the same under Afghan conditions. It is only after trials that one can point out the efficacy of such schemes. Success of such initiatives would further motivate the populace and the government to enlarge their area of operations and commit additional funds thus generating a substantive movement for betterment of education sector in Afghanistan.

Please note that the initiatives below are discussed in detail and with the method description of their conduct in order for the readers, to be able to draw a clear picture of the background and history for each initiative. This will help us to understand the effects of these initiatives in India and their possible application in Afghanistan.

Mid Day Meal Scheme: Lunch at Schools

A developing economy like India still has over 30-40% of its population under the poverty line. In such a scenario, the real challenge that needs to be met is that of obliterating poverty by encouraging employment. Education and particularly the primary education, is of utmost concern. The government of India has therefore, planned many schemes to support children and their education. One such important scheme, which is implemented all over India, is the mid-day meal scheme in the schools. Since a major proportion of the school going children in India, suffer from problems related to malnutrition, which in turn hinders the academic success ratio, the government has decided to make the ends meet by providing mid day meals to the children in school. This scheme has been launched to provide basic nutrition intake and normal mental and physical growth of children.

With a view to enhancing enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improving nutritional levels among children, the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) was launched as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) on 15th August 1995, initially in 2408 blocks in the country. Today, it however, covers around 120 million children in over 12.65 crores⁸⁵ schools/Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) centres across India. Initially, the scheme covered the children in the primary level education, which belonged to the government aided schools. This scheme was however, expanded in 2002 to include the children studying in the EGS, and (Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE) centres, that entailed free supply of food at 100 grams per child per school day, and subsidy for transportation of food grains up to a maximum of Rs. 50 per quintal.

This scheme was later improved in 2006 to include the cooking costs. A year later, it was further expanded to cover the meal costs of the children in the upper primary classes (6 to 8) in the Educationally Backward Blocs (EBBs). Since 2008, this scheme also looks after the physical welfare of the children studying in Government, Local Body, and Government aided primary and upper primary schools and the EGS/AIE centres including Madrasas, and Madrasas supported under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) of all areas across the country. The calorific value of a mid day meal at upper primary stage has been fixed at a minimum of 700 calories, and 20 grams of protein by providing 150 grams of food grains (rice/wheat) per child/school day. Cooking cost excluding the labour and administrative charges has been Rs. 2.50 for primary and Rs. 3.75 for upper primary children. The cost has been however, subject to change from time to time. Today, Mid Day meal scheme is serving the primary and upper primary school children in entire country. 24 hundred thousand cooks are engaged and 110 million children are supported under this scheme in 120 million schools.⁸⁶

Poor families in Afghanistan's remote areas and elsewhere very badly need such a scheme. Apart from the students' families need, providing food for children can give a sense of honour to underprivileged students in addition to much needed nutrition and studies.

Financing Education through Vouchers

The school voucher is used to finance the education of the poor. It is provided by the government to cover the full or partial cost of education of the student at his/her school. The

85 Crore is a unit in the South Asian numbering system equivalent to ten million.

86 Ministry of Human Resource Development, Mid Day Meal Scheme, at <<http://mdm.nic.in/>> [accessed 20 May 2012].
The description on Mid Day Meal Scheme provided in this paper has been inspired by the information available at the Ministry of HRD website.

schools collect vouchers from the students and deposit them with their banks. The banks credit the school account equivalent money, while debiting the account of the government. No money actually changes hands, only the voucher moves from the student to the school, and back to the government. The voucher system makes the schools accountable directly to the students since they pay for their education through coupons.⁸⁷

This scheme may be very useful to countries where the capacity of governmental schools in terms of providing faculty, institutional buildings, and class seats is low. Instead of making their institutions overcrowded, the government may send the students to private schools and finance their studies equivalent to the amount spent on them in public institutions such as on faculty, land, etc. Afghanistan's public institutions, largely lack the capacity to host all students, and even when it is possible to host all, the classes go over crowded, and the learning environment suffers. This problem is although, more dominant at the tertiary level of education, where thousands of students can not get admissions and thus are deprived of benefits of education at this level. Those students, who cannot afford to get themselves enrolled in private institutions, the voucher system discussed above may therefore, act as an alternative.

Apart from India, a number of other countries including Chile, Columbia, Cote d'Ivoire, Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy, New Zealand, Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom (England, & Wales), and the United States have been successfully experimented with the school voucher scheme.⁸⁸

Laadli Scheme: Scholarships for Baby Girls

In a patriarchal society, the women suffer a great deal because of gender bias. Unfortunately, in India, these gender differences have often taken ugly and in most cases, violent forms of female foeticide, child marriage etc. The Laadli scheme is a plan which envisages curbing such problems. The scheme involves granting a prescribed sum of monetary allowance to the girl child at the time of her birth and then at various stages of her education. The scheme aims at enhancing the social status of girl child in the society as well in the family, ensuring proper education to make the girls self reliant, ensuring her economic security and protecting them from discrimination and deprivation. This scheme is currently, operational in the national

87 Interview with Shantanu Gupta, Advocacy Senior Coordinator, Centre for Civil Society (New Delhi, April 2012).

88 School Choice Campaign, Global Experiments in School Voucher <<http://schoolchoice.in/globalexperience.php>> [accessed 20 May 2012].

capital Delhi, but funding is said to be available for families coming from outside the city as well. The amount of grant varies from place to place though.

How does the Money go to the Child?

The amount of money provided by the Laadli scheme is kept in the bank account of the child as a fixed deposit till the girl child grows up. This scheme however, has certain terms and conditions, which check any misuse. The scheme only allows the support of maximum two girl children per family, and ensures that the girl child is a resident of Delhi from three years preceding the birth date. Also, it is important that the family income be below the slab of rupees 1, 00,000 per annum, in order to avail benefits of this scheme.⁸⁹

Historically, it has been usual to implement over women various forms of social and cultural discriminations. Indian women for example have had to deal with many forms of problems such as sati, child marriage, foeticide etc. Even today, baby girls are treated as burden in many Indian families as a result of cultural traditions such as expensive dowry for marrying their daughters off. “[...] Nearly 50,000 female fetuses are aborted every month and untold numbers of baby girls are abandoned or murdered”.⁹⁰ Laadli is one such scheme that aims at helping parents remove the impression of burden on their daughters, and expects to create a sense of encouragement among families to ensure good treatment of their baby girls by providing them education.

The case of Afghanistan may be culturally different, yet a scheme like Laadli may contribute in encouraging the families to support the education of their daughters. To implement such a scheme in Afghanistan however, requires a source of funding which will remain a challenge for sometime to come.

Galli Galli Sim Sim: Using Media for Education

The Indian government has also laid great emphasis on spreading innovative ways of provide education to the backward and illiterate section of the society. This step has largely been implemented with the help of media. One such initiative is taken by an institution named ‘Galli Galli Sim Sim’ (GGSS). This institution provides quality educational experiences through media. GGSS now is broadcast on three leading channels in India – Doordarshan, Cartoon

89 Interview with Shantanu Gupta, CCS (New Delhi, April 2012). Also see <<http://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2011/03/ladli-scheme-india/>> [accessed 20 May 2012].

90 Alan B. Goldberg and Sean Dooley, Disappearing Daughters: Women Pregnant with Girls Pressured Abortion (ABC News, 2011) <<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/women-pregnant-girls-pressured-abortions-india/story?id=15103950#.T7524rQtgyI>> [accessed 24 May 2012].

Network, and POGO. It is reportedly covering nearly 22 million viewers throughout urban and rural India. GGSS provides cognitive and socio-emotional development through enjoyable learning. This didactic programme has also, been supported by some celebrities, who sometimes conduct the programme making it more attractive for the children. The show also features live action films, music, stories and art taken from various elements of Indian culture and the region of the country. Besides, literacy and numerical learning, the show dwells on moral issues such as empathy, appreciation of differences, a sense of civic responsibility, promoting hygiene, and healthy habits.

The project also extends the show further to the marginalized and underprivileged populations through outreach initiatives. It works through mobile community viewings to reach the largest proportion of children, and introduces educational modules in local balwadis.⁹¹ Additionally, GGSS provides the much-needed lessons to the caregivers by instructing them in the newer and more interesting methods of imparting education. Educational materials including books, pamphlets, posters, educational games, and electronic media are not only directed to children, but to parents and caregivers as well, and to those who may not have access to the televisions. GGSS programme is thus, rated among top five regularly watched children's shows in India.⁹²

With the advent of the new government in Afghanistan (2002), the atmosphere was opened for the establishment of various TV channels. These TVs have acted as a source of motivation for the public in different areas including culture, politics, governance, education etc. There is however, a severe need to launch a more inclusive form of educational programmes that can be accompanied with formal structure in accordance with the curricula taught in schools.

Meena Radio: Educating Kids through Radio

Meena radio is an educational project undertaken to curb social evils such as child marriage and promote female education. It can be considered as one of the steps to curb illiteracy in a country where a majority of young women are denied access to proper education. This programme has been named after a girl called Meena, whose younger brother was permitted to attend school, whereas she as a girl was not. The programme is an example of her success and her courage to overcome all familial odds in order to become educated. This nine year- old

91 Balwadis in Hindi refers to kindergartens, or nursery schools.

92 Galli Galli Sim Sim <<http://www.galligallisimsim.com/aboutus.html>> [accessed 02 May 2012]. The information on GGSS laid herein is inspired by its website.

-girl has become the voice for the many voiceless girls, who do not have the privilege for schooling.

Radio has not only been a popular source of entertainment, but also the oldest and the one which is economical. This radio programme is broadcast five days a week, with the aim of promoting awareness on issues of health, empowerment, nutrition and education for every child. The Indian government has equipped schools with the facility of the Meena radio and has also trained teachers and other staff to operate it as a teaching device. Also accompanied with this radio, there are the staged programmes and events such as the Meena Manch (a form of street theatre), songs and cartoons, wherein the personified figure of Meena is projected to the million other young girls and boys, installing in them the hope to outwit social evils and acquire decent standards of education for themselves.

First launched on the Woman's Day in the districts of Lucknow and Lalitpur in Uttar Pradesh (UP), the radio is a partnership between UNICEF, the Uttar Pradesh (UP) government and All India Radio. It is said to eventually be introduced to seven other districts in (UP)⁹³. The popularity of this radio can also be witnessed in the neighbouring countries of India, including Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Quite evidently, the outcome of this radio has been tremendous since the radio programme has developed reflective and observational skills within the adolescent children, who are all geared up to tackle problems related to their country, as noticed in their interviews on how they feel about this educational plan.⁹⁴

There is a serious need to embark on campaigning for at least equal inclusion of girls for education in many parts of Afghanistan. In several traditionally prone parts of the country, girls' education is contradicted by various reasons. One of the solid reasons however, lies on the extent of the insecurity of the environment. Nevertheless, motivating trainings and programmes via radio would be yet, another source to widen the scope of education and avoid any physical threat to students, at least until the situation for the physical existence of school at insecure places ameliorates.

SMC: Involving Community in School Management

School Management Committees (SMC) help the community's representatives be the guardians at the schools where their children study. The representatives may constitute parents or local authorities. These people are admitted in the school to monitor how the school

93 UP refers to a State in India.

94 UNICEF, Meena Radio, Website <http://www.unicef.org/india/media_6119.htm> [accessed 02 May 2012].

functions. The SMC plays a vital role in preparing and recommending developmental plans for the institutions. It also helps the parents involved, work closely with the school staff. In addition, it works as a watchdog to increase the focus of school on poor parents and communities for education.⁹⁵

Similar committees are already being practised in Afghanistan, but they have more of security concern rather than the quality one. The security problem has been playing an impeding role in the path of education development, and has since, stood as a prior concern for the policy makers and advisers in the country.

Performance-linked Pay (PLP): For Teachers' Quality of Performance

This scheme is an initiative of the state government of Andhra Pradesh (AP)⁹⁶ in India. It aims at strengthening the roots of education by developing more serious participation of the teachers in academic teaching programmes. This programme pays attention to providing pay and incentives to the teachers based on the quality of their performance. The performance linked pay programme is expected to involve more number of teachers than before as the idea of paying according to the ability sounds promising to most of the teachers. Besides, it will also endure the student - teacher relationship and will encourage the teachers to take interest in other school activities and positions which are otherwise difficult for the school staff to perform. For example paying more heed to the needs of the students. It is often seen that the lower the wages of the teachers, the poorer the quality of teaching would be. Financial incentives therefore, do play a role in uplifting the quality of teaching in teachers.

Surveys done in the Indian state of AP accounted for the fact that “majority (80%) of the teachers were content with this scheme and out of them 45% expressed high satisfaction levels.” Besides, it made the teachers more aware of their efficiencies, thus causing better results in students’ performance. Although the inclination of the teachers towards the performance linked pay schemes shows signs of deterioration along their age, yet it opens up new and fresh vistas for the new talents and amateur or professional teachers to participate. Likewise, any problem of financial or positional discrepancies is also resolved, and the educational sector is made to function in the absence of as many flaws or obstructions as possible.⁹⁷

95 Interview with Shantanu CCS, New Delhi

96 AP refers to a State in India.

97 Karthik Muralidharan, and Venkatesh Sundararaman, Teacher Opinions on Performance Pay: Evidence from India (2010) <http://www.teindia.nic.in/Files/Articles/Articles_23feb12/Muralidharan_Teacher_Opinions_on_Performance_Pay.p

The application of such an initiative in Afghanistan might be slightly different. Afghanistan as observed earlier, still suffers from lack of professional faculty in educational institutions. With exceptions in a number of institutions, majority of schools undergo unprofessional teaching and learning. The PLP may however, be a sample to initiate alternatives for even the unprofessional teachers on how to first develop their skills in uplifting the knowledge of the students. Based on the current human resources, this system may be planned and implemented with a situational form of ALP.

Activity Based Learning (ABL): Joyful Teaching

The Activity Based Learning (ABL) programme was introduced to the classes one to four. Firstly, it covered 260 schools of the Corporation of Chennai from 2003 to 2006. From June 2007, it has been expanded to the government and government aided schools.⁹⁸ In this scheme, students happen to learn and write through their own active involvement in the class. It also involves the teacher's skill to interweave something boring in a way that engages and fascinates students. For example, bringing cookies in the class and doing arithmetic on them instead of always using chalks and the boards. This kind of learning methodology, is expected promote the idea of children as active, rather than passive learners. It attempts to generate their creativity, and to make them independent. Students are likely to be encouraged for learning better under this plan.⁹⁹

The ABL was first taken up in the state of Tamil Nadu, in the southern part of India. It was developed only as a trial plan in 2003 in the primary schools, but its success was measured highly and was heretofore taken up by many other South Indian states. The UNICEF also supported the efforts to bring the ABL programmes to the government schools. The ABL is, as mentioned largely based on fun learning through colours, music, games etc. It does not hinder the child's creativity; instead, it proffers it through encouragement and fun. Unlike the other schools, where the child, in case of absenteeism, is left on his/her own to cover the missed course, children at ABL centres are taught the portion of their learning which they missed, in interesting ways.¹⁰⁰

[df](#)> [accessed 20 May 2012].

98 Base Line Report of 2007-2008 on Activity Based Learning Report <<http://www.educationforallindia.com/evaluation-of-activity-based-learning-of-tamil-nadu.pdf>> [accessed 20 May 2012].

99 S. Anandalakshmy, A Report on An Innovative Method in Tamil Nadu (2007) <<http://www.ssa.tn.nic.in/Docu/ABL-Report-by-Dr.Anandalakshmi.pdf>> [accessed 20 May 2012].

100S. Anandalakshmy, A Report on An Innovative Method in Tamil Nadu (2007) <<http://www.ssa.tn.nic.in/Docu/ABL-Report-by-Dr.Anandalakshmi.pdf>> [accessed 20 May 2012].

The children often find it boring to go to school. They find it boring only when they are forced to learn. In developing countries like Afghanistan, forcing the child to memorise, or instil the lesson into mind is in vogue. The students can even face physical punishments in case the teacher is not satisfied. The implementation of programmes like ABL may to a greater extent, offer the children the zest and zeal to learn. Children need to be fascinated if expected them to do the favour for us. Same, can we do by making teaching and learning joyful. Such considerate and caring approach towards learning may therefore, prove helpful for developing the children's inquisitive mind as well as their interest to learn.

Remedial Education: Providing Support Classes

Poverty, illiteracy, gender inequality and copious other social problems have been recognized not only by the government but also by many NGOs, which work either independently or with the support of the government, for improving living conditions in needy countries. In this context, it will be worthwhile to examine in short, the role of Pratham, an NGO based initiative in enhancing and ensuring literacy. Pratham offers a programme that offers teaching after the school classes for children who fall behind their fellow students to learn basic writing and reading in the primary classes. Pratham first launched in Mumbai in 1994, worked towards the education of the slum children.

In 2005 and 2006, Assessment Survey Evaluation Research, India (ASER), found out that a significant percentage of children could not read, and write, or do basic arithmetic. Pratham therefore launched its flagship programme, named Read India in 2007 to inculcate reading and writing capabilities within the students of age between 6 and 14, and at least match their learning skills and knowledge to that of the children attending private schools. The Read India programme has since, been working towards its aim with the help of the school teachers, NGOs and other individual volunteers. Efforts have been made to catalyse the standards in education both within the schools and outside. The programme also involves participation of the children's parents. In 2009-2010, the Read India mission spread its ideology from a short term training programme to a more extensive, almost permanent learning process. This meant working constantly in the villages and other backward areas that could ameliorate educational standards. The programme has had phenomenal response. In 2008, the Read India campaign covered 305,000 out of the 600,000 villages and mobilized 450,000 volunteers, and trained

over 600,000 teachers and government workers. In 2008/09, the campaign reached 33 million children across 19 states.¹⁰¹

The Programme has also encouraged participation of more woman volunteers, and in this way has made efforts at overcoming the problems of gender inequality. A tutor (balsakhi)¹⁰², usually a young woman is therefore, recruited from the local community and paid a fraction of the cost of civil-service teachers (\$10-15 per month). She is then trained, and prepared to work with the students of primary schools. The school children are provided extra teaching hours, other than their usual school hours, in which they are urged to acquire the basic learning and mathematical skills.

A comparison to check the efficiency of the programme was also carried out, in which the grades and the performances of the level three students were compared with those of the students who were allotted with a tutor. Substantial positive impacts on children's academic achievement were made. Scores on tests administered after the programme showed that, the test scores were remarkably improved, with the biggest gains in maths. The number of students in the bottom three of programme classes, who passed basic competency tests increased by nearly 8 percent, while those in the top three increased by 4 percent.¹⁰³

Such a programme is necessary for children especially, when they suffer from dyslexia, or any form of problem in reading and writing easily. Afghanistan is among the countries in which attention has not been given to dyslexia. A number of students quit school when they are questioned and punished for not being able to easily learn the lessons imparted to them. Fair consideration is required regarding this. Even students without dyslexic problem may face problems in learning the lessons in the initial go. Most of these students feel, they are disqualified for the classes and they adhere to no other option except to quit, or suffer staying behind other class fellows. As far as the programmes of Remedial Education system is concerned, it becomes important to provide support classes in schools for students who fall behind their class mates. This kind of programme maybe easily implemented in Afghanistan, provided the Education Management Information System of the Ministry of Education first, assesses the ability of the students in reading and writing, the way the quantitative surveys have been held.

101 Please see <<http://www.pratham.org/M-19-3-Read-India.aspx>> [accessed 20 May 2012].

102 Balsakhi in Hindi refers to the friend of a child.

103 See also, Abhijeet Berjee, et al., Balsakhi Remedia Tutoring in Vadodara and Mumbai, India

<<http://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/balsakhi-remedial-tutoring-vadodara-and-mumbai-india>> [accessed 20 May 2012].

Mobile & Immersive Learning for Literacy in Emerging Economies, (Millie)

Teaching Language on Mobile Phones

The progenitor of the programme was Dr. Mathew Kam, who undertook the idea of developing educational games on cell phones to make learning a rupturing process for the school children. This concept was obviously aimed at improving quality in education and was part of Kam's Ph.D thesis in 2004 at the University of California. He was supported by a committee and this concept went beyond the traditional boundaries of computer science, development economics, or language literacy studies. Mathew joined Carnegie Mellon University in 2008 as an Assistant Professor where he expanded Millie into India, China, sub-Saharan Africa, and some other regions.¹⁰⁴

Mathew became interested in implementing the project in India, when he noticed lack of English literacy among children. Kam found the real picture to be quite different in that children were incapable of writing even their names. By using entertaining games on the cell phone and introducing them to the backward areas in India, the project initiated development at two levels: firstly, it nurtured interest among students who were otherwise reluctant to be part of a very perfunctory and less advanced English learning environment, secondly to actively study English. Moreover, it made the children and their parents technologically much aware and advanced. With both the children and their parents willing to learn, the initiative became popular to such an extent that the parents would often visit the schools to encourage admissions of their children themselves.¹⁰⁵

This internationally applied initiative seems to be useful for language learning. Although, English language is imparted in much higher level at public schools in Afghanistan, the application of such a programme may be of good use based on the situation, the level, and subject of learning.

Assessment

A few similar programmes as above have been experimented in Afghanistan. The BBC World's Service Trust's Afghan Education Projects (AEP), for example, has been running radio drama, radio talk shows, and cartoons to address education, return of refugees, mine awareness, and good governance issues. It has been running educational programmes since 1994, and has

¹⁰⁴ See Millie Website <<http://www.millee.org/>> [accessed 20 May 2012].

¹⁰⁵ Also see Mobile Active, <<http://mobileactive.org/millee-learning-english-through-games-small-screen>> [accessed 20 May 2012].

benefited men and women, children and adults. This educational programme was very much well received during the war. Even after war, according to BBC report in 2008, 48% of the population listens to the radio drama every week. On a similar scale Save the Children UK's radio programme incorporates girls with educational programmes.¹⁰⁶ The MoE's radio as discussed above has also been functioning to generate encouragement to cover the students' learning through radio.

Application of some of the India's initiatives discussed requires great amount of efforts in Afghanistan for several reasons. Political stability, economic prosperity, and security that are not largely on the part of the country play a role in implementing such initiatives. At the same time, these initiatives can help bring the country out of political instability, economic disparity, and insecurity. Taking into account the range of positive changes that have thus far been made in at least some form since 2002 in the education sector of Afghanistan, these kinds of policy initiatives if implemented, could have added more to the already efforts made in the realm of literacy enhancement. Although, bringing forward India's sample initiatives does not necessarily mean the absence of useful educational policy initiatives in Afghanistan yet, by reading a different country's whereabouts of innovative projects, that is India's educational programmes, we can offer a unique approach in providing the thinking for a new and better idea of educational policy development in a war stricken country like Afghanistan.

It is however, worth noting that the discussion of the policy initiatives has been descriptive in this paper. Critical observation of these schemes has been ignored. There may be or may not be a scheme, that proves flawless, yet there may happen to be a problem in the management or in the implementing mechanism of the programme. Laadli Scheme for example, has been a great initiative, but it might suffer from problems of misuse and violation. Considering the prevalent corruption in the Indian bureaucratic – administrative machinery, it will be difficult to say how much justice can be done with this plan. In the absence of any strict vigilance or law, the amount of money being allotted for baby girls, is prone to be misappropriated. The practice of nepotism is still, another inscrutable issue which may impede the progress of the girl children belonging to the poor families; as such misuse of the government funds can lead to shortage of money, thus adding more to the prevalent penurious conditions of women.¹⁰⁷

106 BBC (2008), and Save the Children (2007) cited by Morten Sisgaard, Education and Fragility in Afghanistan: A Situational Analysis INEE research paper (2009).

107 Also see <<http://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2011/03/ladli-scheme-india/>> [accessed 20 May 2012].

Conclusion

The Afghan Constitution, the Afghan Education Law, the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), the Afghan Millennium Development Goals (AMDG), the Afghan National Education Strategic Plans (NESP I, and NESP II), Education for All (EFA) Goals, all emphasise the importance of education. These have confirmed the role of education in shaping the future of Afghanistan, and claim to work for its betterment. The Article 43 of the 2005 Constitution for example, considers education up to the level of bachelor's to be provided free, and as the right of all citizens of Afghanistan. It obliges the state to devise balanced expansion of education all over the country, and compels it to provide compulsory intermediate level education, and teach the native languages in the areas where spoken. The Education Law further emphasizes on equity of participation for education, and a more disinterested curriculum that could impart non-partisan elements inspired by the academic notions (see appendix I). The ANDS, the AMDG, and the NESPs I, II too, have kept the development of education sector in Afghanistan as a matter of grave concern, and have, processed their efforts to achieve what is needed.

In the wake of the collapse of the Taliban regime for instance, over 80 percent of the population were illiterate and a third of the country's 8,000 schools had been destroyed. "The extraordinary return to school in 2002 – a 400 percent increase in enrolment – exceeded all national and international expectations and gave the war torn country a sense of hope and stability. However, [...] simply returning to school has not been enough".¹⁰⁸ Focusing on quality development of education is equally important. Afghan surveys on education provide information the quantitative aspect but are silent on the quality of education being provided. Much has been known about the ratio of students, and educational institutions, while little has been said about the quality standards.

Moreover, as observed in Chapter II, the MoE has thus far, emphasized more on the development of primary, and secondary levels of education, whereas the formal structuring of pre-primary level to an extent, has been kept aside. Only in the plan of 2013 – 2015, has the MoE laid greater emphasis on the empowerment of this level of schooling. The childhood period, especially the first six years of a kid's life are acknowledged as the most critical years for their sound development. Their educational destiny can be assigned from this period. Of the total population of Afghanistan, nearly half constitutes school-age children, many of whom are below 7 years of age. If the basis of education or the initial phase of learning for these children is ensured well, their up bringing would be much more effective.

¹⁰⁸Jeaniene Spink, Education, Reconstruction, and Statebuilding in Afghanistan, (journal, no date).

APPENDIX I

EDUCATION LAW

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE MOST COMPASSIONATE, THE MOST MERCIFUL



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Ministry of Education

Education Law¹⁰⁹

Decree # 56

Date 31/04/1386

Official Gazette Serial # (955)

109 Please note that this is the copied form of education law. For the original version, please refer to the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan, and or any respective educational departments.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Foundation

Article One:

This law is enacted in accordance with the provision of article seventeenth, forty-third, forty-fourth, forty-fifth, forty-sixth and forty-seventh of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, in order to regulate educational affairs in the country.

Objectives

Article Two

The main objectives of this law are as follow:

1. Ensure equal rights of education and training for the citizens of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan through promotion and development of universal, balanced and equitable educational manner.
2. Strengthen Islamic spirit, patriotism, national unity, preservation of independence, and defense of territorial integrity, protection of interest, national pride, and loyalty to the republic system of Afghanistan.
3. Educate children, youth and adolescents as pious, Afghans and useful and sound members of the Society.
4. Develop and improve moral, sentimental, mental, physical nurturing capacities and sociable spirit of the students.
5. Strengthen the spirit of respect to human rights, protection of the women rights, democracy and elimination of every kind of discrimination, in light of the Islamic values and prevention of adduction to narcotics.
6. Strengthen the spirit of individual, social responsibilities and observance of law by teachers, lecturers, Modrasan, and the rest of the employees of the ministry of education.

7. Provide opportunity for the participation of the students' parents/ guardians and other members of the society in the management affairs, and obtaining the moral and financial cooperation for the promotion and development of education.
8. Educate and train citizens by active participation to promote economy and social affairs in reduction of poverty in the country.
9. Ensure intermediate (basic) compulsory education and to provide grounds for secondary education, in accordance with the requirements of the society.
10. Ensure and Develop pre- school education in accordance with the needs of the country's children.
11. Ensure and develop teacher's training education, Islamic education, technical -professional, vocational and artistic education in the country.
12. Eliminate illiteracy and provide grounds for accelerated learning for the children and adults who are left behind from the school in the country.
13. Develop and improve the quality of education by applying modern experiences of the contemporary world, in accordance with the country's needs, Islamic and national values.
14. Promote and improve academic and professional level of teachers, lecturers, Modrasan, directors, and the rest of the employees of the ministry of education.
15. Develop unified educational curriculum, in accordance with the contemporary and up to date standards.
16. Establish, expand, promote, build, repair and mobilize schools, Madrasas and other educational institutions of the ministry of education.

Equal Rights in education

Article three

The citizens of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan have equal rights to education without any kind of discrimination.

Free and Compulsory Education

Article Four

1. The intermediate (basic) education in Afghanistan is compulsory.
2. Pre-school educational level, intermediate (basic) education, secondary, technical-professional, vocational, artistic, formal Islamic education, higher education, (thirteenth and fourteenth grades) teachers' training, literacy and basic practical education in the public educational and training institutions are provided for free.

Enrolment Age

Article five

1. Children, from age six to the completion of age nine, are compulsory enrolled in the intermediate (basic) education schools level.
2. Children, whose ages are over kindergarten and lower than the school enrolment age, shall be enrolled in the pre-school education level.
3. Educational and training opportunities for children and youth, over age nine, are provided in accordance with its related rule.

Administration and management

Article six

The ministry of education is the highest authority to design policies, administer, direct and apply educational objectives, stated in article two of this law and is responsible to manage issues related to educational and training levels and lower than the bachelor degree in the country.

Duties and Authorities

Article seven

The ministry of education has the following duties and authorities:

1. Organize pre-school education plan, intermediate (basic) education, secondary, technical-professional, vocational, artistic, and formal Islamic education, teachers training, literacy and basic practical education, unattended education and education by correspondence.

2. Establish schools, Madrasases and teachers training institutions, technical-professional, vocational and artistic and center for literacy, with or without dormitory, in accordance with the community's needs.
3. Establish and equip public schools for the out standing, gifted and talented students and students with special needs.
4. Issue license to establish private domestic educational, combined and international institutions and supervise their activities.
5. Provide teaching and supplementary teaching materials.
6. Establish libraries, laboratories, cultural centres, information technology, playgrounds, and provide sport's equipments, in accordance with educational institutions needs.
7. Issue graduation certificate to the graduates of different educational levels, stated in this law.

Academic Council

Article Eight

1. In order to issue academic, educational and professional advises, in command of drafting policies, drafting appropriate strategies, schemes, and reforms in the educational and training system, curriculum, teachers training and scientific researches, the academic council shall be established in the ministry of education.
2. Combination and number of members of education academic council and its activities shall be arranged in accordance with its related rules.
3. The members of the academic council are eligible to receive adequate attendance privilege from the budget of the ministry of education.

Establishment of schools, Madrasas and educational institutions

Article Nine

1. The ministry of education shall establish schools, Madrasas, educational institutions, and educational courses of different levels mentioned in this law considering social needs and the financial capability of the state, in accordance with educational rules and

standards.

2. Education and training of nomads' children, shall take place in the established and mobile schools. The ministry of education, within its financial capabilities shall provide facilities to the Kochi children, by establishing dormitories.

Establishment of Dormitories

Article Ten

The ministry of education, in order to ensure access of the society to the different levels of education stated in this law, shall establish needed educational dormitories, within the government financial capabilities, in accordance with its related rules.

Establishment of Private domestic, Combined and International institution

Article Eleven

1. National and foreign natural and legal persons can establish private, combined and international educational institutions, with national and international standards in the different educational levels in accordance with its related regulation for the Afghan and foreign citizens.
2. Curriculum, educational plan and their activities mentioned in paragraph (1) of this article and the conditions of admission of the students, lecturers , teachers and Islamic teachers shall be arranged in accordance with its related regulation.

Educational Standards

Article Twelve

1. The beginning and closing of the school year, in the different climatically regions, the number of weekly teaching hours, the number of the students in the class, curriculum, educational plan, evaluation system and examination of different educational levels, are set forth, in accordance with its related rules, by the ministry of education.
2. Admission requirements, number, level of educational standards of teachers, lecturers, and Modrasan, and the principle method of evaluation and examination and their other academic, professional and specialization are set forth by the ministry of education with its related rules.

Unattended education and education by correspondence**Article Thirteen**

The ministry of education shall provide the opportunity of expansion of unattended education and education by correspondence of different educational levels mentioned in this law in accordance with its related regulation.

Pre-school education**Article Fourteen**

Pre- school education shall be provided in order to prepare children for intermediate (basic) education in accordance with its related rules.

Education of special need person**Article fifteen**

Education of children and adults who needs special educational and training, and due to different reasons are left behind from education and training, shall be provided in different educational levels, in accordance with its related rules.

Educational and training radio and TV programs**Article sixteen**

The ministry of education in order to promote different levels of education, stated in this law shall provide and publicize educational , entertainment, public awareness educational and training radio and TV programs for children and adults, in accordance with its related rules.

CHAPTER TWO

INTERMEDIATE (BASIC) EDUCATION

Article Seventeen

Intermediate (Basic) educational level comprises grade first to the end of grade ninth, provided free and compulsory in a balanced and equitable manner, in accordance with the educational standards, considering the number of population and Kochies residing in the area.

The Objectives of the intermediate (basic) education level

Article Eighteen

Objectives of the intermediate (basic) education are:

1. Understand the basic principles and commandments of the sacred religion of Islam and strengthen Islamic belief and values. Non-Muslim students are exempt from this provision.
2. Improve and strengthen Islamic sensation and spirit of patriotism and unity and national solidarity, justice, equality, peaceful coexistence, peace loving, tolerability and self-reliance.
3. Improve and strengthen respecting to the human and woman rights.
4. Aware the students to the importance of the protection of the environment and its proper use and strengthen the spirit of adduction.
5. Improve and strengthen the spirit of social responsibility, law abiding, order and discipline, social behaviour, respecting parents, elder, teachers, lecturers, Modrasan and effective participation in the family, schools and societal affairs and spirit of mutual assistance, kindness, and cooperation.
6. Develop and strengthen physical, spiritual, moral, mental, affection and social soundness of the students.
7. Develop and expand training physical education, cultural and artistic programs in accordance with the Islamic values.
8. Acquire functional literacy and develop skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening

in the national and international languages.

9. Develop and strengthen the habit and culture of reading.
10. Acquire basic knowledge of social and natural sciences.
11. Develop and Strengthen the sense of initiation, intelligence and identifying problems and seeking logical solution.
12. Prepare the students for the secondary educational level.

CHAPTER THREE

SECONDARY GENERAL EDUCATION

Article Nineteen

The secondary general education level comprises grades ten, eleven and twelve, is provided free in a balanced and equitable manner, in accordance with educational and training standards, considering the number of population and Kochies residing in the area for the graduates of the ninth grades of the intermediate (Basic) educational level.

Objectives of the secondary general education

Article Twenty

The objectives of the secondary general educational level, in addition to the objectives of article eighteen of this law are:

1. Develop and strengthen understanding and solidify Islamic belief and values of the students. Non-Muslim students are exempt from this provision.
2. Develop and strengthen the spirit of loyalty to the homeland, the system of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, preservation of independence, defending territorial integrity and national values, protecting properties and public assets, consolidating democracy, in conformity with Islamic values and nationally accepted traditions.
3. Develop and expand culture of peace and equality.
4. Aware students of the harms of tobacco, drugs, intoxication, danger of AIDS, terrorism, war, violence, discrimination, and every kinds of prejudices and other prohibitions.
5. Develop and expand Islamic knowledge, social and natural sciences and mathematics.
6. Develop and strengthen skills in national and international languages.
7. Use of contemporary technology, including information technology.
8. Develop and expand the habit and culture of reading, thinking and analysing academic researches and self-evaluation.
9. Prepare students for continuing and higher education and trade and occupation.

CHAPTER FOUR

ISLAMIC EDUCATION LEVEL

Article Twenty-one

1. Islamic formal educational level comprises grade tenth to the end of grade fourteenth, provided and expanded free in the public educational Madrasas, in a balanced and equitable manner, in accordance with the number of population and Kochis residing in the area and educational and training standards for the graduates of the ninth grades of intermediate (basic) education level.

2. Education in Darulhefazes comprises grade one to the end of grade twelve, provided and expanded free in the public Darulhefazes.

Objectives of the Islamic education level

Article Twenty-two

The objectives of the formal Islamic education level and Darulhefazes, in addition to the objectives set forth in articles eighteenth and twentieth of this law are:

1. Gain principles, rules, religious precepts, academic and ethical orders of the sacred religion of Islam, and use them in the individual and social life, effective and useful participation in the household, Madrasa and the community life.

2. Train scholars, orators, preachers, Modrasan, and (memorizers) Hafezes of the Holly Quran, for teaching, preaching, propagating, directing and leading prayers (Imam).

3. Train professional teacher for Islamic knowledge and Arabic language to teach in Madrasas and public and private educational institutions.

CHAPTER FIVE

TECHNICAL, PROFESSIONAL, VOCATIONAL AND ARTISTIC EDUCATION

Article Twenty-Three

1. Technical-professional, vocational and artistic education level comprises grade tenth to the end of grade fourteenth , provided and expanded in public educational institutions in a balanced and equitable manner, considering the number of population and Kochis residing in the area and educational and training standards for the graduates of the intermediate (basic) educational schools.
2. Technical – professional vocational and artistic education comprise short terms courses in order to develop and provide professional skills in accordance with societal needs, in the educational institutions of the ministry of education.

Objectives of the Technical- Professional, Vocational and Artistic education level

Article Twenty-Four

The objectives of technical-professional, vocational and artistic educational level, in addition to the objectives set forth in article twentieth of this law, are:

1. Train human resources in the technical- professional, vocational and artistic fields needed by the society and international market considering national and international standards, with special concern to the woman needs.
2. Develop and expand knowledge and skills in the technical- professional, vocational and artistic section, through theoretical and practical manner, in the needed fields.
3. Provide special education for the blind and disabled students in appropriate and needed field s.
4. Prepare students for admission into the educational institutions and universities.

CHAPTER SIX

TEACHERS' TRAINING EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Article Twenty-Five

Teachers' training educational level comprises grade tenth to the end of grade fourteenth, provided and expanded free, in a balanced and equitable manner, considering the number of population and Kochi residing in the area in accordance with the educational and training standards, for the graduates of the intermediate (basic) and secondary educational schools.

Objectives of the Teacher's Training educational level

Article Twenty- six

The objectives of the teacher's training education level are:

1. Train pious teachers, lecturers and Modrasan, with knowledge in highly professional standards skills, in order to acquire intermediate (basic), and secondary education objectives, stated in this law, in accordance with educational necessity and educational and training system.
2. Increase the number of professional teachers, lecturers and Modrasan.
3. Promote knowledge and professional skills of teachers, lectures and Modrasan.
4. Provide grounds for taking the national skills exam of teachers, lecturers and Modrasan while in service.

Programs for on the job training and pre-admission to the service

Article Twenty –Seven

The ministry of education considering the needs of the different educational levels stated in this law, shall provide and apply effective training programs for teachers, lecturers and Modrasan while in service and prior to admission into the service.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CENTRE FOR SCIENCE AND EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING TECHNOLOGY

Article Twenty-Eight

In order to improve the quality, expand and develop and academic researches in scientific and mathematics education, learning information technology and its application in the school and educational and training institutions the centre for science and educational and training technology shall be established. Issues related to the centre for science and educational and training technology and its duties and authorities of academic members, shall be set forth in accordance with its related rules.

Objectives of the Centre for Science and Educational and Training Technology

Article Twenty- Nine

The objectives of the centre for science and educational and training technology are:

1. Ensure students of all fields in the different educational levels to have access to learn quality and contemporary scientific and mathematics education and information technology.
2. Enhance level of academic and professional knowledge and improve practical skills of teachers and lecturers in science, mathematics and information technology.
3. Use and application of educational and training technology and provide teaching aid material in science, mathematics, and information technology subjects for the purpose of theoretical and practical quality learning and provide and use contemporary audio visual education and training technology.
4. Review the textbooks of science and mathematics and information technology through scientific researches.
5. Equip laboratories for science and mathematics, prepare mobile laboratories (Kits) and experimental laboratories guidebooks.
6. Prepare ground for training specialized and professional cadres in the field of science, mathematics and information technology.

CHAPTER EIGHT

EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM

Unified Educational Curriculum

Article Thirtieth

1. Unified educational curriculum, is the standard which sets forth general and specific objectives of education and training and based on that, the ministry of education provides and organizes the content of educational textbooks, method of teaching and evolution, teaching material and its auxiliary.
2. A unified educational curriculum shall apply in all public and private educational and training institutions. Private international educational institutions, stated in article (11) of this law, are exempted from this provision.

Prepare, Draft and Develop Educational Curriculum

Article Thirty-One

1. The ministry of education, in order to prepare and draft develop educational curriculum and teaching materials and arrange its related affairs, shall establish the academic board and the developing educational curriculum, teaching materials and its publishing office. The composition, duties and authority of this office shall be set forth in separate rules.
2. Unified educational curriculum for levels of intermediate (basic), secondary, technical-professional, vocational, and artistic, formal Islamic education, teachers' training, literary and basic practical education, pre-school education, and unattended education and education by correspondence, shall be continuously reviewed and developed, in accordance with the needs of the society and considering internationally accepted academic standards, prepared and drafted by the boards mentioned in paragraph

(1) of this article and by observing acquired experiences.

- (3) Educational curriculum stated in paragraph (2) of this article, shall apply after the ratification of the academic council of the ministry of education and approval of the minister.

Language of Teaching

Article Thirty-two

1. Teaching in the public educational institutions, stated in this law, national private educational institutions and educational and training programs and centers for literacy and basic practical education, shall be taught in one of the state official languages (Pashto and Dari). Language of teaching shall be selected from one of the two state official languages, based on the current language spoken by the majority of the population residing in the area, in accordance with its related rule.
2. Learning Pashto and Dari languages in the schools and educational institutions is compulsory.
3. In the areas where spoken language of the majority of the people is the third official language in the country (Uzbiki, Turkmani, Pashai, Nooristani, Balochi, Pamiry and other languages), in addition to teach Pashto and Dari languages, opportunities for teaching of the third language as a teaching subject shall be prepared. In order to teach the third official languages of the country, the ministry of education in the field of teachers training, textbooks, teaching materials, shall provide and apply effective programs.
4. Teaching in the international educational institution, shall be taken place in a language that has been selected by the educational institutions and with the agreement of the ministry of education. Teaching one of the official languages (Pashto and Dari), basics and commands of the secret religion of Islam for the Afghan students in these educational institutions shall be provided in accordance with the separate procedures, prepared and organized by the ministry of education.
5. Foreign languages in the educational institutions stated in this law and private and public educational and training programs, shall be taught in conformity with the educational curriculum.

CHAPTER NINE

EXTRA CURRICULA ACTIVITIES

Implementation of Extra Curricula Activities

Article Thirty-three

(1) The ministry of education, in order to promote students personality and educational level with having the spirit of unity, harmony, equality, sense of understanding, assistance, humanism, patriotism, respect to human and woman's rights, acquaintance to diverse cultures, participation in social and cultural affairs of the community, shall organize and apply the following extra curricula activities under the guidance of teachers, lecturers and Modrasan:

1. Encourage and abet students to perform obligatory duties and obey Islamic ethics.
2. Participate actively and voluntarily in the social works including helping needy compatriots, preserve living, environment, cleaning and greenery affairs, construct and rehabilitate inside and out side of the educational institution premises.
3. Participate actively in field trips for the purpose of acquaintance with the compatriots, culture and rich history of the country and strengthen national unity.
4. Participate actively in competition, gatherings and academic conferences, artistic, literary and sporting in and outside of the country.
5. Create students exchange programs for the purpose of academic learning, with Islamic and other friendly nations.
6. Organize workshops and seminars for understanding the charter of the UN, basic declaration of the human right and respect to human dignity.
7. Organize other extra curricula activities resulting mental, intellectual, physical and personal behavior enhancement of the students.

(2) Participate in the activities stated in paragraph (1) of this article shall take place with the approval of the students' parents.

Establishment of Boys Scout

Article Thirty-four

In order to improve quality, effectiveness, order and discipline in the educational institutions stated in this law and performing voluntary and social services when needed, the department of the boys scouts, shall be established and expanded. The method activities of the Boy Scotts shall be set forth in accordance with its related rules.

CHAPTER TEN

LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION

Literacy and Basic Education

Article Thirty-five

Literacy and basic practical education comprises reading, writing, counting and learning knowledge of basic practical skills, vocational and professional occupational skills that shall be provided in a balanced and equitable manner for the deprived adults, adolescent and youths, who are left behind from educational institutions in the country.

The Objectives of literacy and Basic Practical Education

Article Thirty-six

The objective of the literacy and basic practical education are:

1. Observe the orders of the secret religion of Islam related to literacy and knowledge.
2. Provide grounds for reading, writing, counting and acquiring knowledge in basic practical and vocational skills for illiterate and less literate and prepare them for continuing education.
3. Provide the opportunity for continuing education stated in this law for adult and children who are left behind from education.

Compulsory Learning of Literacy and Basic Practical Education

Article Thirty-Seven

1. Teach literacy and basic practical education to the illiterate and less literate for contractor of employees of the public and private organizations are compulsory.
2. The ministries and public and private organizations shall provide grounds for literacy and basic practical education programs with cooperation of the ministry of education in their related departments.
3. Method to implement literacy and basic practical education programs in their related ministries and private and public departments, shall be prepared in accordance with

separate rule and be approved and organized by the ministry of education.

4. Ministries and public and private organizations stated in paragraph (2) of this article are obliged to provide the stationary, place to teach and employ the literacy and basic practical education teachers.
5. The ministry of education shall prepare and provide books, learning materials and grounds of learning for literacy and basic practical education teachers of the ministries and public and private departments, stated in paragraph (2) of this article.
6. The ministry of education, based on societal needs and possibility of the government financial capabilities, shall set up and conduct national literacy and basic practical education programs, considering priority of the deprived people of the society, in a balanced and equitable manner, in accordance to its related procedure.

Administer and Manage, Literacy and Basic Practical Education

Article Thirty –eight

1. In order to draft and apply national programs in the domain of literacy and basic practical education, obtain resources, manage, lead and supervise the process of implementation of the afore mentioned programs, the high commission of literacy and basic practical education, shall be established in the ministry of education.
2. Composition of the members and method of commission's activities stated in paragraph (1) of this article shall be set forth in accordance with its related procedure.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Prohibition of Physical and Psychological Punishment

Article Thirty-Nine

Every kind of physical and psychological punishment of students is prohibited even for their correction and chastisement. Violators shall be prosecuted in accordance with the legal provisions.

Prohibition of Political Activities

Article Forty

1. Political and partisan activities of the student's, teacher's, lecturers, Modrasan and other employees of the ministry of education in the premises of the educational institutions and educational and training programs stated in this law, are forbidden.
2. Individuals, organizations and political parties, are prohibited to use educational institutions stated in this law and educational and training programs for achieving their political purposes.

Uniforms

Article Forty-One

Students, teachers, lecturers and Modrasan of the educational institutions stated in this law, wear uniforms, which its types shall be considered in accordance with the climatic and cultural requirements of the different regions of the country and be determined by its related rules.

Incentive Pay

Article Forty-Two

In order to motivate teachers, lecturers, Modrasan, authors, researchers, academic and professional members of teachers training institutions, centre for science and educational and training technology, develop educational curriculum and publications, Islamic formal education, Darulhefazes and technical- professional education, shall receive incentive pay, in accordance with its legislative document.

Work Schedule

Article Forty- Three

Attendance, off and work time for teachers, lecturers, authors, researchers and other

educational employees, shall be set forth by observing the provisions of the labor law and its related rules.

Retirement

Article Forty-Four

Teachers, lecturers, Modrasan, authors and researchers, academic and professional members in accordance with the provisions of the law, shall benefit from retirement rights. In case of the administrative exigencies and employees willingness that has working ability, their employment duration shall extended for another ten years.

National Teaching Skill Examination

Article Forty- five

Any individual can be employed as a teacher, who, in addition to possesses employment qualification of the civil service law, successfully passes the national teaching skill examination, in accordance with its related procedure.

Assistance

Article Forty-Six

The ministry of education, in order to materially and morally assist teachers, lecturers, Modrasan, authors, researchers and other related employees shall design and implement and create effective programs including, teachers' assistance account and cooperatives in accordance with the financial capability of the government.

Methods and conditions of using teacher's assistance account and cooperatives shall be set forth, in accordance with its related rule.

Use of Scholarships and Fellowships

Article Forty Seven

The ministry of education, in order to improve and expand academic, professional, and specialization of the academic and related administrative employees, shall provide the suitable grounds to use domestic and foreign scholarships and fellowships and participation in the courses, seminars, workshops, conferences and symposiums, in accordance with its related rules, in a balanced and equitable manner in the country.

Council of the Parents, Students, Teachers and the Community People

Article Forty- Eight

(1) The council of the representatives of student's parents, teachers and local residents, to

achieve the following objectives, shall be established, in the public and private schools and educational institutions:

1. Active participation of the students' parents, teachers and the local residents in the process of education and training, in order to resolve educational and training problems, improving educational and training quality, prevention of misuse, legal and disciplinary violations of students, teachers and employees of the ministry of education.
2. Oversee and supervise from education, moral, edification and social interactive of the students' and employees of the ministry of education.
3. Protect the students and educational personnel's from violence and destructive activities in the family, inside and outside of the educational institution.
4. Active participation in management and implementation of development programs of the ministry of education for improvement of education and training system in the country.

(2) Organization and method of activity of the council stated in paragraph (1) of this article shall be set forth in accordance with its related rule.

Organizing other Administrative Affairs

Article Forty- Nine

Enrollment conditions, promotion, graduation examinations, grounding, transfer, dismissal and discharge of the students from the educational institutions and other educational and training programs stated in this law, shall be regulated in accordance with its related legislative documents.

Graduation Certificate

Article Fifty

Graduates from the different educational levels stated in this law and educational and training programs are entitled to receive graduation certificates from the ministry of education. Conditions, specification and types of graduation certificates shall be determined in accordance with its related rules.

Enacting Rules and procedures**Article Fifty-One**

The ministry of education, for the better implementation of the provisions of this law, shall propose regulations, enact and apply rules and procedures.

Enforcement**Article Fifty-Two**

This law, from the date of its endorsement shall be enforced and published in the official gazette. By its enforcement, the education law published in the official gazette No. 796 dated 29th of Moharam alharam 1422 H.Q. and other provisions contrary to this law shall be repealed.

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