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A master programme in educational research and development in Afghanistan 2008-2010. Experiences and outcomes

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INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A MASTER PROGRAMME IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFGHANISTAN 2008-2010

Experiences and Outcomes

Edited by:
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Abbreviations

ACCA	The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance to determine statistical significance of
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
BLC	Basic Learning Competencies
CBE	Community Based Education
CBO	Community Based Organization
CBS	Community Based School or Sections
CDC	Community Development Council
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CF	Curriculum Framework
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CTD	Compilation and Translation Department
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department For International Development
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
EALAS	East Asia Learning Achievements Study
EFA	Education For All
EQAO	Education Quality and Accountability Office
EU	European Union
GAD	Gender and Development
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GoA	Government of Afghanistan
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HESP	High Education Strategic Plan
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations
LHL	Learning for Healthy Life
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NESP	National Education Strategic Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRVA	National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Organization
PGFCBE	Policy Guideline for Community-Based Education
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SCA	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
SES	Social Economical Status
SOLO	Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes
TED	Teacher Education Division of the MoE

TIMSS	Third International Mathematics and Science Study
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nation's Children Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WID	Women in Development

1. INTRODUCTION

Pia Karlsson & Amir Mansory

The Master Programme in Educational Research and Development (MAP) was running from May 2008 – March 2011[1]. It was the first time ever a training programme at this level was implemented in Afghanistan as a result of international cooperation in higher education. Five universities have been involved:

- Nangarhar University, Afghanistan
- Karlstad University, Sweden,
- Tampere University, Finland,
- Bochum University, Germany
- Kathmandu University, Nepal.

The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan has been associated partner. MAP was first planned at Stockholm University in Sweden and a connection to this university has been maintained throughout the Programme. MAP was financed by the European Commission through the Asia-Link Programme.

The general aim of MAP was to build capacity among Afghan education staff, more specifically to develop attitudes, skills and competencies that would allow for independent and scientifically based research in education. The Programme endeavoured to promote reflective thought, analytical abilities and critical thinking skills. To achieve the goal the Programme has had a specific focus on social research methods or methods of inquiry in theory as well as in practice. Another specific aspect of the Programme was the gender perspective that has been applied in most of the courses and assignments.

Totally 21 participants – from Nangarhar University (7), Ministry of Education (7), Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (4) and other organisations (2) - have graduated and been awarded a Master Degree at Karlstad University.

The content and modes of study in brief

The Programme was offered both at 60 ECTS and 120 ECTS levels. A combination of part and full time studies has been used, including face-to-face sessions, tutoring on distance via e-mail and self-studies. The language of instruction was English. All lectures were provided in Kabul or Jalalabad by the visiting teachers:

- Prof. Christel Adick, Bochum University
- Prof. Holger Daun, Stockholm University
- Dr. Björn Eliasson, Karlstad University
- Dr. Pia Karlsson, Karlstad University
- Dr. Amir Mansory, Karlstad University
- Prof. Mahesh Parajuli, Kathmandu University
- Prof. Tuomas Takala, Tampere University.

In total, eight courses were provided, some of 7.5 and others of 15 ECTS, including for example Learning and Teaching in Contemporary Society, Teacher's Professional Role, Education and Development with Comparative Perspectives and Islam and Education in the Era of Globalisation. Besides lectures, seminars, and self-studies the MAP students have

[1] Besides the Master Programme the project also organized open seminars and conferences, participated in international conferences, had an active website, published Newsletters and other material.

participated in a special, and probably unique, course in the academic world, a course named Field Studies, which constituted one of the major courses of the Programme.

In between the courses the participants were mainly engaged in self-studies of the compulsory literature and writing assignments and reports. Course leaders and programme coordinators provided support and supervision by email and in monthly seminars. Each course was examined through a specific assignment, usually a written course paper or fieldwork report. The papers were graded Fail, Pass or Pass with Distinction. In case of Fail the students had the opportunity to rewrite the assignment.

Students who opted for a MA degree of 60 credits wrote one thesis only and for MA Degree of 120 credits the writing of two theses were required (in addition to more courses). The theses and course papers written by the MAP participants have contributed considerably to knowledge about education in Afghanistan, an area that is in dire need of scientifically based knowledge. In this book some of the produced material is published. In another publication a selection of theses and papers are translated into Dari and Pashto. More information about MAP is found at www.kau.se/map

Organisation of the Book

After this introductory chapter follows a chapter on Education in Afghanistan in order to provide a background both historically and contemporary of the education sector. Next is Part I, which includes a selection of eleven theses followed by Part II, which consists of five selected course papers and one fieldwork report. Part II also includes a detailed description of the eight courses, including aims, content, literature, assignment and names of the lecturers. The selected theses, papers and report have been shortened and edited by the supervisor of the respective author (student), i.e. the MAP lecturers. All theses are available as complete versions at www.kau.se/map.

Preparations for the writing of the first thesis started more than a year before the last defences. In the Degree Course I, described later in this book, the participants were introduced to a common topic: Female Education in Afghanistan. Under this umbrella theme, participants choose, after extensive discussions with their respective supervisor, their own particular thesis subject. For the writing of the second thesis there were no specific directions as regards the topic; the participants choose topic on their own, often with much guidance by the supervisor, though.

Part I.

An issue of much concern for the Ministry of Education and others is, for example, the high drop out rate of girl students in primary education. In chapter three, edited by Dr. Pia Karlsson, Zaher Mohammad Akbar discusses girls' retention rates and factors that influence girls' drop out. His study, carried out in Kunduz province, collected data from eight schools in rural and urban areas. He found that around 37 per cent of all girls of school age was enrolled, fewer in primary level but more in secondary schools. Overall drop out rate was higher for girls than boys. Poor security was considered the major obstacle for girls' participation in education.

Several participants were interested in girls' learning achievements as compared to boys, in relation to family backgrounds or to teacher qualifications. Chapter four, edited by Prof. Holger Daun, is written by Ismat Mohammad Tahir. By using data collected by SCA through a test based on Basic Learning Competencies (BLC) in mathematics and language achievements of 1170 students (552 girls) at the end of grade three in 12 provinces, and complemented with interviews of teachers and students, he found that girls had achieved higher scores than boys in both subjects; particularly evident in language. Maybe surprisingly, children of farmers and skilled labours had achieved higher scores than children whose parents had professions such as doctors, engineers and teachers.

Susan Wardak's thesis in chapter five, also edited by Prof. Holger Daun, examines gender differences in math achievements among 1017 sixth grade students (505 boys, 512 girls) in six provinces in Afghanistan. Results indicate that both boys and girls performed dramatically lower than compared to international standards. Boys performed, overall, slightly better than girls but the difference was not statistically significant.

Kanishka Shahabi, the writer of chapter six, has also used the secondary data provided by SCA and his study, here edited by Prof. Mahesh Parajuli, explores math and language achievements of grade three students in rural areas of Afghanistan. A low level of performance was found in both subjects: both boys and girls scored only around 50 in both grades. No relationship between the students' performance and teachers' sex, education and training was found. Likewise, there was no or little relation between students' performance and parents' education or occupation.

In chapter seven and eight gender roles in language textbooks have been investigated. Ahmad Khaled Fahim (chapter six, edited by Prof. Christel Adick) has studied the recently revised Pashto language textbooks for grades 1-6. By analyzing texts and pictures from a gender perspective he found an overall male bias in texts, illustrations and language. The textbooks portray males in active roles mostly outside home settings while females are portrayed in more passive roles, such as taking care of children, looking after domestic chores and living in subordination to men. In addition, ten teachers were interviewed and a majority of both male and female teachers believed that certain occupations are male exclusive, e.g. driver, president, carpenter, national army soldier while others are for females only, e.g. kindergarten teacher. The majority of female teachers also believed that it is impossible for women to be army soldiers, carpenters, farmers and drivers. Reasons included women's physical inability, social restrictions and fear of abuse.

Mohammad Nabi Shahab, in chapter eight, also edited by Prof. Christel Adick, takes a historical perspective in his exploration of gender roles in Pashto language textbooks. He has analysed textbooks from the Communist period (1979-1992), the Mujaheddin period (1992-1996), the Taliban period (1996-2002) and during the present government (2002 - ongoing). In particular, the male and female social roles, status, and responsibilities were compared. It was found that females have not been given their due roles in any period. Moreover, no significant progress had been made, not even in the recently revised textbooks, which are presently used in schools.

Parents' educational background as well as parents' attitudes towards girls' education (often linked) have been found to influence girls' participation in education in many countries. Mayel Aminulhaq has studied parents' attitudes in two specific areas, one rural and one urban, and also sought to investigate whether a move from a rural area to the city changes parents' position. In his study, chapter nine, edited by Dr. Pia Karlsson, he interviewed refugees who originated from the same area and among whom some returned to the village and others instead settled in the city. A shift from rural life to urban life seems to be contributing in changing the attitudes of parents. For instance, in the city 100 per cent of the school age girls attended school while only 37 of the rural girls was enrolled. The lack of female teachers, a long distance to school and unsafe route were the parents' major concerns, particularly in the rural areas, as regards participation in education for their daughters.

Parents' expectations of returns of education are one of the themes in chapter ten, edited by Prof. Mahesh Parajuli. Rahmani Rahmanulla found that parents, referring to Islam as well as the Constitution, were aware of the need of education for their children. Although parents did not know exactly what their children learned in school, they expressed their full trust on the school and its curriculum. Parents aspired a good job for their children, which would bring social and economic prosperity, not only for the family but also for the social and economic development of society. All parents agreed that their active involvement would bring positive

results in their children's learning. However, they were not much involved. Their support to their children's education was confined to sending them to school, providing learning material and environment at home and motivating them for learning. The reasons for their non-involvement included absence of such culture of involvement, lack of government policy, parental illiteracy, unwelcome behaviour of teachers of some schools, etc.

Teachers' communication in the classroom is the subject of next chapter. In chapter eleven, edited by Dr. Pia Karlsson, Sherzoi Ahmad Jawid has, through classroom observations and by interviewing teachers, studied how male and female teachers communicate with students in grade one and six, in particular, how teachers ask and respond to questions, how they address students, and whether they use physical/corporal and/or psychological/mental punishment. He found that teachers pay attention only to certain students of the class, seldom recognized students by name and commonly abused students mentally. It was also found that corporal punishment, although banned by law, still is frequently practiced and considered necessary by the teachers.

Since 2002 a huge influx of students has resulted in three-doubled enrolment rates and the education sector needs provision and support from not only the MoE but also, for example, by international NGOs, such as the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan. Particularly in remote areas with small villages education is provided, above all for girls, as Community Based Schools (CBS). Abdul Mobin Quraishi have been studied CBS. In chapter 12, edited by Prof. Tuomas Takala, an attempt was made to find out to what extent the MoE policy on CBS has been implemented. In accordance to the MoE guidelines, the local communities had provided the physical space for the schools; moreover, the communities had also taken the responsibility to protect the school. The teachers had been recruited according to by MoE set standards and teachers were paid regularly by the NGOs, which was much appreciated by the teachers themselves. Most of the studied CBSs implemented the government curriculum while some, however, used both the official and the NGO's own curriculum

A sign of that globalisation in education has reached also Afghanistan is the emergence of private schools. The last chapter in this book, chapter 13, written by Nooruddin Kwaja and edited by Prof. Tuomas Takala, compares some private and public schools in Kunduz province. Both type of schools use the state curriculum but has different study plans. There were more teaching hours in the private schools compared to public schools. A pre-school was often was attached to the private school. Mostly, classes were co-educational. Many subjects were taught in English. When comparing students' performance the results were better in the private schools. Whether this difference is due to higher quality of private schools, to the varied content the final exam tests, or to social and cultural capital of the students' families is a question that still seeks an answer. The study indicates that students of the private schools were mostly children of wealthy and middle class families.

Part two

In Part II MAP's eight courses are described. They were:

- Social Research Methods (15 ECTS)
- The Teacher's Professional Role in the Society (15 ECTS)
- Education and Development in a Comparative Perspective (15 ECTS)
- Teaching and Learning in a Contemporary Society (15 ECTS)
- Scientific Writing (7.5 ECTS)
- Islam and Education (7.5 ECTS)
- Field Studies (15 ECTS)
- Degree Course I (15 ECTS)

- Degree Course II (15 ECTS)

The courses are described in detail in Chapter 14 by Pia Karlsson and Amir Mansory. In Chapter 15 a paper from the course Education and Development is presented with the title *Gender and Education – a global perspective and the situation in Afghanistan* written by Ahmad Khalid Fahim. Next chapter is the assignment by Aminulhaq Mayel from the course Teaching and Learning. It is titled *Learning in the light of theories*. Next paper ss selected from the same course. Mohammad Tahir Ismat has written chapter 17, *Reflection on some learning theories*. Also Chapter 18 is chosen among the assignments from this course. It is titled *Learning theories and their application in the classroom – an analysis from own experience* and is written by Mohammad Zaher Akbar. Chapter 19, *Islamic Education: A comparison of MoE documents* is the assignment written by Sherzoi Ahmad Jawid from the course Islam and Education. Chapter 20, finally, is an example of a fieldwork report: *The use of new textbooks: classroom observations and teacher interviews* by Husnia Tareen.

All the papers and the report have been shortened and edited by Pia Karlsson and Amir Mansory before inclusion in this book.

Karlstad and Kabul in February 2011

Dr. Pia Karlsson & Dr. Amir Mansory

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2. EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Pia Karlsson & Amir Mansory

When Afghans discuss the aim of education it does not take long before two concepts are brought up: adab and akhlaq. They are repeatedly mentioned as constituting the proper essence of education. This chapter starts by explaining the meaning and importance of these concepts. Next there is a description of three types of education in Afghanistan: informal education, Islamic education and Western type of education, described with regards to history, content and organisation. Since memorisation is particularly important as a learning technique in Islamic education, a discussion about the value of this method is included. In the last part of this chapter we provide an account of three burning issues that have been inherent throughout the development of education in Afghanistan. These issues have sometimes led to open conflict, temporarily been put to lull and sometimes been resting just below the surface. They are: girls' participation in education; the role of Islam in Western type of education; and finally, state control of Islamic education.

Two important concepts in education

Adab originally referred to the new literature developed during the 9th and 10th centuries by Arab and Persian writers, which combined instruction and entertainment. Stories, anecdotes, folklore and historical accounts from pre-Islamic, Greek, Persian, Arabic and Indian sources were then collected and published (Ahmed, 1988).

In contemporary dictionary the term *adab* is translated as politeness (www.farsidic.com). It has to do with a person's behaviour towards others. It is about proper conduct and good manners. For example, in Afghanistan as in many other places, greeting each other is very important. Learning how to greet others appropriately is vital in the education of children. *Salam Aleikum* is the initial words used in a greeting, which approximately means: 'peace to you'. The compulsory answer is: *Wa-aleikum Asalam (*'the same to you'). There are many rules connected to the greeting procedure. An older person should greet the younger first; the one who enters a house should start the greeting; and, men should greet women first. Such is the order whether people are acquainted with each other or not. The idea is that the stronger one (the older, the entering, the man) has the power to offer peace. S/he has the upper hand and can assure his/her good intention while the weaker part should accept the offer and then convey the same message. The intention, it is believed, is to start the meeting in a tranquil and human manner. Shaking hands is compulsory when men greet each other, and also in greetings between women. Children commonly shake hands with each other too. When men and women meet, they seldom shake hands, not even when they are relatives. (The habit of kissing cheeks is an urban and quite recently introduced phenomenon).

To wash hands before the meals is another example of *adab*. To smack one's lips or burp when eating together with other people is not *adab*. At home, parents teach children, in particular boys, how to serve tea to guests. They learn to be attentive and prepared to fill the cup again when the guest has finished. These are actions connected with *adab*. Girls learn to cover their hair from at least teenage and to act modestly, particularly in the presence of males. Without such behaviour the girl has no *adab*.

Adab also includes rising to one's feet when a person enters the room. It involves sitting in a proper way (on the floor) with legs crossed and straightened back. Someone who has learnt *adab* does not run and rush if not necessary. S/he walks calmly, showing s/he has a clear intention and direction and treads with certain effectiveness. Just strolling along in a casual manner is not *adab*. A person with *adab* does not use big gestures but controls his/her movements. S/he does not speak in a loud voice but talks clearly, softly and calmly. A person

should not overreact but proceed in a balanced manner. One should have full command of expressions and emotions. The ideal is a balanced and stable person.

In sum, *adab* is about good manners towards others or, in other words, about social conduct according to prevailing norms. *Adab* is the behaviour a child should learn.

Akhlaq, the second important concept in education, is more related to the life of grown-ups. It is about responsibilities and duties. *Akhlaq* means morals or morality when translated into English (www.farsidic.com). The two concepts are often coupled. While *adab* is concerned with polite manners, *akhlaq* has a deeper and more ethical meaning. It deals with the individual's responsibility to fulfil his/her obligations as human being. To eat decently is to have *adab* but someone who shares his food with the poor has good *akhlaq*. Children who play marbles on the road and disturb the neighbours may have no *adab* but if one of them cheats or steals marbles from another, he has bad *akhlaq*.

Akhlaq is related to two essential concepts in Islam: *haram* and *halal*. *Halal* means 'allowed' or 'permissible' while *haram* is used for the opposite: something that is prohibited. A child is instructed not to do *haram* things such as stealing, cheating, quarrelling or making trouble for others. Such actions are considered bad *akhlaq*. Boys who fight are regarded as having bad *akhlaq* and are separated and rebuked if adults are close by. Girls seldom fight physically but may battle verbally and slander others, which is also considered bad *akhlaq*. A child who tries to bypass the queue outside a shop has no *adab* while an adult who gently helps a shy child to come up first has good *akhlaq*.

Although it is more related to adults, *akhlaq* also involves responsibilities for children. Such duties increase as the child grows up. Children are expected to help their parents in various ways, and a child who tries to escape such responsibilities has bad *akhlaq*.

Informal education

Informal education, that is, non-institutional learning of knowledge, skills, traditions, beliefs and values has been and still is very important in Afghanistan. Such education also transmits the prevailing gender roles. Boys, particularly in rural areas, learn, for example, about animal husbandry and how to sow and harvest, ride horses, construct houses and use a bow or a gun. A girl learns about household activities such as cooking and baking, cleaning and washing, and how to take care of children and elderly people. She learns the duties of motherhood and wifehood: to care for the family, to raise children, to obey and respect her husband and parents-in-law. A boy, who will become a husband and father, learns to take responsibility for the family. He should guide, control and respect his wife as well as support and protect her, his children and parents. In addition, as a young boy he gradually learns to take part in community affairs.

Traditions and values are often transmitted orally through poetry and stories. The stories have an ethical message and advise readers/listeners on moral matters. Respect and responsibility are important in addition to virtues such as honesty and courage. It is commonly agreed that children should be taught to be kind, empathetic, diligent and obedient. Adults are obliged to treat children kindly. Other important values in the folk stories include unity and equality. Many stories and poems tell about the duty to fight against oppression in all forms. There are some 30 to 40 stories, which are well known by most people and have been transmitted verbally over hundreds of years from generation to generation. By the end of the 19th century many of these stories were compiled in a book called *Mili Hendara*, National Mirror. The morals reflected in these books also highlight values such as generosity and hospitality, which are generally considered, by Afghans as well as visitors, to be a typical and imperative Afghan characteristic.

Informal education also includes teaching and learning of Islam. Praying rituals are practiced at home by the mother and conveyed to her daughters while the boys accompany

their father to the mosque.

ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Islamic education has a long tradition in Afghanistan. It began with the arrival of Islam in the 7th century. Male individuals who had acquired knowledge of Islam through *madrasas* or individual studies have been teaching in the mosques for hundreds of years. This type of Islamic education still occurs (Amaj, 1991; Rafi, 1999). In 1960, 8.5 per cent of Afghan men were working as religious teachers as a full or part time occupation (Dupree, 1973).

Formal Islamic education differs from the informal Islamic instruction in at least three respects: 1) it takes place in a specific setting, for example in a mosque or in a *madrasa*; 2) a special teacher is appointed, often the imam of the mosque; and 3) written material is studied. In addition to the Quran and the *hadiths,* several other books are studied. In the first Islamic schools, moral education as well as reading, writing and arithmetic were taught. Sometimes vocational education was included, for example calligraphy and bookkeeping (Rafi, 1999). To read and memorise the Quran is one of the prime objectives of Islamic education. A person who has memorised the entire Quran, a *Qari,* is highly respected in Afghanistan.

Girls have always been excluded from formal Islamic education in Afghanistan[2]. After the elementary instruction girls get in the mosque school, their opportunity to learn about Islam is mainly through primary schools. Consequently, the knowledge girls and women in Afghanistan possess about Islam is much more limited than what boys and men have learned, unless their father, husband or brothers have taught them at home. (The few women who have studied at the Faculty of *Shariat* in Kabul University are exceptions).

For centuries the government has tried to control Islamic education with varying degrees of efficiency and success. Khattak (1986) has described this struggle: "Since the early days of Afghan governments until now the administration has tried by various means to get rid of these influences [by religious instructors] and to administer Islamic instructions through State Agencies" (p. 46). This aspiration to control Islamic education is still evident today.

Memorisation as a learning technique in Islamic education

People in illiterate environments depend on their memory capacity. There are no notebooks or calendars to aid recollection. Memorising is a necessary part of life. To be able to memorise parts of the Quran is a practical need among illiterate people in Afghanistan. Some *suras* are read when praying and unless they are memorised, a person is not able to perform the daily prayers. Prayers may be performed individually or as a collective act. Prayers can be performed publicly such as men's praying in the mosque or in private, which is common when women pray. Individual or collective, private or public, praying is, aside from its religious meaning, a social undertaking that every Afghan embraces from an early age. It is practically unthinkable to imagine an Afghan who never prays. S/he would be an outcast, at least if s/he lives in rural Afghanistan.

The tradition of oral recitation has continued throughout the centuries all over the Muslim world. The Western type of education did not enter into a void when it was introduced in Muslim countries but was confronted with a well-established tradition of learning. Memorisation has a long tradition and is a technique held in high esteem. It is the main technique for learning also in primary education.

Western learning theorists and practitioners have limited appreciation of memorisation as a learning technique. Often it is taken for granted that memorisation excludes understanding. Particularly, to learn by heart something that is not understood, like the Arabic text of the

[2] Recently, government girl madrasas have opened.

Quran, is seen as utterly meaningless. It is often forgotten that young children in Western type of schools all over the world memorise many items without comprehension. One example is the multiplication table. Eight or nine year old children seldom have problems learning the tables by heart but only at an older age are they able to understand why, for instance, 4 x 4 = 16 (or many other mathematical symbols for that matter; see, for example, Piaget, 1954). The child's maturation level has certain implications when learning abstract and symbolic issues. However, many theorists advocate that a proper method of instruction can overcome or at least facilitate understanding of complicated abstract phenomena (Bruner 1971; Bandura, 1986).

For children memorising the Quran is often a pleasure. They enjoy the beauty of the rhymes, the rhythm and the intonation - much like Western children appreciate and recite nursery rhymes or poems without understanding the meanings (Boyle, 2004). Body movements often accompany Quran reading. It is since long acknowledged that learning can be facilitated by manipulating with objects, engaging in body movements, adding supportive rhythms or similar activities. In Muslim countries, the students at *madrasas*, who sit cross-legged and rhythmically bow forwards and back to support their learning have become a fearsome or ridiculed picture in Western literature and media. The students are associated with mentally retarded children or the activities are explained as advanced brainwashing and terrorist training[3]. The preference for individual learning and competitiveness is so ingrained in the Western mind set that a collectivist spirit and mass learning is understood as threatening. The Western model of an individual silently studying on his/her own is in sharp contrast to the picture of a large group orally reciting all together. Wagner (1993) who studied literacy achievement is Morocco has characterised Islamic versus Western type of education as illustrated below:

Islamic education	**Western-style education**
Collective spirit; group studies	Individualism; competitive examinations
Oral reading, recitation skills	Silent reading
Memorisation as goal	Comprehension as goal

Source: Wagner (1993, p.78)

These characteristics are typical for all forms of Islamic education in Afghanistan: in the mosque schools as well as in the different types of *madrasas* and in the Quran schools.

The Mosque School

The mosque school provides the first level of Islamic education. The basic elements of Islam are taught to all children who live in the neighbourhood of the mosque. It is non-formal in character: there are no entrance admission criteria, no fees, no grade system, no examinations, no certificates and participation is voluntary (but compulsory in practise). There are mosque schools in all villages and town blocks all over the country and virtually all children, boys and girls, attend a mosque school. In some places, the mosque school is mainly intended for pre-school children while in others it serves older children and complements the primary school. Some children continue to attend the mosque school for many years while others spend only a year or two. Attendance is irregular. Most children participate on a daily basis but some study only occasionally. Boys may continue for many years but girls tend to quit when they are around eleven or twelve years old. It is not regarded as appropriate for the male teachers to teach girls after that age and there are only male teachers in the mosque school.

[3] A report from The Library of Congress (Washington) refers to *madrasas* as "wholly unconcerned with religious scholarship and [with a focus] solely on teaching violence" (Armanios, 2003, p. 3)

The teacher in the mosque school is a mullah or a *talib.* Mostly, he is the village imam. In Afghanistan, a mullah is a male person who has studied in a *madrasa.* He has not necessarily completed the entire curriculum but has at least studied for some four to five years. When he studied in the *madrasa* he was a *talib,* a student of Islam. A mullah may be hired by the villagers to work as imam in the mosque (then sometimes called mullah-imam). The imam is responsible for the mosque.

It is generally agreed that all children should learn the basics of Islam. This entails learning to read the Quran and memorise some minor parts of it. It also includes learning the five pillars of Islam, the praying rituals and Islamic ethics. Memorisation of Quranic verses, prayers and praying rituals are taught verbally to the children while books are used when learning, for example, the Arabic letters.

Most of the letters in the Afghan languages of Pashto and Dari are identical to the 28 Arabic ones (a few more letters are included in the Afghan languages). These letters differ considerably from, for example, the Latin alphabet, particularly as only consonants and long vowels are represented. Short vowel sounds exist frequently but are not represented by letters and the reader must figure out which short vowel sound should be heard after the consonant so s/he can comprehend the words and the text. Therefore, the reader must be familiar with quite many words in order to pronounce the words correctly and grasp the content of the text.

When children start reading the Quran the short vowels are marked with special signs to guide the reading. Quran studies start with reading the first *separa*[4]. When one *separa* has been learned all the others are easy to read. Most children learn to read the Quran in two to three years. Parts of the last *separa,* from the 90th to the 114th *sura,* are memorised and recited in prayers. Only occasionally is the Quranic text translated or explained to the children.

Shoroti Salat, 'Conditions for Praying', is another book in mosque schools. It is about prayers and praying rituals. It is also written in Arabic and the teacher translates the text for the children. The next book is *Quduri,* which is about the five pillars and the faith of Islam. In addition, two books with moral poems and stories are common in all mosque schools. First, *Panj Ketab* (Five Books), which consists of poetry written by centuries old authors; three of these were from Afghanistan and two from neighbouring countries. In addition to reading these books, children are engaged in writing letters and numbers on their slates. They also learn simple arithmetic.

Direct teaching, as when the teacher speaks and the students listen, is the dominant method. The best way for a student who wishes to express his/her respect for the teacher is to listen. Respect for teachers is mandatory. The mullah-teacher is usually highly respected for his great knowledge. The children are also respected. To be kind and gracious towards children is regarded as an Islamic obligation. That the mullah-teacher sometimes uses a stick is accepted and not regarded as disrespect. Excessive use is, however, strongly condemned. Learning in the mosque school (as in most educational settings in Afghanistan) is a passive act. Normally, students learn individually and at their own pace. The classes can be quite big - and noisy! Sometimes there are more than 100 students of varying ages in the mosque school.

The Madrasa

Madrasas, or Islamic schools, have a long history in Afghanistan. Until recently, hundreds, maybe thousands, of *madrasas* existed in the country. *Madrasas* have always been a community affair. They are boarding institutions and students from different villages attend the school and live together. Generally, education is free of charge and the running costs are shared by the local community. The aim of the *madrasa* is to provide the specialists an Islamic society

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[4] There are totally 30 *separas* in the Quran.

needs or, in other words, to produce masters in Islamic theology and law. A mullah is, as mentioned, an adult man who has studied in a *madrasa.* He has high status as a learned person - but there are also many good jokes about mullahs! Today's younger mullahs usually have primary and sometimes secondary education in addition to Islamic studies. Mullahs work as teachers in the *madrasa*.

A broad spectrum of religious subjects is studied in the *madrasa.* Among these are: *fiqh,* Islamic jurisprudence; *tafsir*, interpretations of the Quran; *hadiths,* sayings by the Prophet Mohammed; *sira,* actions by the Prophet Mohammed; *miras*, laws of inheritance; and, *tawhid*, unity of God. Philosophy, logic, rhetoric, metaphysics and theology are other subjects that are taught and books by, for example, Ibn Sina, al-Farabi and Socrates are studied. The study of Islamic ethics and rituals and the proper recitation of the Quran are particularly important. In addition, Arabic language and literature and Persian classics are studied. Natural sciences, such as medicine and astrology are subjects studied at higher levels.

The students are usually highly motivated and often dedicate many years to their studies. They attend on irregular and individual basis and decide themselves at what pace they wish to learn and for how long. If they get bored of one teacher they can go to another (at least if they study in a big *madrasa*) or they can change school and become a student at another *madrasa*. A diligent student might complete the entire training in ten years but usually a longer time is required to complete a *madrasa* education. A student graduates from the *madrasa* after completing the defined books in the different subjects. There is no specific examination but after completion a special ceremony (*Dastarbandi*) and a feast are arranged. The student gets a white turban wound around his head. Anyone who has studied Islam comprehensively can become imam but in order to become a judge or a lawyer, specified training is stipulated by the government. Principally, only graduates from the Faculty of *Shariat* at the University are allowed to work as judges (also females) but in practice graduates from the former government *madrasas* have also been approved as judges.

In the beginning of the 1970s, in addition to the many village and city *madrasas*, there were some ten to fifteen Islamic schools of extraordinary reputation in Afghanistan (here called regional *madrasas*) with a large number of *taliban* and prominent scholars as teachers. These particular *madrasas* followed a predetermined curriculum and the training ran for a fixed number of years. The students were grouped into classes like in public schools. Students from small village *madrasas* often completed their Islamic studies in these *madrasas*. There were many similarities to the government *madrasas* (see below) with one important exception: they were community based and managed and thus, not controlled by the government. They were independent institutions and were not concerned about the requirements set up by the Ministry of Education regarding, for example, student admissions. It has not been possible to find out whether they still exist. The ones in Kunduz and Ghazni were active at least up to 2004.

The few (around nine) government *madrasas* that existed before the wars had a government determined curriculum. The first government *madrasa* was launched by King Amanullah already in the 1920s in Kabul. The intention was to set up a proficiency system for imams (Rafi, 1990). As time went on, the government took over some other city *madrasas*, called them "formal *madrasas"*, and established a strict system for admission, teacher recruitment, accreditation and so on. These *madrasas* were in many aspects organised as secondary schools. Subjects such as mathematics, science and languages were also taught.

The Communist government introduced a Soviet inspired educational system, which included virtually no Islamic teachings (Samady, 2001), but they wisely left the traditional *madrasas* to the local communities. The *madrasas* survived but kept a low profile during this period. The teachers were officially accused of backwardness and the students, particularly those who studied at higher levels, were called 'black reactionaries' (due to their black beards). However, the government *madrasas* remained. Even during the Communist rule there was still

a need for Islamic judges since the *Shariah* law system was partially persevered.

The Islamic revival during the *Jihad*, the liberation war against the Soviet occupation 1979-89, prepared the way for an expansion of *madrasas.* Some of the *Mujaheddin* groups set up *madrasas,* which included religious and non-religious subjects with Arab support in the liberated areas. These *madrasas* were strongly influenced by the Arab *Wahabi* school of Islam.

The *Taliban* government (1996 - 2001) introduced yet another type of *madrasa*: a six year school with subjects such as mathematics, science, languages, including English, and literature. More than 50 per cent of the time was set aside for religious subjects. These *Taliban madrasas* were the only schools with government support at the time. They virtually replaced the primary schools in Afghanistan with the exception of NGO and community supported schools. These *Taliban madrasas* were, however, fairly limited in number.

The curriculum Framework launched by the Ministry of Education in 2003 introduced a new form of Islamic school. After grade six, students may continue to secondary school or to a government *madrasa* for three or six years. In these new *madrasas*, in which some 10 per cent of the total number of students is expected to study and in which girls are also allowed, approximately 70 per cent of the time is dedicated to religious subjects. The intention, according to the head of the Department of Islamic Education at Ministry of Education, is to replace the traditional *madrasas* with formal government *madrasas* and "produce" *taliban* with updated and "modern" knowledge. With government *madrasas* in the country "students do not need to go to Pakistani *madrasas* and study[5]". He argued that community based *madrasas* are private and therefore are not allowed according to the new Constitution. In 2008, 336 government madrasas were running with a total of approximately 123 000students, of which 9.6 % were girls (Ministry of Education, 2010).

The Quran School (Dar-ul-hefaz)

Quran schools have not been as common as *madrasas* in Afghanistan. Initially, mostly blind men became *Qaris*. In recent years these schools have become increasingly popular and the male students have often studied in *madrasas* or primary and secondary schools prior to the Quran studies.

WESTERN TYPE OF EDUCATION

Unlike most other countries is Asia and Africa, Afghanistan was never colonised by any of the imperial powers from the 16th to the 20th centuries. This fact has had implications for Afghanistan's educational system. First, the country has not had a foreign language, that is, the colonisers' language, which so many countries are still burden by, as medium of instruction in schools. Afghanistan is fortunate to use its own national languages in the teaching, a fact, which has not only facilitated teaching and learning but also has brought about a sense of pride to the whole nation. Secondly, in the absence of a colonial power, there was no need for a colonial administration, which in the colonised countries triggered the introduction of education. State power in Afghanistan was relatively weak during the 19th century, contrary to, for example, the British administration in India[6]. It was not until late in the century that Afghanistan sensed the need for a qualified central administration. As a consequence, Western type of education was introduced comparatively late.

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[5] This was a problem aired also by one of judges of the Supreme Court: "In Pakistani madrasas they learn that our government is *kafir* and they return as suicide bombers" (Kashaf, 2006).

[6] In British India, Lord Macaulay issued in 1835 the 'Minute of Education: "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (cited in Ahmed, 1988, p. 126).

The origin of maktab

In Afghanistan, the public school (primary and secondary education) is referred to as *maktab*. This is an Arabic word and usually means 'library' in Arabic countries. *Madrasa* in everyday speech is used for all kinds of Islamic education, that is, not only for the type of *madrasas* described above but also for mosque schools and Quran schools. In Arabic, '*madrasa*' means 'school' and is normally used for religious as well as Western type of schools.

Maktab is first mentioned as a place for learning how to write in the old literature of Pashto and Dari. For example, *maktab* is mentioned in this poem by Sadi (1215-1292), a famous Sufi poet:

> A king sent his son to *maktab*
> Put a silver slate beside him
> Wrote on the slate with gold.
> The tight fist of a teacher is better than a father's compassion.

Another verse by the Pashto poet Hamid Baba[7] (1662-1727) indicates the simultaneous existence of *maktab* and *madrasa* already in the 18th century[8].

> Better to have no son
> Than one who has been neither to *madrasa* nor to *maktab.*

Originally, *maktab* was located in a bazaar room where a clerk offered his literary services to customers who needed written documents of some kind. Sometimes the clerk also acted as teacher and instructed interested people in the art of writing (Rafi, 1990).

Education during the first half of the 20th century[9]

By the end of the 19th century, the king recognised the need for trained officers and administrators and in 1878 set up two institutions in Kabul to train military and administrative staff. Only relatives to the royal family were admitted as students in the *Madrasa-i-Nizami* (Military School) and the *Madrasa-i-Mulki* (Public School). In these schools as well as in the first primary school for boys that was established in Kabul in 1903, the curriculum was based on the content of the Islamic *madrasa.* The sons of the elite were the first students of *maktabs* in the beginning of the 20th century (Rafi, 1990).

King Amanullah, inspired by the reforms in Ataturk's Turkey, introduced the first educational reform in Afghanistan. In 1922, the first Minister of Education was appointed (Samady, 2001). In the 1920s, several *maktabs*, both primary and secondary, were established with secular subjects in addition to those taught in the *madrasas.* A few schools also started outside Kabul. The first primary school for girls opened in 1921 under the auspices of Amanullah's wife, Queen Soraya. Students, both boys and girls, were sent abroad for further studies. For example, girl students studied to be nurses in Turkey in the late 1920s (Dupree, 1973). By 1929, there were around 300 schools in the country which where attended by some 50,000 students (Rafi, 1990). Amanullah faced strong opposition and eventually he had to leave Afghanistan. All girl schools closed and the reform programme came to a halt (ibid; Karlsson, 2001).

In the beginning of the 1930s, only 13 primary schools with a total of 1,590 boy students were functioning in the country (Ghani 1990, cited in Christensen 1995). During the coming

[7] Poems by Sadi and Hamid are included in Afghan primary school textbooks.
[8] Both poems are translated by Amir Mansory
[9] The statistics provided in this chapter must be regarded with caution.

years, a few secondary schools were established in provincial capitals and one secondary girl school was introduced in Kabul. Generally, expansion was slow. In 1950 there were in total 3,000 students in 17 secondary schools, out of these four were girl schools (Samady, 2001). The constitutions of 1931 and 1948 stipulated compulsory primary education. The right and responsibility for provision of education was reserved for the state from primary up to university level (ibid.). In 1940, when the total population was estimated at 10 million people, there were 57,000 students in the country. Of these, only 900 were girls, 1.5 per cent (ibid.).

The first teacher training school, for men only, was established in 1923. It continued for more than 30 years until additional training colleges were opened.

From the 1950s: Expansion

From the 1950s and up until the disastrous wars began in 1978, the educational sector expanded rapidly and the provision of education grew at all levels. In particular, primary education expanded quickly as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 2:1 Expansion of primary education 1940 - 1980

Year	Schools	Enrolled boys	Enrolled girls	Total students	Teachers
1940	300	56,100	900	57,000	1,800
1950	300	87,500	4,000	91,500	3,000
1960	1,100	155,700	20,000	175,700	5,100
1970	3,000	464,500	76,100	540,600	13,100
1980	3,800	917,400	198,600	1,116,000	35,400

Source: Samady (2001)

In 1950, fewer than 100,000 students were enrolled in primary schools, an estimated six per cent of the concerned age group. Less than four per cent of all students were girls. In 1955, there were girl schools in seven out of 29 provincial capitals but very few, if any, in rural areas (Ghani, 1990 and Kraus, 1994 cited in Cristensen, 1995). In the secondary schools there were even fewer students, around 3,000 totally. Out of these hardly 300 were girls.

By 1970, the situation had changed dramatically. In thirty years the number of students had almost ten folded (ibid.). By the end of the 1970s one third of all children were enrolled in primary schools; however, girls constituted only seven per cent of this number. In Kabul, however, 35 per cent of all students were girls (ibid.). In the capital four prestigious secondary schools were established in the 1930s, based on German and French models. After World War II two additional schools patterned on British and American examples were introduced. The teachers and the medium of instruction were German, French, American and British, respectively (Olesen, 1995). A crafts school was initiated already in 1923 and was later followed by the opening of technical, administrative, commercial and agricultural schools. In the 1960s, a Hotel Management School was established in Kabul, which reflects an initial step to attract tourists to the country (Samady, 2001).

In the 1960s, several new programmes were initiated for teacher training, in-service and pre-service programmes, as well as training at the Faculties of Education at the universities. The teaching profession, traditionally held in high esteem, was strongly promoted by the government. An institution for training of teacher educators was also established. Teacher training curricula included mainly subject knowledge. Only three out of some 40 hours per week were dedicated to "education", "psychology", and "teaching methods"[10] (ibid.)

In 1947, the Ministry of Education was given more authority. Its role now spanned the development of all levels of general and vocational education and included development of

[10] Similarly, the current two-year pre-service teacher training programmes offer 2,304 hours of study, out of which only 12 involve "practice teaching" (Ministry of Education, 2006)

textbooks (including printing), educational materials and school construction. Within a strictly centralised system, provincial education directorates were established (ibid.). Around ten per cent of the national budget was allotted to the development of education in the 1960s and 1970s (ibid.).

In the seven-year plan of 1976 a new educational reform was planned in which education was to respond to the needs of the anticipated industrialisation of the country. Eight years of basic, compulsory education with alternative options in secondary schools as well as expansion of vocational education were planned (Ministry of Planning, 1975). However, not much materialised after the Communist seizure of power in 1978 and the subsequent turmoil.

Progress halted

With Soviet support the Communist regime remained in power until 1992 but it had, almost from start, very little control outside the cities. Nevertheless, the communists tried to introduce a socialist educational system without Islamic influences. The "Fundamental Principles of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan", adopted in 1980, clearly reflect how education was considered an important instrument for promoting a communist ideology (Samady, 2001). Soviet experts and advisers were plentiful in the now two ministries of education. With the Soviet curriculum as a model, science and mathematics were emphasised and practical work was compulsory. Elmi, a Professor at the Department of Islamic History and Art at Kabul University in the 1960s and 1970s, described the situation this way:

> [N]ew subjects were introduced. All textbooks were rewritten by Soviet advisers. History would present a dialectical materialistic view of history. Geography would emphasise more study of Russia, the Soviet block and Cuba. A new course of politics became obligatory …[also] in secondary schools (Elmi, 1986, p. 90).

Russian became the main foreign language to study in schools and universities (ibid.). Only teachers affiliated with the Communist parties[11] were employed. Girls' education was much encouraged. The posters spread throughout the country depicting girls dressed in short skirts, red neck-scarves and clenched fists were hardly cherished by the Afghans, particularly not by people in rural areas. Parents withdrew their children from *maktabs*, first the girls and then the boys. The overall situation deteriorated during the 1980s as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2:2 Primary education with government support 1978 and 1990

	1978	**1990**
Boy students	843 000	414 200
Girl students	152 800	214 600
Schools	3 400	600
Male teachers	24 800	7 700
Female teachers	5 100	8 900

Source: Samady 2001

The destruction of the educational infrastructure was enormous, particularly in the rural areas. More than 2,000 school buildings were destroyed. The number of boy students decreased with more than half while the number of girls increased. The number of male teachers declined drastically with more than two thirds but the number of female teachers increased. Boys, at least from teen age, did not register in schools in order to avoid military service. Many joined the *Mujaheddin* groups. Male teachers left their profession for the same reason. Most of the girl

[11] There were two Communist parties in Afghanistan at the time: *Khalk* (The People) and *Parcham* (The Flag).

students and their female teachers were in Kabul; 75 per cent of the female teachers were working in Kabul (Samady, 2001).

In the liberated rural areas, *Mujaheddin* initiated educational activities sometimes with support from international NGOs. *Maktabs* appeared in many places, including quite a few girl schools. These girl schools were the first ever in many places. The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA), University of Nebraska (UNO) and Muslim Aid were the main actors. In 1988, 1,500 schools with around 180,000 primary school students got financial and technical support. Among the leadership of the *Mujaheddin* groups and in the Islamist movement generally, there were many teachers and students from institutions of higher education. *Mujaheddin* soldiers acted as teachers or teacher trainers during periods of low intensity fighting. The Quran and Islamic subjects played an important role in the primary school teaching.

In the refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran educational facilities were provided too. One calculation, which may be too optimistic, is provided by Samady (2001) who estimates that 25 to 30 per cent of the refugee children had access to primary education.

New hopes dashed

When the Communist government collapsed and was replaced in 1992 by the government of *Mujaheddin* a new curriculum was developed for primary education. It dedicated around 30 per cent of the hours to studies of the Quran and Islamic subjects. However, the continuation of the war after 1992 caused yet a further collapse of most educational institutions. Now the war spread to the cities and forced big urban schools to cease teaching. The city population, particularly the Kabulis, left their homes *en masse* to join the millions of rural refugees, either to relatives in calm rural parts of the country or to Pakistani camps. Girls' education was severely hit during this period and the total number of girl students decreased. In rural areas the *maktabs* often continued to function (to the extent they existed) and in some areas even experienced an upswing, especially with regards to girl schools. Young women from Kabul and other cities were contracted as teachers for the rural girls. However, the total number of both male and female teachers decreased considerably during these four years. After 1978, 20,000 male teachers had left their jobs. They had died, fled, emigrated or 'disappeared'. Only 4,900 remained in duty in 1994 (Samady, 2001).

Table 2:3 Primary education with government support 1990 and 1994

	1990	**1994**
Boy students	414,200	459,800
Girl students	214,600	168,800
Schools	600	?
Male teachers	7,700	4,900
Female teachers	8,900	6,700

Source: Samady 2001

Taliban education

With the *Taliban* in power, the war atrocities ceased in major parts of the country. The *Taliban* government's interest in education was fairly weak and mainly, at least initially, focused on Islamic education in *madrasas.* After some years, they also made an attempt to change *maktab* education. Girl schools were officially closed, which severely affected the girls in the cities. In rural areas, however, by keeping a low profile girls' education continued at the primary level, usually, but not always, in home schools. The schools got most of their support from NGOs but also local communities financed girl classes. Female teachers, often from the cities, taught in these schools. However, the total enrolment rate for girls continued to decrease during the

1990s as an effect of the closure of city girl schools. The female teachers in cities were not allowed to work (but still received their salaries during the first years of the *Taliban* regime). This was a serious calamity not only for girls but also for boys since many of their teachers were women.

During this period, it is estimated that only 10 to 15 per cent of primary school aged children had access to *maktab* education (Rugh, 1998). The SCA provided at least 30 per cent of the total education offered (Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, 2000). In 2000, SCA was practically the sole NGO in the education sector and supported almost 600 schools (in rural areas only) with 170,000 students of which 21 per cent were girls (Samady, 2001)[12].

AFTER 2001

In June 2002, education was proclaimed a national priority and the international donor community initiated assistance. Eventually, a huge expansion of education took place[13]. There is no accurate data of net enrolment; instead school attendance rates are used as a proxy indicator in the available information. Net Enrolment Rate (NER) was calculated as 54 per cent in grades 1 – 6 in 2004 with boys' NER estimated at 66 - 67 per cent and girls' NER at an average of 34 per cent (Ministry of Education, 2005a; UNICEF 2005a). These figures had improved by 2007 when at primary level NER for boys was estimated at 73 % and for girls at 46 %. However, the drop out rate is high; particularly girls in rural schools tend to drop out after grade three (Ministry of Education, 2007a).

In 2008, around 78 per cent of all enrolled students were studying in grades 1 – 6 (Ministry of Education, 2010). 42 per cent were students of grades 1 - 3 while only 5 per cent were students in grades 10 - 12. 37 per cent of all students were girls, which implies that there are almost twice as many boys as girls in the schools[14]. The disparities between rural and urban areas are considerable as seen in Table 2:4.

Table 2:4 Gender parity, education level, rural – urban schools; 2007.

Level of Education	Total	Rural	Urban
Primary	0.56	0.53	0.71
Lower Secondary	0.38	0.25	0.53
Upper Secondary	0.33	0.14	0.47

Source: Ministry of Education (2007)

In urban areas, girls are approaching an equal share at the primary level but in urban secondary schools there are still twice as many boys as girls (ibid). In rural areas, there are only half as many girls as boys in primary schools and at upper secondary level there are ten times more boys than girls (ibid.).

Not only girls in primary schools are included in the figures above. There are other forms of girls' education, for example, accelerated learning classes (six years of primary education are studied in two-three years), adult literacy classes, home-based classes, and girl *madrasas*. In recent years, Community Based Education has been introduced, supported mainly by NGOs and Unicef. In these schools, usually only up to grade three, girls constitute almost 60 %.

[12] According to SCA reports, 22.7 per cent were girls in 2000, 23 per cent in 2001 and 26 per cent in 2002 (Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, 2002).

[13] The following data cannot be considered fully accurate and different information is provided by different sources. The figures vary also in official documents.

[14] Thus, it is obvious that the Taliban ban was not the only or even the main obstacle for girls' participation in education in rural areas.

In 2008, 64 per cent of all the 45,800 female teachers (29 % of the teaching force) were working in the four provinces with relatively big cities. In 106 out of 364 districts there very few female teachers employed (Ministry of Education, 2009). Only in Kabul does a majority of teachers meet the official qualifications for teachers, that is, a completed teacher training program.

The teacher – student ratio at primary level was 1:66 while at the higher secondary level it was 1:7 (Ministry of Education, 2007b). Teachers are distributed in accordance to a system that favours more teachers per class from grade 4 and upward. This is due to the fact that more subjects are added in each grade and teachers normally teach only one or two subjects. The number of students in grades 1 – 3 is considerably higher than in the subsequent grades, thus resulting in the teacher-student ratios noted above.

The system results in overcrowded classes in the lower grades, which may be a cause of the high drop out at primary level. The Department of Planning at Ministry of Education assumes a drop out rate of 19 per cent annually (Ministry of Education, 2009). Another study of the drop out rates reports that on average 22 per cent of the registered students drop out at the end of the school year. This figure is the accumulated number of permanently absent (three years) students and implies an annual drop out rate of seven to eight per cent (Mansory 2007a). Whatever rate may be accurate, drop out is a huge problem

18 per cent of all students studied above grade six in 2007. Historically, Afghanistan has always had very few secondary schools. In particular since the 1990s, the proportion of secondary to primary schools has been very low, a fact with implications not least for recruitment of teachers. In 2007, secondary schools were still unevenly distributed in the country, indicated by the NER at upper secondary school level (Ministry of Education, 2007). In provinces where there are cities and secondary schools students face no problem if they want to further their studies, while in many rural parts, especially in the insecure southern provinces, the majority of students has no option but to leave schools.

There were 23 state universities (including 8 institutes of Higher Education) in 2009 and almost all included Faculties of Education. In 2007, out of some 70,000 secondary school graduates only 15,000 could be accommodated in higher education institutions. The competition for admission will get harder every year as more and more students complete secondary education and apply to university. Several private universities have been established in the capital and in a few other cities but only few students can be admitted.

In 2009, more than half of schools had no proper school building. The schools with buildings cannot house all children in classrooms. Many classes were taught in tents, in mosques, in private houses or in the open air under the shadow of trees, if available. On the whole, only 20 per cent of schools had access to water and even fewer had toilets or latrines (Ministry of Education, 2006). Many schools worked in two or even three shifts. When schools, particularly in urban areas, teach in double or triple shifts, the result is that many students do not get the stipulated amount of instruction (ibid). In rural areas, the primary school is usually located in a central village (often where there was a school in the 1970s) and children from surrounding villages have to walk, sometimes up to six km or more, to get to the school. A long distance to school is mentioned as one of the reasons for girls' low enrolment. The deteriorating security situation has also affected girls' participation.

There are several ministries involved in education in Afghanistan. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the overall provision of education throughout the country. The Ministry of Higher Education has responsibility for tertiary education including training of teachers for higher secondary education. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for non-formal, vocational education as well as pre-school education[15] and the

[15] No formal system exists for pre-school children. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs run some 200 kindergartens for children of government employees (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Ministry of Pilgrimage and Endowments has the responsibility for Islamic education in mosque schools.

In 2006, there were 42 vocational schools with some 9,000 students; more than half of these were students in Kabul. Of these, 900 students were female and all of them studied in Kabul and Herat (ibid.).

It is estimated that around 11 million adult Afghans need literacy training. Literacy programmes have been initiated, mostly in the cities. There is no information available on the number of participants (ibid.).

Increasing unrest, instability and insecurity in some parts of the country caused by *taliban* resurgence as well as political resistance movements against the so called coalition forces on the one side and the NATO bombings and other war atrocities on the other have again made girls' education more vulnerable. That criminality is on the increase does not improve the situation. Several schools, particularly girl schools have been set on fire at night[16].

CONFLICT ISSUES IN AFGHAN EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

From an educational perspective, three issues have been important in many upheavals and rebellions in Afghanistan throughout modern history: the role of Islam in education; education for girls; and, government control of Islamic education. These issues were disputed already in 1929 when King Amanullah was forced into exile and have, after a relatively calm period thereafter, again become very hot issues starting in the 1970s.

Islam was an important subject from the very beginning of *maktab* education. This fact did not cause much friction until the 1970s when secular subjects expanded at the cost of Islamic teachings. From that time, much more attention was paid to the secular content of *maktab* education and Islamic subjects were, if not directly reduced in the curriculum, dealt with as less important by teachers and planners. The students, "*maktabees*", represented the new generation that was to contribute to the development of Afghanistan and bring the country into a modern era. The underlying assumption was that religious knowledge was of less importance and out of date. The Communist curriculum further emphasised this development but still did not erase all Islamic subjects. Islam remained a subject for one to two hours per week in the primary school during this period.

The short-lived *Mujaheddin* government introduced a considerable expansion of the time devoted to Islamic subjects in *maktab.* The hours increased to 12 per week in grades 4 through 6. Mostly, the NGOs who supported education in the 1990s adhered to this curriculum. In the *Taliban* primary schools, students spent more than half the time on Islamic subjects.

One of the first measures undertaken by the interim government in 2002 was to considerably reduce the number of hours of Islamic subjects to the same amount as during the Communist period. This caused a lot of opposition and was later changed several times.

Maktab education was, as mentioned, introduced fairly late in Afghanistan and the first schools were established to serve the needs of the army, the growing administration and to promote a general modernisation of the country. Education was required for new professionals, and only men had ever held professional positions in the country. There was no felt need to educate girls, who should marry and take care of the home and children. The first generation of school girls (in the 1920s) were dressed in a way that that did not correspond to what was generally considered to be in accordance with the Islamic dress code. Thus it was not hard for the belief to arise that *maktab* education as such was counter to Islamic values. Those who advocated for girls' education moved too hastily and probably did not have enough contact

[16] In 2007 and 2008 481 schools have been closed due to security reasons and around 300 000 students have been deprived of education (Ministry of Education, 2009).

with the beliefs and values that dominated the majority of the population at that time. As a result girls' education faced its first backlash by the end of the 1920s.

During the following decades, girl schools were restarted at a very slow pace. Boys' education expanded very slowly as well. From the 1950s, girls' education grew, slowly, and initially mostly in urban areas. It became increasingly accepted that girls and women were needed in the pedagogical and medical professions since the gender separation required female teachers for girls and female doctors for women. By the end of the 1970s, girls constituted around one third of all students. Rural girl students were still, however, few. In the 1980s the number of girl students outnumbered the boys in city schools (the only schools with government support) and in rural areas girls became pupils to an extent that had never occurred before. Contrary to what is generally described, the *Mujaheddin* movements, whose members often were Islamist modernists, generally favoured girls' education. With international financial support (sometimes also conditioned) girl schools were established in *Mujaheddin* controlled rural areas. This development continued during the *Taliban* ban on girls' education: the number of rural girl schools increased continuously during these years. City girls, however, were totally excluded from education with the exception of those who could participate in some clandestine home schools. The *Taliban* believed that only (limited) Islamic education was required and that women did not need education at all. However, the *Taliban* movement was not homogenous in their view of education. In rural areas girls' education was often accepted and women were allowed to teach.

After the fall of the *Taliban* regime, girls have returned to schools in the cities and rural schools have also had an increase of girl students. Still (2009), however, girls constitute only 36 per cent of all students and a majority of the girl students are still urban dwellers (Ministry of Education, 2009).

As described earlier Islamic education has often included a large portion of non-religious subjects, particularly when Islamic societies were at their height. When *maktab* education was first introduced in Afghanistan, it built upon the experience and on the content of Islamic schools and only gradually incorporated the typical features of Western type of education. From the 1920s, *maktab* and *madrasa* have represented two educational systems, which have often been regarded as contradictory systems and looked upon with suspicion by the ruling classes as well as by the rural masses. When governments have put their efforts on educational development, they have focussed only on *maktab* education. When the state has paid attention to *madrasas,* the reason has not been to improve or expand them but rather to control and supervise the traditionally, community based Islamic schools.

King Amanullah was the first to establish government *madrasas* and he was followed by later governments, with the exception of the Communist regime. In 2006, the Ministry of Education sensed "a need for broad-based consultations on the goals for Islamic education and the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students should learn in the *Madrasas*". A "new syllabi and textbooks ... to be re-designed" are anticipated (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 18). "Some religious leaders do not support this change, so it is vital that the Ministry of Education is able to obtain their support with regards to the curriculum and the overall system of Islamic education" (ibid. p. 19). In 2009, the Departments of Education and Islamic Education at the MoE have been merged into one department called Department of General and Islamic Education.

Table 2:5 Conflict issues in Afghan educational history

Period	**Islam in *maktab***	**Girls in *maktab***	**Control of *madrasa***
1920s	*Maktab* curriculum based on *madrasa*.	First girl school started in 1921. Closed in 1929.	Community *madrasas* all over the country.

			Two government *madrasas* in Kabul.
1930s – 1940s	No change.	Very few girl schools restarted.	No change.
1950s – 1960s	Secular education in focus as a means for modernisation.	Slow expansion, mainly in cities.	Community *madrasas* continued. Gradual government take over of seven city *madrasas*.
1970s	Decreased hours.	Big expansion in cities. A few schools in rural areas.	Community *madrasas* and nine government *madrasas* continued up to 1978.
1980s	In public *maktab*: decreased hours. In *Mujaheddin maktab*: increased hours. In refugee schools: increased hours	Public girl schools in cities. *Mujaheddin* girl schools in rural areas. Girl schools in refugee camps	Community *madrasas* attacked, and expropriated; many continued (with a low profile). Nine government *madrasas* dysfunctional but existing. *Mujaheddin madrasas* with formal structure. *Wahabi madrasas* supported by Arabs. *Madrasas* in refugee camps.
1990s	NGO schools with *Mujaheddin* curriculum. *Taliban* schools = *madrasas* with secular subjects.	NGO girl schools in rural areas. *Taliban* ban on girl schools (mainly in cities).	Community *madrasas* revived, some supported by the *Taliban* government. Nine government *madrasas* revived.
2000s	In 2002 decreased to the level of the 1970s. Increased in 2006.	Back to school campaign resulted in many girl schools, in rural areas still low enrolment. High drop out after grade 3[17].	Community *madrasas* closed down, still on the decline. 336 government *madrasas* in 2007

CONCLUSION

Afghanistan has, on one side, a long history and rich experience of Islamic education and, on the other side, a fairly short record of Western type of education. In both systems girls and women have been excluded to a large extent. Islamic education has been neglected by the state as well as by religious organisations, which has resulted in the present stagnation. It is, however, still held in high esteem by the population. Practically one hundred per cent of all children attend mosque schools. The state has made several attempts to control Islamic schools,

[17] Girl students have constituted around 30 – 35 per cent of all enrolled primary school students since the 1970s, during the Communist period in the 1980s, in the NGO supported schools in the 1990s and still, in the government schools in 2009 (Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, 1999, Government of Afghanistan, 2004, MoE 2007)

the *madrasas*. Western type of education was introduced without considering Afghan traditions and has at times been resisted, particularly when authorities tried to also make students of girls. The role of Islam as a subject in Western type of education has been a recurrent theme of various curricula. The conflict between the two systems remains today. However, the two systems could have quite a lot to gain from each other's experience.

In 2010, the population in Afghanistan is estimated to have increased to 35 million people. It is estimated that 20 per cent of the total population in Afghanistan is of primary school age, that is, 7 to 12 years old (Government of Afghanistan, 2005a). If this is correct it implies the highest proportion of this age group to total national population in the world. It is an enormous challenge for the country to match the expansion of the school system with its population growth.

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THESES

3. FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE GIRLS' RETENTION RATE IN EDUCATION.

Zaher Mohammad Akbar

INTRODUCTION

Primary education is a cornerstone for the entire education system. It is a significant investment in human capital, which can lead to abolishing poverty, eliminating gender disparity, increasing income and improving the overall health situation. Girls' education attracts huge attention worldwide. Girls and women are important agents in economic and social development and their rights are granted through several international documents, e.g. the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (UN, 1990), Convention on the rights of the child (CRC), Convention on the elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Dakar Framework and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In Afghanistan, girls' access to education has been limited throughout history (Intil et al. 2006). Since 2001 education, particularly girls' education has become one of the key priorities of the Afghan government. The Constitution guarantees free and compulsory education for girls and boys equally, a point, which is also emphasized in the first National Education Strategic Plan (NESP).

Gender disparity in education is one of the most serious problems the country is facing. Lack of security, limited availability of girl schools and several socio-economical obstacles are some of the reasons that cause a majority of girls to attend not even a basic cycle of education. However, many factors can influence girls' active and full participation; some of these are known and discovered, while others still remain unclear. Exploring factors that prevent girls' education may contribute to a better understanding of which conditions limit their participation and what impact specific interventions might have on their retention.

Objectives

- To identify some factors that influence girls' enrolment, retention and drop out rate in primary education (grades 1 - 4) in Kunduz province
- To discuss some interventions that have been tried for improving girls' participation in education

Research questions

The study attempts to answer the following questions:
a) What are some of the factors that prevent girls from getting a primary education?
b) What is the scope of survival and drop out in grades 1 - 4 of primary education?
c) Which girls do not enroll or drop out prematurely?
d) Which specific initiatives/interventions could motivate girls' participation and retention in education?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender and Education

Why is girls' education important?

"Educating a girl is equal to educate a whole family" and "educate a man, you educate an individual, but educate a woman, you educate a nation" are both sayings what convey the importance of girls' education. Rena (2007) referred to a similar statement, which claims that that there will be no educated people without educated women. Various agendas in order to bring women into development have been developed, for instance, Women in Development (WID) in 1970, Gender and Development (GAD) and Gender Equality (Chitrakar, 2009). Chitrakar (2009) expressed that investment in girls' education guarantees several socio-economic development goals, for example EFA and MDGs goals The World Bank has stressed upon education as a means to reduce female fertility and child mortality rate (Word Bank, 2005). Moreover, female education improves labour supply, productivity, social and personal well-being (ibid.). The impact of female education on fertility rate is recognized worldwide; in most countries girls' education has contributed to reducing the fertility rate.

Through education women can gain their legal rights, become active in social participation, enhance productivity and take active part in the well-being of coming generations (UNESCO, 2003). Karlsson (2001) mentions that mothers' education increases children's schooling, girls' in particular. She adds that girls' education ensures women's economic self-reliance, autonomy and decision-making ability in the family, as well as in society. Although girls' education is looked upon from different perspectives, for example, the World Bank considers it as economical and marketable improvement, while UNICEF views it as a human right (Karlsson, 2001), all are of the opinion that development is seriously delayed unless there is an effective programme for girls' education.

Girls' education in Afghanistan

Girls' education in particular, as stated by Karlsson and Mansory (2007), has been a controversial matter in Afghanistan. Politicization of education and specifically girls' education has been an influential factor in educational development of the country throughout the history.

Historical Background

The first school, Habibya, was established in Kabul in 1903 (Olesen, 1995). From 1919, during the period of King Aminullah, several schools were established, including girl schools. In 1922 primary education was made compulsory, free of charge and a government responsibility, confirmed in later Constitutions (1931, 1948, 1964 and 1976) (Samadi, 2001). Still, however, educational facilities were limited to some cities only (Olesen, 1995). In 1975 only 11.4 per cent of the population of school age or above was literate, out of which the majority was male. (World Bank, 2005).

Nevertheless, this does not mean that there was no education or educational institutions. Afghanistan is a country with a long civilization, with famous scholars as Biruni, Mulana Rumi, and Hakim Sanai. Education and knowledge seeking is considered a duty in Islam. Historically, there was a widely covering education system although limited to Islamic subjects, supported by local people and provided at home and in mosques (Riley, 2009; Samadi, 2001). Islamic institutions (for a minority male population) on the other hand, provided a wide range of other subjects as well

The first girl schools were established in 1921with curriculum as well as financial support from Turkey (Mansory, 2000; Samadi, 2001). After 1950 an expansion took place and girls' schools were established in several provincial capitals, while in rural areas, not only girls, but boys as well had no access to education, not even to primary. In 1970 the situation had improved, but still girls constituted only seven per cent of all students enrolled in primary education this year. The main difficulty was a high drop rate out of students; girls in particular, after grade three (Mansory, 2000).

In 1978, 31.per cent of the schools provided educational facilities for girls, In 1993, 13.2 per cent of all schools were girls' schools; while in 1996-1999 female education was banned and only 2 per cent of the girls had access to school (World Bank, 2005).

Recent progress in Girls' education

The Constitution of Afghanistan states "Education is the right of all citizens of Afghanistan, which shall be provided up to secondary level, free of charge by the state" (Article 43) and as regards female education "The state shall devise and implement effective programs for balancing and promoting of education for women, improving of education of nomads and elimination of illiteracy in the country (Article 44).

The Government is also committed to the MDGs and has set the year 2020 for achieving the goal when "all children in Afghanistan, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary education", (cited in Chitrakar, 2009).

According to Amnesty International (2009) there is one girl in four students, while UNICEF (2009) claims that girls constitute 35 per cent. The primary net enrolment rate is for boys 74 and for girls 46 per cent (ibid.). There are two million out of school children in the country; of those are 1.3million girls (World Bank, 2005).

Gender disparity in education is a challenge

Gender parity in education is the equal ratio of girls to boys when enrolled and attended schools (Oxfam, 2006; Subrahmanian, 2006), while gender equality is the measurement of outcomes, related to educational progress such as enrolment, repetition, completion, achievements and other measures of equality beyond parity (Subrahmanian, 2006). Subrahmanian (2005) views gender parity and equality as a goal to achieve for the educational community as a whole. Education can prove as a best way to eliminate gender disparity in all aspects of human life. It can close the gender gap and improve equity through positive messages on gender equality, women's rights, and the importance of education for girls. Several studies have proved that out of school children with uneducated mothers are twice to those children with educated mothers (UNESCO, 2007). Through education the gender gap in the society can be narrowed: a man with education recognizes gender equality, gets interest in his daughters' and sisters' education, treats his wife equally and gives her voice in every aspect of social and family life (UNESCO, 1998).

EFA Dakar Framework and MDGs set the year 2005 as the final date for achieving gender parity in education and the year 2015 for achieving gender equality in primary as well secondary education. In reality, there are many societies, even among the most developed; where women and girls do not enjoy equal opportunities in social affairs as men do (Karlsson & Mansory, 2007; UNESCO 2003-4). Inequality and gender disparity in education as well as in other dimensions of social and economical life is a common phenomenon in the majority of the countries. South Asia remains the most gender-unequal region in the world (UNICEF, 2005); conservative cultural and other socio-economic reasons have created a huge gap between sexes and hindered girls' access to education. Most of the world's out of school children, particularly girls, are in South Asian countries (Karlsson & Mansory, 2007; UNESCO, 1998). The majority of people, particularly in rural areas consider girls' education less important than that of boys.

Afghanistan ranks 181 of 182 in Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP, 2009); has a GPI 0.60, lower than other less developed countries in SSA (sub-Saharan Africa) and south and west Asia. According to UNESCO (2009) there are 63 girls in school for every 100 boys. MoE (2009) reports that 60 per cent of girls are still out of school. Gender disparity is visible in both enrolment and completion rate (World Bank, 2009).

Chitrakar (2009) points out that even if the country is far from gender equity in primary education, it is encouraging if the picture is seen from a historical perspective. Also the

findings by Karlsson and Mansory (2007) that points at peoples' positive perceptions and attitude towards girls' active participation in education is an achievement compared to previous years.

Why are girls' still held back?

Despite overall growth in educational enrolment worldwide, more than 115 million children of primary school age do not receive an elementary education, and with a few exceptions; girls are more likely than boys to be left without education all over the developing world (UNESCO, 2009). In Afghanistan 65 per cent of out-of-school children are out of school (MoE, 2009).

The right to education can be discussed from different perspectives, for example, "rights to education", "rights within education", and "rights through education" (UNESCO, 2003).

In the Afghan context the "right to education" is not evident for all when it comes to girls' education: schools are not available, socio-economic and cultural factors impede girls participation to a much higher degree that for boys. The perception that girls' education will not be beneficial for the parents as girls after marriage move to her husband's house makes parents favour boys' education more than that of girls. In addition, poor security could also be a n explanation to gender disparity.

Lack of girls' schools, long distance to school and lack of female teachers (Karlsson and Mansory, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2009), son preference (Karlsson and Mansory, 2007) (even when the general attitude was positive toward girls' education) are among factors that hinder and limit girls' participation in education (Karlsson and Mansory, 2007; UNICEF, 2003; World Bank, 2005). However, it has been found that a majority of people places equal importance on girls' and boys' education and views education as *farz* (obligation) both for boys and girls (Karlsson and Mansory, 2007).

METHODS

The current study has collected statistics on students, enrolment, drop out and retention rates up to grade five in the selected schools. The data collected from Kunduz Department of Education has been compared with the national level data as well as information from the sampled schools. All the data collection happened at the end of the educational year, when students had passed final exams.

In addition, interviews were conducted with girls who had left school and girls who had continued to grade five as well as with teachers and headmasters in the sampled schools. Structured interviews and self-directed questionnaires were used as tools for data collection. Interviews included information regarding people's interest in girls' education, main barriers in girls' enrolment and reasons for drop out. The self-guided questionnaires collected information regarding family background, parents' education and reasons for leaving school. The questionnaires were filled in by selected girl students and collected by an assistant.

As a baseline for the study, I used selected school records of grade one in 2006 and grade four in 2009. Enrolled students' statistics in 2006 was received from the schools and the students were followed up to grade four in 2009, which provided an indication of the drop out and survival rates to grade five.

The study started in January and was completed in March, 2010

Sampling

The research was carried out in Kunduz province with a total sample of 16 schools from urban and rural areas. The study was carried out in 8 girls' and 8 boys' schools; 4 in each category

(urban-rural). The selection was done purposefully. Schools were selected based on the existence of girls' schools in the rural areas, mainly in districts centres where girls' schools were open, while girls' schools in the city was selected from different locations of the city, two from each of the four sides in provincial capital.

Quantitative data on the enrolment of boys and girls of the last four years (2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009) was collected from Provincial Education Department, and UNICEF provincial office in Kunduz. Structured interviews with 32 (16 female and 16 male) teachers and headmasters in 16 selected schools in the province have been conducted. Self-guided questionnaires for 16 girl students, one from each school who had dropped out and 50 girl students in two classes who continued to grade four was filled out.

Limitations

Finding and collecting data in the schools' recording system was a difficult and time consuming activity. The provincial department completes the data for all schools for last four consecutive years. To find .the drop out and survival rate for every year for each cohort of students and consider newly admitted students was a problem, which might have caused some inadequacy to the correctness of the data collection and compilation.

As mentioned the sample was drawn from schools in the proximity to districts centres, where girls' schools are still operating. Due to long distances, scattered locations of schools and the difficulty to find girls who had dropped out the researcher assigned a well-trained person for the collection.

This study cannot be applicable to all or even most parts of the country; the findings are limited to the sampled schools in Kunduz.

FINDINGS

Girls' education in Kunduz

Kunduz is located in the North-Eastern region. The province is divided into seven districts and is home to 3 per cent of the total population of the country, On average, there is one school per 4,800 population, the enrolment rate in the province is 47 per cent; for girls 37. per cent, which is more than two per cent above national level (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Central Statistics Office, 2003). The GPI in the province according to Ministry of Education (2008) is 0.60 and it is equal to the national level. According to information obtained from Kunduz Provincial Education Department, the total number of schools in 2009 was 411 (98 girl schools, and 122 co-educated schools; including 84 high schools, out of which 16 were girls' high schools). The total number of students were 249 088, out of which 96 870 (39 per cent) were girls.

42 per cent of the girls in 2009 were students in the cities, where only, according to statistics obtained from Provincial Education Department only 15 per cent of the population live. Information from the same source indicates that 31 per cent of all schools are located in the provincial capital. This discloses a clear geographical disparity in the province.

Girls' enrolment 2006-2009

As seen in table 3:1 the total number of enrolled girls in primary education has decreased from 86086 to 74296, i.e. by 13.70 per cent, which has occurred in 2008 and 2009, when the girls of this study were in grade three and four. Similar decrease has occurred also for boys, their number decreased from 123600 in 2006 to 108337 or 12.35 per cent. However, in secondary education the number of students has increased, for boys the number is almost doubled while

for girls it is almost four folded. The percentage of girl students remains more or less constant at 37 per cent, which is two per cent above national level.

Table 3:1 Enrolment students 2006-2009 in primary and secondary education, Kunduz

Year	Primary level Grade 1-4		Primary level Grade 5-6		Total Primary		Secondary level Grade 7-12		Girls' percentage, (primary and secondary)
	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	
2006	89180	69468	34420	16618	123600	86086	22652	5899	37
2007	86012	69896	44212	26316	130224	96212	28358	8436	34
2008	69730	52330	38439	26715	108169	79045	40791	17137	35.5
2009	77238	54307	31099	19989	108337	74296	41155	19027	37.5

Source: UNICEF, Kunduz Office.

Even if an increase in girls' enrolment after 2007 has occurred the overall percentage of girls to boys as depicted in the table is discouraging.

Girls' survival up to grade five

Survival rate is the percentage of students enrolled in grade one and continued to last grade of the required level, without repetition (UNESCO, 2008; 1998). Survival rate in the area was a challenge as it is in many developing countries, even in countries with a high enrolment rate (UNESCO, 2008). In order to compare the findings and to give a clear picture of the situation, there was need for collecting some information on this issue on national level.

In Afghanistan, different figures have been given by different sources; according to UNESCO (2008) the overall survival rate for boys is 50 per cent, while for girls it is 35 per cent, but figures given by World Bank (2009) indicate that the survival rate is 53 or 55 per cent for boys and 21 per cent for girls. According to the findings in the present study the survival rate differs from one location to another, as table 3:2, below shows.

Table 3:2 Survival rate to grade five by sex and location of 16 schools in the province

Area Gender	Students in 1st grade 2006	Students completed grade four in 2009	Survival rate to grade five by per cent
Rural Girls	726	686	**94.50**
Urban Girls	1007	683	**68**
Total Girls	1733	1370	**79**
Rural Boys	658	554	**84**
Urban Boys	551	472	**86**
Total Boys	1209	1026	**85**
Overall Boys, Girls	2942	2398	**81.50**

The data on survival rates from the sampled schools for 2006-2009 indicates that between 2006 and 2009 girls' overall survival rates was lower than that of boys. Girls' retention in rural areas was higher than urban boys', also as compared to urban girls. Contrary to rural girls, urban girls proved to have lower survival rate in all categories and locations. Survival percentage for

both urban and rural boys is the same, with no significant variation. It equals national level, which is 85 per cent.

Girls' drop out rate

Besides the latest improvement, the high drop out rate is a huge and common problem a in most developing countries (World Bank, 2005) According to MoE (2008), drop out and repetition rate is higher than elsewhere in the world, generally drop out is around 15 per cent and repetition is 6 per cent; for boys and girls of all grades. The drop out rate reaches its peak in grade 2 for boys and grade 3 for girls, and it is much higher for girls than for boys, while the overall drop out is higher in grades 4 to 5 (between 15 and 23 per cent for girls and between 10 and 13 per cent for boys) (ibid.). Average drop out rate for grades 1 to 5 is higher for girls: 21 per cent compare to 14 per cent for boys.

In a survey conducted by the MoE in 2008, Kunduz was found at the bottom as regards to permanently absentees - 18 per cent in the province and 15 per cent on national level (ibid.).

The figures given by Kunduz Provincial Education Department on 2009 drop out rates are slightly higher: 21 per cent for girls and 19 per cent for boys. However, the findings of the sampled schools in the present study show an average drop out rate of 18.50 per cent; illustrated in more detail in Table 3:3.

Table 3:3 Registered students and drop outs in 8 urban and 8 rural schools, Kunduz, 2006 and 2009

Area Gender	**Students in grade one, 2006**	**Students completed grade four in 2009**	**Rate of dropt out**	**Rate of drop out by per cent**
Rural Girls	726	686	40	**5.50**
Rural Boys	658	554	106	**16**
Urban Girls	1007	683	324	**32**
Urban Boys	551	472	77	**14**
Total Girls	1733	1370	363	**21**
Total Boys	1209	1026	183	**15**
Overall Boys, Girls	2942	2396	546	**18.50**

In this study the drop out is generally higher for girls than for boys, with the exception of rural girls. Girls' high drop out is an internationally experienced phenomenon, particularly in developing countries. This is confirmed also in this study. In the above table the percentage of girls' drop out is higher than that for boys when considering the total number of students: 21 per cent of girls had dropped out when reaching grade five while 15 per cent of the boys had done so. When comparing urban boys and girls the difference is even higher: 32 per cent of girls had dropped out while only 14 per cent of the boys had. However, when comparing rural and urban students there is a remarkable difference between rural and urban girls: only 5 per cent of rural girls had left school while 32 per cent of urban girls had quit.

Who are the girls who did not enrol or who dropped out?

To explore the factors that inhibit girls' participation and cause girls' drop out people with close relations to education were interviewed, teachers, headmasters and girl students – those who had left school and those who continued - were selected. The core questions circled

around people's general attitudes towards girls' education, specific barriers to girls' education as well as recent progress and initiatives, which may stimulate and ensure girls' active participation in education.

Teachers and head masters views

Generally, more than 90 per cent (29 out of 32) of the respondents had the impression that, people believe that girls' education is important in present-day Afghanistan. All the respondents said that a majority of the population in the area are more interested in girls' education now compared to some few years ago. The teachers and headmasters in this study identified some specific families whose suffering from socio-cultural and economical problems, which, in spite of a general positive attitude, caused a negative position to girls' education. These families or groups are described below.

Families living in instable and insecure parts

Conflict and displacement, caused by war, have imposed constraints on education in many parts of the province. The Government has lost control over large portions of rural Kunduz. Several incidents of schools put on fire have occurred, teachers have been threatened etc. These areas, particularly rural, have seen a decrease of the number of girls in school. 'Conflict' was the main barrier to girls' education according to by 26 (80 per cent) the respondents in rural areas and by 24 (70 per cent) of the rural teachers.

That some groups have put a ban and severely restrict girls' education in most rural parts of the province was pointed out as an obstacle by more than 70 per cent of the respondents. Schools have been closed and thousands of girls have been deprived of education. In a study by Oxfam (2005) security was the fifth main reason but in this study responses indicate that security is the strongest factor and is more important than poverty.

Families with illiterate parents and poor families

Generally, as Chitrakar (2009) argued, education is generally highly valued by people, although some people due to geographical location, lifestyle and some traditional aspects neglect girls' education and have no interest in education of their daughters. Similar to many studies the findings of this study illustrates that children who do not enrol or drop out are children of illiterate parents.

Poverty as a crucial factor was referred to as a second problem in the rural areas. According to UNESCO (2007) poverty is the main reason for girls to drop out.. Some families depend on their children's income so children need to work to assist their family or to take care of siblings (UNESCO, 2007). In this study all the teachers and head masters saw a direct relationship between drop out and poverty. People are less interested in girls' education and drop out becomes high when the girl's labour and housework is needed. Even if education is free some families depend on girls' indirect contributions they are supposed to offer at home.

Views of the girls who had dropped out

Nine out of 16 of the drop out girls were from poor families and only one had parents with high economic status. Only two of their fathers had education up to grade 12. One had studied to grade nine .The rest were illiterate and so were all the mothers.

Around half of the girls in the rural area stated imposed restrictions on girls' schools and poor security in the area as the main reason that had made them quit school. "I am so interested in school and want to return and continue my education if only security allows me" a girl has written on questionnaire. In the urban schools security was not an issue at all. Family poverty and domestic work were mentioned as other barriers limiting girls' education by three of the respondents. They said they had to work in the field with fathers or at home with

mothers. Work was mentioned as a reason by both rural and urban girls. Parents' permission was also a reason for drop out for three girls; they said that their fathers and grandfathers did not allow them to go school.

All the respondents except one, valued education very highly and were interested in education, wanted to complete their education and continue to a higher level. No barriers of the education system and no traditional values were mentioned as common problems. Lack of female teachers, as was found by Karlsson and Mansory (2007) as a main problem was not considered as a barrier neither in the urban nor in the rural location. Insufficient textbooks, low quality education, irregularity were mentioned as some problems they had faced, but not to the degree that would make them leave school.

Views of the girls who continued to grade five

Contrary to the rural students, 80 per cent of the urban students were from educated families: 90 per cent had educated fathers and around 35 per cent had educated mothers. The economic conditions were generally considered better: around half classified themselves as middle class, some had poor economy and quite a few were well off. A majority of the fathers had some small business or were working in the bazaar: others had official works as clerks, teachers or similar.

To increase the participation of girls in education establishment of schools in the vicinity was suggested and beside this, incentives for girls, free textbooks and stationary would attract more girls' to school: Also, qualified teachers was proposed as a good motivator for girls, particularly in rural areas.

Particular interventions to attract girl students

UNESCO (1998) has found that incentives have improved girls' education quantitatively, but not qualitatively. Girls' enrolment enhanced, drop out rate decreased and people's interest increased when an incentive programme started but long term effects have not been studied. In Kunduz, a number of initiatives have been started by the government and international organizations in order to facilitate girls' access to school and encourage them to take active part,. Among these are Learning for Healthy Life (LHL), particular courses for rural girls provided by some NGOs, priority by MoE to female teachers, establishment of schools in less than required distance (three km), etc. Gender mainstreaming is on the agenda in every workshop, seminar and public communication. Two interventions are described below.

Food for education

A food distribution programme by World Food Programme (WFP)was running in some parts of the province in the last years. Girls' schools or in co-educated schools girls' students got this assistance, not the boys. According to respondents this programme increased the number of girls everywhere. Families sent all their girl children; even those underage or overage. During the programme implementation schools and classes were overcrowded, but when the distribution disrupted, the number of girl students fell dramatically and most of them quit. As pointed out by UNESCO (1998) such programmes tend to be more harmful than useful, which was also proven in Kunduz.

Community Based Education (CBEs)

More than 63 per cent of girls do not attend education, some of them due to lack of schools in the area. Parents usually prevent their girls to walk a long distance to school. Distance to school is an important factor, which can ensure or limit girls' access and retention in school. Community Based Education (CBE) has been implemented by some NGOs, in particular the

Swedish Committee for Afghanistan and is an innovation recognized by the Ministry of Education as an effective measure to attain EFA and gender parity. The main reason for establishing CBE is to ensure access to education, for girls in rural areas. According to Karlsson and Khan Shirin (2007), there were around 9000 CBE sections in the country in 2007 and they estimated that the number would increase to 30000 sections by 2010.

Currently, there are around 253 CBE classes in Kunduz, with 4000 girls students in six of the districts. SCA provides salaries and training to teachers, textbooks and other material, furnishes classrooms and support the local community to implement and monitor the teaching-learning activities regularly, while the community facilitates the school premises. The project has proven successful and is operating in the most remote and conservative parts of the province. Community involvement is a priority; besides supplying the classrooms close to homes the classes are managed by a Community Development Council (CDC). Female teachers are given priority and in case they are unprofessional on the job trainings are designed and delivered based on their needs.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Girls' enrolment has increased

Girls' participation in education and the number of girls' schools have increased considerably in Kunduz, and there are girls' schools in most villages, but still it is a long way to go before educational facilities are provided equally for boys and girls. Girls constitute 37 per cent of all students, two per cent above the national average, an encouraging figure not least when considering the poor and volatile security situation in the province. Girls' survival up to secondary school is in parallel to that of boys, an indication of what significance the security has for girls' enrolment. Security is no problem in the cities, where a majority of the secondary schools are located. Still, there are other barriers that prevent girls from attending school. The availability of girls' schools in rural areas is a big challenge. 31 per cent of the girls' schools are located in the provincial capital.

Girls' survival and drop out

The drop out rate in Kunduz, according to 2007 national survey was 18 per cent, which is 3 per cent higher compared to other provinces.. In the present study the overall dropout rate was 18.5 per cent, close to the national survey finding. This study found that girls' drop out rate is higher than boys', 21 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively. Deteriorated security in the area could be the reason for this. However, girls in rural areas had lower drop out rate – only 5.50 per cent – compared to girls' in urban areas and it was lower than boys in both urban and rural areas, which contradicts the assumption that lack of security influences the drop out rate. Rather, a settled lifestyle and less migration in rural areas, where people live in their own houses without frequent shifting from place to place could be an explanation. Furthermore, teachers are less formal and may not pay much attention to students' daily attendance in the rural schools.

Main constraints to girls' enrolment and retention

The obstacles and barriers in front of girls' education was to a large extent the same in urban and rural areas; however, in some rural parts girls' education was totally banned. Security was mentioned as the first barrier by rural respondents while poverty was the major obstacle for city respondents. In addition, traditional beliefs and parents' literacy level strongly influence girls' enrolment and retention. Migration from place to place was an important factor mentioned the city respondents.

Insecurity

Conflict and war make millions of children out of school (UNESCO, 2010). Several studies indicate that in war-struck countries, the participation in education of millions of children, especially girls, have decreased (UNESCO, 2003)

In Kunduz, the decrease in girls' percentage in last two years –(2008 and 2009) happened as a result of poor security and armed conflicts in rural areas, where clashes between armed groups occur daily: Many schools were ordered to close down, teachers and headmasters have been threatened, beaten and even killed. Several schools have been put on fire and burnt down in 2009. A long distance to school is closely related to insecurity. Girls' schools are often located in the district centres and the lack of freedom of mobility for young girls, common in all rural parts of the country, make it impossible for girls from remote villages to attend school.

Poverty

Poverty was mentioned as the second main reason preventing girls' education in rural area, while in the cities it was more important than security. Many studies (e.g. (Chitrakar, 2009UNESCO, 2007, Karlsson, 2001, Colclough et al., 2000, UNESCO, 1998) have found that poverty is directly related to low enrolment and high drop out. In Afghanistan the per capita income is less than 1$ and 42 per cent of the population live below line of poverty and not surprisingly poor economy is explaining people's disinterest in education. Kunduz, a province where people mainly live on agriculture many families depend on children's labour. Girls have to work in the household to assist the family. Moreover, in rural areas there are few job opportunities for women so girls' education is often appreciated by many parents.

Studies from African countries found that girls from poor households constitute the majority of out of school children in poor countries. Direct and indirect costs are the main reasons for poor families not to send or withdraw their daughters from schools (Colclough et al. 2000).

Negative attitudes towards girls' education

Conservative attitudes was found as one of the strongest reasons for the low enrolment and high drop out for girl students, particularly when they reach the age of puberty, i.e. around 13-15 years, after grade 5. Chitrakar (2009) found that parents usually prefer and attach higher value to boys' education than to girls' since the perceived benefits from girls' education is not directed to their fathers' family. Traditional values and people's attitudes towards girls' education influence their education; usually rural societies are more conservative and seldom are girls allowed, when grown up, to come out of their homes (UNESCO 2010).

Parental illiteracy was mentioned as a factor affecting girls' participation in school; it was said by teachers and head masters to be one of the main elements. The drop out students in this study were mostly from families with illiterate parents.

Interventions and their impacts on girls' education

Universal primary education for girls requires more resources, flexibility and particular measures. In Kunduz two important interventions had been tried: CBE and Food for Education. CBEs in Kunduz accommodated around 4000 girls in 70 locations in the rural and remote villages in 2010. The main implementer in the province is SCA. Recent ban on girls' schools issued by some armed groups in the area has increased the number of girls in CBE classes - the only alternative for girls to continue their studies. Vicinity to residential area, active community involvement, effective monitoring, priority to female and local teachers and flexible school hours are CBE characteristics, which have attracted more girls and increased people's interest. Regular visits and support by school consultants to CBE classes, sufficient

supply of school materials and close contact with local elders are factors that have contributed to the popularity of CBE.

Food for Education was implemented in some parts of the province. It had been effective in attracting more girls to schools for a short while - but when it closed down a majority of students had left school. This programme was harmful rather than useful. Overage and underage students filled the classes wasting teachers' and other students' time. When the programme closed down many had to quit school with incomplete education. "Educational wastage" is a proper term for this kind of programme.

CONCLUSION

The overall objective of the study was to identify some main elements depriving girls from education. Furthermore, the study aimed at finding some reasons for girls' drop out, recent progress in girl's education and existing interventions in the area. The study was applied in Kunduz, a province with poor security.

Since 2001 the Government of Afghanistan has been committed to facilitate education for all, and girls' education has been a top priority in every national document. Much progress has occurred in recent years, also in Kunduz. Girls' access to education is ensured in many parts of the province, the number of girls' school, even in rural areas, has increased. Peoples' attitudes and interest in sending their daughters to school have changed in a positive way. In most remote villages there are girls' schools working regularly and the local community plays an active role in keeping these schools open.

Even if a great deal of progress has occurred and many achievements have been accomplished in the area, girls' primary education is still a main challenge. Thousands of girls, particularly in rural areas, receive little or no education. Gender disparity in primary education exists in many parts in the province, and it seems unlikely that gender parity will be achieved in 2010, the year set by the government. Girls' enrolment rate is two per cent above national level. But gender disparity in primary education is huge in rural area. Overall drop out rate for boys as well as girls have been found to be higher than national level in rural and urban locations. On contrary, girls in rural locations demonstrated to have a better retention and survival rate to grade five. Poor security in Kunduz and ban on girls' education was the strongest factor that prevented rural girls from attending schools. Household poverty was the second reason behind girls' low enrolment and high drop out. Furthermore, illiteracy among the parents and sometimes their negative attitudes towards girls' education constitute obstacles for girls' education in the region.

Special programmes such as CBE classes had improved girls' participation in education while Food for Education Programme found to be ineffective.

On the basis of the findings it might be concluded that girls' education and gender disparity in schooling is still a serious issue. More effective and concerted actions need to be undertaken to ensure access and retention in schools.

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4. GIRLS' LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS IN MATH AND LANGUAGE AT THE END OF GRADE 3.

Ismat Mohammad Tahir

INTRODUCTION

An important aspect of children's well-being is their academic performance. Previous research has shown that the socio-economic status of students and features of the home environment may have large impact on their academic achievement. Teaching practices, class size, parental involvement with the school and school characteristics can also exert influence on academic performance. On the basis of recent reports and our eye witness; we may argue that most of the parents, Ministry of Education (MoE) officials and even students in Afghanistan are concerned about the quality of education and learning achievements of the students, particularly of girls, during their primary level of schooling (Mansory, 2000).

Access to education is the main goal for MoE, but for other stakeholders 'Quality Education' is also nearly at the top of the policy agenda. Obviously the recent numeric expansion of schooling opportunities in the country has not been enjoying higher education quality (UNESCO, 2000, cited in Karlsson, 2001).

Problem Area

When observing a huge number of students going to school with very low status of learning conditions, it seems necessary to customize and institutionalize learning achievement studies for assessment of the students.

In Afghanistan, the public examination system is based on final grade exam results taking place on annual basis, which can provide information on pass, fail and absenteeism rates of students during the school year. Since the examinations are set and marked by school teachers (not by provincial or national examination authorities), the results of such examinations can not be easily translated into statements about students' performance in relation to the curriculum on national level. Teachers use different types of tests made by themselves and scored by themselves alone. Also, comparison between schools, for example, is impossible to make even within a particular year. There are no standardized tests, neither any scientific research available for analysis of the learning achievement of children, particularly girls in grade 3, on country level.

Considering these points as justification I felt a need for this study and launched it. The following are the main components covered in this study: a) Exploration of what students know and understand in relation to national curricula and in relation to contextual factors and inputs, b) Identification of links between gender and learning achievements of students, , and c) Identification of some of the school and home background factors relating to learning achievement.

Objectives

The main aim of the study is to put light on some aspects of learning achievement of students, particularly girls, at primary level of education in a selected number of schools in Afghanistan. In order to reach to this aim the following objectives have been set for the study:

a) To compare learning achievements of girls with that of boys.
b) To explore some of the factors that generally are known to affect learning achievement of girls and boys.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on some of the existing literature, two of the most important topics of this study will be discussed: assessment of primary school students' learning achievement and gender comparison of learning achievement of the sampled group of students.

Learning and Assessment of Learning Achievement

Generally, assessment of learning achievement among students is not an aim in itself but rather one of the means of monitoring the goals of Education for All (EFA). Though access to school is important, essential and among the main strategic goals in Afghanistan, quality of education and knowledge of what children learn and how they learn in school are topics on the agenda of the policy makers in the country (Mansory, 2000).

A simple definition of learning is acquisition of new knowledge. However, most educational policies include in the curricula also gaining certain skills and attitudes. Skills can include necessary abilities to acquire new knowledge, such as reading and writing but also acquisition of higher psychological functions such as mnemonics or deduction. Skills may also include practical skills such as playing an instrument or doing masonry. The border between knowledge and skill is not that sharp and the two overlap in many cases. Educational curricula also include the dissemination of cultural values and morals and religious beliefs of the nation. Learning can thus be defined as the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Different philosophers and educationalists have presented different theories of learning (Philips and Soltis, 2003). For example, according to Piaget, a child comes into the world with a few cognitive faculties to guide his/her behaviours. The child learns how to feel and reflect. This means that a child comes into real life without any innate knowledge but rather with the abilities to deal with her/his needs. This is why children are not sent to schools until they have learnt to talk, walk and play. For this to happen, the child generally needs to attain the age of 4 to 6 years.

An operational definition of learning is proposed as a process of constructing relations (Shute, 1994, cited in Karlsson and Mansory 2003). We can roughly distinguish three categories of learning: a) learning is equal to recollection, i.e. for learning to occur we have should have the ability to recall; b) learning is the knowledge and framed information that is received from someone else, in other words knowledge is transmitted from someone to someone else; and c) learning is to make or construct knowledge, i.e. we should perform an active act in order to learn something. Today, there is a worldwide consensus that activity on the part of the learner is a prerequisite for learning to happen, but there is still a far distance to go before this belief is realized in all the classrooms in the world (Karlsson and Mansory, 2003).

That student learning is affected by a variety of factors related to school as well as to family and the student's own personal characteristics is well known since long. In other words, school inputs are not the only factors determining school outputs; students' learning is influenced also by many non-school factors. Societal factors, i.e. economic, social and political factors are important characteristics for the education system of a society (Fägerlind and Saha, 1989).

Looking back to the past few years, lots of projects have been undertaken and are in the focus for improvement of the quality of education in Afghanistan. All such inputs are often used as indicators of education quality but they are substitutes of actual student learning achievement (Mansory, 2000). Although the terms assessment, evaluation and measurement are often used interchangeably, it is essential to note that these terms need to be interpreted separately. Each generally makes use of tests; nevertheless, none of these terms is identical

with testing, and the types of tests required for each of these three activities may differ from each other. These three activities are considered below in reverse order. The common dictionary definition of assigning a numerical quantity serves well in most applications of educational measurement. While instruments such as rulers and stopwatches can be used directly to measure height and speed, many features of educational interest must be measured indirectly. Measurement is a useful operation in the processes of evaluation, or for research where characteristics must be measured, or as part of the tasks of assessment of student performance while the use of the term evaluation is in general reserved for application to abstract entities such as programs, curricula and organizational situations. Evaluation commonly consists of making comparisons with a standard, or against criteria derived from stated objectives, or with other programs, curricula or organizational situations. Evaluation is primarily an activity involved in research and development. It may require the measurement of educational outcomes, and it may involve the testing of both individuals and groups. Most judgments of an evaluative kind made in education would seem to be holistic in nature and to be based on a global examination of a situation. The term assessment may include administration of tests, or it may simply involve activities of grading or classifying according to some specified criteria. Student achievement in a particular course might be assessed, or students' attitudes towards particular aspects of their schooling might be examined. Such assessments are generally based on an informal synthesis of a wide variety of evidence, although they might include the use of the test results, or responses to attitude scales and questionnaires (UNESCO, 2000). However, such assessments can be transformed into a scale of measurement. It is, nevertheless, unlucky that the term student evaluation is now being widely utilized as a consequence of the growing stress on the evaluation of educational programmes and the financial support made available for such work (ibid).

Gender and Education

Gender is the role given by society to girls as well as to boys; it means these roles are not necessarily naturally caused by their biological structures. Thus if a society sets a rule that girls cannot continue education beyond grade 6, this is not based on their biological needs but rather on the role set by society for a human being, so it is changeable. Larson (2008) writes:

> Gender refers to the array of socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis. Gender equality entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, or prejudices (p. v).

Women are at the heart of most societies, regardless of whether they are working, earning money or not, mothers being influential people in children's style of life and careers. Educating girls is one of the most important investments that any country or a particular society can make in its own future.

Education has a sociological effect on girls' and women's ability to claim other rights and achieve higher status in society, such as economic independence and political representation. As the following examples demonstrate, having an education can make an enormous difference to a woman's chances of finding well-paid job, raising a healthy family and preventing the spread of diseases such as HIV and AIDS. As DFID (2005) reports:

- Women with at least a basic education are much less likely to be poor.
- Providing girls with one extra year of schooling beyond the average can boost their eventual wages by 10 to 20 per cent.

- An infant born to an educated woman is much more likely to survive until adulthood.
- In Africa, children of mothers who receive five years of primary education are 40 per cent more likely to live beyond age five.
- An educated woman is 50 per cent more likely to have her children immunized against childhood diseases (p. 2).

School is, in fact, significantly different for boys and girls. For example, the stories and their hidden messages in textbooks and attitudes of the teachers, particularly male teachers, advise girls that they are second-rate and tell them to have lower expectations. Most of the girls act so as to fulfil such prophecies. Negative attitudes are likely to contribute to girls' lower achievement (UNESCO, 2000).

Some Factors that Influence Learning Achievement

There are different factors from family to school environment and from financial to social conditions of the society that can influence learning achievement of the children.

Learning theorists share the view that children's development is in our hands; we teach them, we direct them, we support and motivate them (Crain, 1985). The outcome is a product of the social environment. Developmental theorists, on the other hand, think that children grow and learn on their own; they develop according to certain stages, determined by inner urges and needs (Karlsson and Mansory, 2003).

Besides the family and school environment some other factors, e.g. geographical location as well as job opportunity market, may also have an influence on the attitude of the students towards a particular or group of subjects. For instance a very low interest was existing in learning of English and computer expertise among the students in Afghanistan before 2001, while after inflow of western organizations and funds into this country as well as the establishment of Mr.Karzai's government, most of the students are willing to learn English and computer technology. This change is mostly caused by the job opportunity with higher salaries in NGOs, private business companies and the embassies of the western countries.

Behaviour, education level and occupation of the parents, gender, education level and teaching experience of the teachers, distance to the school, class size, physical environment and teaching resources available in schools can have direct impact on learning achievement of the students. To help a child perform well in school particularly at primary level, all of these factors have to be improved enough in order to meet at least the minimum standards accepted internationally.

METHOD

In order to conduct a comprehensive study I needed data that indicate various factors affecting learning achievements of the students, but to collect such data was beyond the scope of this study. As Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) is a reliable source among the actors working in the field of education on country level, I utilized the data collected in October 2009 by education teams of this organization through a test prepared for assessing learning achievements of grade three students in languages (Pashto or Dari) and mathematics subjects at the end of the grade. When elaborating the test questions, the learning standards called "Basic Learning Competencies of Math and Languages for primary level"; a document developed by a group of NGOs under the leadership of UNICEF in 2000 was consulted. Moreover, assessment reports and test questions from Trends in International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) and East Asia Learning were consulted (Mansory, 2010). The test was also based on the textbooks in the two subjects for grade 3 and applied and scored by the SCA.

There were twenty questions in the test; the first ten dealt with language and the other ten with mathematics. In the language part there was a text taken from Pashto textbook regarding protection of the teeth. Then five questions were asked about the given texts, e.g.: What was the text about? Who had the teeth ache? What caused the teeth ache? What did the doctor advise? Each of the questions had three possible answers available, while the student was supposed to circle one among the three. In the second part of the language test, there were some sentences with blanks to be filled in with proper words from grammar point of view and at the end there were few questions in dictation.

In the mathematics part there were ten questions starting with the basic level operations of adding, subtracting, multiplication and dividing integers with some analytical questions in words. For example, there were 50 birds sitting in a tree. After a few minutes some of them flew up, now seeing 22 birds in the tree, how many birds have flown up? Then there were some bank notes of Afs. 10, 20, 50 and 100, and the students were asked to find out which note equal Afs.10 or Afs.20 and then which notes together make Afs.30. There were also other items, such as a circle and triangle and a rectangle and the students were asked to write the name of each figure.

As the test papers were designed to assess learning achievement of grade 3 students in language and mathematics along with some additional information regarding progress of the model schools and number of visits by SCA's school consultants. I utilized this data after having read the language and mathematic textbooks of grade three. This reading confirmed that the test matched the contents of the textbooks and this convinced me to accept the data as valid for the topic of my study. The test was applied in different locations; some of the schools belonged to very rural areas (Lahussain and Moni schools in Shigal district of Kunar), some belonged to semi rural areas (Hazrat Sultan school in Kunduz) and some were located very close to the city (Sangbaran school in Taloqan). Moreover, students of different ethnic groups with different mother tongues and local cultures were included.

Background data has been collected through questionnaires filled in by teachers and students of the concerned classes involved.

Sampling and School Characteristics

Local cultures and socio-economic situation of the east, north, south and central zones of Afghanistan are relatively different from each other. Although these features condition schooling, we cannot give the details here.

School profiles: Grade three students of 34 schools (4 in the east, 7 in the center, 9 in the south and 14 in the north) in four out of six zones of the country have been included in this study.Schools in the east and southern zones represent Pashtoon speakers where Pashto is studied as first language, while schools in the central and northern zones mainly represent Hazara, Tajik and Uzbak societies where Dari is studied as first language in schools. Among the 34 assessed schools, 28 are jointly funded by MoE and SCA (so called model schools) while the remaining schools are funded by the MoE alone.

*Class profiles: 3*9 grade three classes in the schools were included, and from each school one or more classes were included depending on the size of the school. Most of the classes are taught in the native language of the students.

Student profiles: The 1,170 grade three students (552 of them girls) included in the study represent the majority group (Pashtoon) and some of the minorities in the country, e.g. Tajik, Uzbak, Hazara.

Limitations of the Study

The data has been collected and processed by SCA, a fact that might have implied certain limitations. For example, the data has been collected and compiled in certain schools, so called cold-climate schools (functioning during summer season and off during the winter season) and the extent to which learning achievement and its related factors are valid also in hot-climate schools of the country is not known.

Another limitation of the study is that variables or factors to which learning achievement is assumed to be related are treated one by one here, a fact that does not make it possible to study the relative importance of each school and family variable. A multivariate analysis of some type would have shown the relative importance of each background or independent variable as well as spurious relationships due to intervening variables.

FINDINGS

The findings are presented in terms of test scores in relation to factors that have been shown in international studies or have been assumed to influence learning achievements of the students in developing countries. The test scores are presented and analyzed in relation to three different groups of factors or variables: student characteristics (gender and age), school related factors and family related factors.

Gender, Age and Score Levels of The students

In order to study gender differences in learning achievement of the students on the tests, their test scores will be described in relation to their gender and age. The findings are presented in Tables 4:1 and 4:2.

Table 4:1 Students' Average Scores in Relation to Students´ Sex

Gender	**Average Scores**		**Both subjects**
	Language	**Mathematics**	
Girls, N= 552	58	48	53
Boys, N=618	55	47	51
Total averages	**56**	**47**	

N.B. No statistical test has been applied to test the level of significance of the differences found, and this is the case throughout the presentation.

The score levels in Table 1 show that there are no big differences between boys and girls. Both sexes have achieved higher scores in language than in mathematics. The standard deviations (not presented here) indicate that there is a lot of dispersion in the average scores gained by students in both subjects. That is, learning achievement varies a lot within each category (of gender and subject) and this seems to indicate, among other things, that some of the schools have not completed their annual teaching plan in due time.

As shown in Table 1, students have in the two subjects together just fulfilled average scores necessary for passing of a grade under national standards for passing (50 per cent as average scores in all subjects). In Afghanistan students are enrolled in grade one of the formal schools at the age range of six to nine years, which means that a "normal" student is expected to be nine to 12 years old when studying in grade three. In all cases, those of the age group 10 – 12 years have the highest scores and there is no significant difference between girls and boys in

this age category. The scores shown in Table 2 indicate that the girls have achieved higher scores in language in the first age category, while boys have achieved higher scores than girls in mathematics in the oldest age group. In the remaining instances, there are no significant differences.

Table 4:2 Students' Scores by Age level and Gender

Age level in years	**Mathematics**		**Language**	
	Girls	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Boys**
7 to 9 (N=441)	46 (N=240)	39 (N=175)	57	47
10 to 12 (N=648)	51 (N=275)	50 (N=379)	60	59
Above 12 (N=110)	36 (N=37)	48 (N=64)	52	52
Total average	**48**	**47**	**58**	**55**

School related factors, the Student Scores and Gender Differences

Factors of the school environment, such as teacher sex, distance to school, educational background of the teachers, class size, and school funders are assumed to affect students´ learning. The test scores are studied in relation to these factors or variables one by one, and therefore we should be cautious when commenting upon the findings and drawing conclusions

The average scores in Table 4:3 show that students taught by female teachers have gained significantly higher scores in both subjects than those taught by male teachers. Students of both sexes have achieved higher scores in language than in mathematics subject regardless of the teacher sex.

Table 4:3 Students' Average Scores and Gender Variation of the Teachers

Teacher Sex	**Average score of the students**		**Both subjects**
	Language	**Mathematics**	
Female, N=16	62	56	59
Male, N=23	51	40	46
Total average	56	47	

That distance to school (in terms of walking time) matters in learning achievement of the students is well-known. However, here the relationship between distance to school and student achievement is not straightforward. Those with a walking distance of 31 – 60 minutes and not those with the shortest distance have the highest test scores in both subjects and among both sexes. This could not be explained with the type of analysis conducted here. It is notable that girls have achieved higher scores than boys among those who have the longest walking time. It might be the case that those with the longest distance are enrolled only if they are the "brightest" and most school motivated children in the families.

Table 4:4 Students' Scores in Relation to Distance School to Home and Gender

Distance in minutes	**Mathematics**	**Language**

(walking)	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Up to 30 N=752	46 N=363	47 N=389	59	57
31 to 60 N=209	63 N=89	60 N=120	66	68
More than 60 N=209	43 N=100	33 N=109	50	36
Total average	**48**	**47**	**58**	**55**

The scores in Table 5 show that students taught by lower qualified teachers have achieved higher scores than students with teachers having longer education. This is most evident in mathematics. The lowest scores have in most cases been achieved by students instructed by the teachers with qualification higher than grade 12. This finding does not correspond to relevant findings in international studies.

Table 4:5 Students' Scores in Relation to Educational Background of Teachers

Teacher's background	Mathematics		Language	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Lower than grade 12 N=12	50 N=8	55 N=4	56	53
= grade 12 N=18	49 N=7	50 N=11	56	45
Higher than grade 12 N=9	36 N=4	35 N=5	53	50
Total average	**48**	**47**	**58**	**55**

The number of students in a class had a reverse relationship to students´ test scores – the larger the class, the higher the test scores (see Table 4:6). This applies in both subjects studied here and for boys as well as girls. This reverse relationship is slightly stronger among boys than among girls in language. Since a multivariate analysis has not been applied, we cannot know whether some other variable(s) is (are) intervening here and makes this relationship appear.

Table 4:6 Students' Scores in Relation to Class Size and Student Gender

Number of students in class	Mathematics		Language	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Up to 29 N=14	35 N=9	34 N=5	50	44
30-59 N=13	45 N=6	44 N=7	55	53
More than 59 N=12	60 N=4	58 N=8	65	66
Total average	**48**	**47**	**58**	**55**

Students of the classes (schools) funded by an NGO (for improvement of education quality) besides the MoE have achieved significantly higher scores than students of those classes (schools), which have been funded by MoE alone (Table 4:7). Once again, we cannot be certain about this relationship since no multivariate analysis has been applied. Also, ethnographic studies of schools with the different types of funding might show what makes this difference in the test scores. However, the differences are so big so that type of funding ought to have a certain relationship to test scores.

Table 4:7 Students' Scores in Relation to Type of Supporter to Schools and Student Gender

Type of Supporters to school	**Mathematics**		**Language**	
	Girls	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Boys**
MoE + NGOs (SCA) N=33	55 N=16	47 N=17	66	51
MoE alone, N=6	21 N=3	25 N=3	50	40
Total average	**48**	**47**	**58**	**55**

Family Related Factors and Gender Differences in Students´ Test Scores

There are some family related factors that affect learning achievement of students, particularly girls, in schools. These factors are mainly parents' social status, behaviour, educational level as well as occupation and type of support to their school age children. In order to find out if this is the case in this study, learning achievement of the grade three students in relation to their family related factors are presented in the following tables.

Table 4:8 shows that children of farmers have achieved the highest scores in mathematics. They are closely followed by all other children except children of parents with "Other" occupation. Children of the "Professionals" (i.e. the highest socio-economic group) have the lowest or among the lowest scores.

Table 4:8 Students' Scores by Occupation of the Fathers and Student Gender

Occupation	**Mathematics**		**Language**	
	Girls	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Boys**
Professionals• N=117	37 N=55	35 N=62	57	52
Skilled Labors N=350	45 N=166	47 N=184	60	59
Farmers N=543	52 N=256	51 N=287	58	55
Imams N=22	45 N=12	50 N=10	44	35

•[1]Professional: at least graduate of grade 12, having professional job in government or in NGOs e.g Teacher, Doctor, Engineer and etc.
2-Skilled Labor: Mason, Carpenter, Plumber and so on that working in local markets from village to provincial capital.
3-Farmers: Having farming as his/her business regardless of owning land or not.
4-Imam: Leading prayers in a local or district level mosques *(Musjid)*
5-Others: In case father is deceased or no information is available on his occupation.

Others N=138	48 N=63	45 N=75	59	50
Total average	**48**	**47**	**58**	**55**

The relationship between fathers' educational level and learning achievement of their children is strong but unsystematic differences (Table 4:9). Children of fathers who have studied up to basic level only, have achieved the highest scores among all groups except boys in language. Children of Islamic education holders rank second on the tests with very small difference in favour of boys. Surprisingly children of uneducated fathers have achieved better results than children of those, who have studied school up to secondary level or higher even professionals. It is reasonable to assume that some other variable(s) is (are) intervening here.

Table 4:9 Students' Scores in Relation to Student Gender and Educational Level of their Fathers

Educational Level (Fathers)	**Mathematics**		**Language**	
	Girls	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Boys**
Higher than grade 12 N=25	18 N=15	17 N=10	34	35
Secondary level (grade 10-12), N=135	12 N=64	10 N=71	32	30
Basic level (grade 1-9) N=321	70 N=151	68 N=170	77	66
Islamic Education N=100	56 N=60	60 N=40	70	70
Uneducated N=589	45 N=262	43 N=327	53	54
Total average	**48**	**47**	**58**	**55**

When it comes to the relationship between mothers´ level of literacy and student test scores, we find that children of literate mothers have achieved significantly higher scores than children with illiterate mothers (Table 4:10). This is most evident in language.

Table 4:10 Students' Scores in Relation to Mothers' Level of Literacy

Mothers (literacy)	**Mathematics**		**Language**	
	Girls	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Boys**
Literate N=138	61 N=75	60 N=63	75	70
Illiterate N= 1032	46 N=477	45 N=555	55	53
Total average	**48**	**47**	**58**	**55**

As a summary of the relationships between students´ test scores, on the one hand, and school related and out-of-school factors, on the other hand, the following ranges of difference are presented in Table 4:11. The numbers in this table show the range of variation (max – min) in test scores in relation to each of the factors studied here. This table shows that the largest differences in students´ test scores in both subjects are related to fathers´ educational level. For example, the differences between the maximum average score and the minimum average score

is 58 (70 – 12, see Table 4:9) in the case of girls and mathematics. However, as shown before, the minimum score levels were not related to fathers with the lowest level of education. As second and third factors, school supporter and distance home - school appear.

Table 4:11 The Range of Difference in Students´ Test Scores in Relation to School and Out-of-School Factors

	Mathematics		**Language**	
Distance home - school	**20**	27	16	**32**
Teacher education	14	**20**	7	8
Class size	**25**	15	16	**22**
School supporter	**34**	**22**	16	11
Family Background Factors				
Student age	15	11	8	12
Fathers´ occupation	15	16	16	**24**
Fathers´ education	**58**	**51**	**45**	**40**
Mothers´ level of literacy	15	15	**20**	17

Note: Differences of 20 or more score points are in bold.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Student Characteristics: In the case of the relationship between students' age and their learning achievement we have seen that students in the age group 10 to 12 years (the stipulated ages) have achieved the highest scores. Among the presumable reasons for this we can mention the following; a) the national curriculum might match the development and needs of this age group; b) some of the students in the oldest group may have repeated grade three, and generally, repeaters do not achieve well. There is no straightforward relationship between the home to school distance and learning achievement of the students. The students that spend more than half an hour but less than one hour to school have gained higher scores than those spending less or more than that. It is difficult to explain this finding, but one of the reasons could be the importance, that schooling has in the eyes of students (and their parents) that walk longer. The students who come from the longest distance might be more school motivated and are prepared to walk long way.

With reference to gender differences, we surprisingly see that among the students that walk more than one hour to school, girls have achieved significantly higher scores than boys. Such unexpected results (in Afghan context) most likely show the interest of the girls in schooling in comparison to boys.

School Related Factors and Learning Achievement: Some of the factors that influence learning achievement of the students are related to their schools, for instance, teacher sex, home to school distance, teachers' qualification, and size of the class.

Students of both sexes taught by female teachers score significantly higher than students taught by male teachers. One of the reasons for this relationship could be that female teachers are encouraging their students (as their secondary mothers) instead of threatening them; thus their teaching might be more interesting for students than the teaching performed by male teachers.

Teacher education has a relationship to test scores, which is reverse to what we could have assumed. That is, the more education teachers have, the lower the test scores of their students, and the differences in test scores in relation to teachers´ level of education are larger in mathematics than in language. In mathematics, the differences are smaller among girls than among boys. Girls as well as boys have performed almost the same in mathematics regardless of teachers' qualification level, while in the case of language, there is a significant gender difference only among those taught by teachers having grade 12. Some of the reasons for reverse relationship between teacher qualification and students´ learning achievement may be that teachers with qualification lower than grade 14 degree are paid at the same level or with less privileges for their working experiences regardless of their qualification level, this in some cases may have caused less interest of the highly qualified teachers. Also, teachers with higher qualifications may have other jobs in addition to teaching in a school; thus they are not working with full attention to their students or often miss their periods.

As to class size, its relationship to students´ test scores is also does not correspond to our expectations; the larger the classes, the higher the students´ test scores are in both of the subjects. Some of the presumable reasons for such surprising results might be that a) proactive and competent teachers have been assigned to the classes with higher number of students, b) big classes exist in relatively urban areas where better learning and teaching facilities are available in school, in the rural areas students leave school because of more involvement in agricultural business and due to lack of teachers c) students are distributed into groups in the case of bigger classes, thus better achievement may have been caused by group works among the students.

The Ministry does not pay sufficient attention to quality of education in terms of technical or human resources but rather to expansion of enrolment. The gap in the quality of education is covered in most cases by NGOs e.g. SCA, Afghan Khan Foundation (AKF), and Save the Children Sweden-Norway (SCSN) as well as by the schools functioning in the private sector e.g. Kabul International School (KIS), Shams London Academy (SLA) and others. Students in the schools funded by SCA have achieved significantly higher scores than students of the ordinary formal schools funded by MoE alone. As the number of the assessed schools funded by MoE alone is very low in this study, the results should be considered with caution. Among the possible reasons for this finding, we can refer to; a) teachers of the schools funded jointly by MoE and SCA are from time to time trained in subject competencies, pedagogy and their classes are observed by SCA's School Consultants (SCs) for on spot support, b) Student centred teaching methodology is applied in this type of schools, and c) teachers are supported with a certain amount of salary incentive for motivation and ensuring that they are focusing on their students instead of being busy in other jobs for family survival.

Family Related Factors, Learning Achievement and Gender of the Students: Children of farmers have performed among the best in both subjects. Children of skilled labours (carpenter, mason, driver and etc) and the group of "Other" fathers (deceased fathers or data is missing on their occupations) are following them respectively. To our surprise, children of professional (doctors, engineer, teacher and etc) fathers are at the fourth level of scores. Among the reasons for these findings we can refer to the following. a) Due to lower economic level, the farmers' children do not have access to TV, video and other tools of enjoyment and thus remain in close contact with their lessons; b) having seen the life conditions of their classmates, children of farmers are willing to change route of their life and focus to have better financial and social status for their family in the future, thus they pay more attention to studying and doing their homework.

As to the relationship between fathers´ education and their children's learning achievement, the association between these two variables is not systematic. The higher the education level of fathers is, the lower is its contribution to learning achievement of their

children. However, the education level of fathers has no straightforward relationship to the learning achievement of the students. Children of fathers with basic education have achieved highest or among the highest scores; this is closely followed by children of Islamic education holders with no difference in relation to gender of the students. Presumably, there are some indirect effects of the educational level of fathers on their children performance, e.g. higher educated fathers are either government employees or working in NGOs, where they have relations with many high ranking staff in the ministries. This may have acquired some cultural capital that could be negotiated by their children in school. Thus these children perceive that they do no need to study hard, while children of uneducated, lower educated fathers and of those fathers who have gained Islamic education do not enjoy such cultural capital. Regarding the role of fathers with Islamic education we can say that Mullahs tend to wish their children to learn and memorize the holy Quran in the pre-school ages, which spiritually may strengthen learning competencies among children. Mullahs are usually busy in teaching the children at home and in the mosques and rarely travel far away from home.

Coming to the most important among the family related factors, mothers´ level of literacy, we see its strong relationship to learning achievement of the children, particularly girls. Children of literate mothers have achieved significantly higher scores than children of illiterate mothers.

The findings presented previously in the tables indicate that students, particularly girls, have performed better in language subject than mathematics in most of the categories of teacher education, father's education, and so on. Some of the reasons might be that we have assessed learning achievement of the students in their first language. Students might be naturally interested in learning their native language; language might be easier to teach and learn, and family members (if educated) can help their children in language rather than mathematics, which needs some specific pedagogic skills in teaching.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study has been to access grade three students' (particularly girls) learning achievement in mathematics and language subjects and to indicate some of factors that may influence the learning achievement. In order to attain this aim, the mathematics and language competencies of the students were assessed through a test.

Some of the findings of this study correspond to what is known from other, international, studies, while other findings were unanticipated and surprising. The following findings are of the first type:

- *Student gender:* Girls have somewhat higher scores than boys in language but not mathematics;
- *Age category:* The highest scores were encountered among those in the stipulated age group (10 to 12 years of age);
- *Teacher sex:* Students with female teachers attain higher scores than students taught by male teachers;
- *Mothers´ level of literacy*: It is a well-known fact that children (especially girls) achieve better, the more education their mothers have.

On the other hand, the following findings are not directly supported by findings from other (international) studies:

- Students spending "medium" *time* (30 - 60 minutes) *between home and school* achieve higher scores than students spending less or more;

- *Teacher education:* Although there are some exceptions, especially in developing countries, students have higher level of learning achievement, the more education their teachers have.
- *Class size:* Students´ test scores are higher, the bigger their class. Internationally there are contradictory findings, but taking into consideration the big size of some classes in Afghanistan, very little supports this finding.
- *Fathers´ occupation and fathers´ educational level:* The highest scores did not appear among students, whose parents had longer education and/or high status occupations. Generally, this finding does not correspond to the findings from other studies, but similar findings have been made in some developing countries.

With the exception of some private and community-based schools, no studies have been found in regard to the relationship between funding of the schools and students´ learning achievement.

Finally, all the findings of this study should be interpreted with caution. The reason is that the relationship between test scores and other variables have been analyzed one by one, a fact that has not made it possible to control each time for other (intervening) variables. Some type of multivariate analysis would have been able to clarify this. However, such a design has been beyond the scope and level of this study.

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5. GENDER DIFFERENCES AT GRADE 6 IN MATH PERFORMANCE

Susan Wardak

INTRODUCTION

Islam promotes education for male and female regardless of how difficult it is to access it, but the literacy rate in Afghanistan remains among the lowest in the world. Afghanistan is a nation in educational crisis as well as a nation now beginning to recover from the devastation and destruction of educational institutions resulting from many years of violence and disruption of civil society. Security threats, poverty, shortage of qualified teachers (especially female), lack of proper learning facilities, distance to school, and questionable quality are among the key reasons that account for the low school enrolment, low literacy rate and high dropout rates, especially for girls and women. Other factors in Afghanistan that counter easy delivery of education include a severely damaged government system resulting in weak implementation capacity, the harsh climate, the rugged terrain, the lack of transportation. These factors are especially difficult for girls to overcome because of family concerns about safety. The cultural practices of early marriage for girls also make school attendance by girls problematic. The perceived need for girls to be taught by female teachers presents another obstacle to overcome.

Despite these obstacles, girls are attending schools in greater numbers than ever before, and they are studying the same national curriculum as boys. Because of the cultural attitudes that view math and science as male fields and not appropriate to the intellectual abilities of girls, and because of the international data that show a gender gap in math achievement, it could easily be inferred that the girls of Afghanistan would be no exception.

Therefore, this study was an important step in documenting whether or not a gender gap exists and may limit Afghan girls to future lives without strong math skills necessary for making progress in an emerging technological society.

Problem Area: probability of low achievement for girls imbedded in international studies

The disparity between girls and boys in achievement levels in mathematics became a concern in technologically advanced nations in the 1990s, and many nations developed teaching methodologies, curricula, and programs to increase girl's interest in mathematics and to raise their achievement levels. The outcomes of these programs are mixed, but in general the achievement gap has been closing in nations where such efforts have been made, for example in the United States and western European countries. The debate surrounding the lower performance of girls in mathematics has centred on nature (biological differences between the sexes) or nurture (culture, experience, expectations, etc). This question is still fervently debated. However, evidence shows that girls in many societies perform equally well in mathematics as boys and can compete academically without discrimination. The research literature indicates that girls show interest and abilities in mathematics through the elementary years, but that interest and participation decline by about twelve years of age. If girls' interest declines and they drop out of the math curriculum at about the 6th grade level this leaves the field of mathematics, and those careers that require math skills, open largely to males.

Objectives

The aim of this study is to survey the performance in mathematics of boys and girls in the sixth grade using a sample of schools from six provinces. The primary objective is to find quantitative data to assess the math achievement levels of girls and boys in sixth grade in schools throughout Afghanistan to determine if a significant gender gap exists and to propose actions to close that gap. A second objective is to identify some of the reasons behind the

assumed gender differences in mathematics. While not a nationally representative study or one based on a comprehensive examination, this study samples different provinces throughout Afghanistan.

Research Questions

The problem addressed in this study is whether in Afghanistan girls now face what was identified in the research literature of the 1990s in the west as a "gender gap" in math achievement. The central research question is: "Are Afghan girls in elementary school (sixth grade as the marker) doing poorer in mathematics than boys of the same age and grade? The research hypothesis is "Girls will be found to have lower maths achievement levels than boys based on a test previously applied by an international organization in Afghanistan." The null hypothesis is that no difference will be found between boys and girls in these data. If the null hypothesis is rejected, and the research hypothesis is supported the implications for girls in Afghanistan will be clearer.

If this common gender gap is found in Afghanistan, at a time when educational reform is being promoted throughout the nation, this is the time to address that gap before it grows larger. The nation's future progress depends upon an equivalent education for boys and girls. Opportunities for girls to contribute their talents to the nation's social, economic and technological development are essential to the nation While many other questions will emerge from the analysis of data, the key research task is to provide evidence to answer to the research question.

The total number of schools that were planned to be included was 220, but one school in Parwan was unable to complete the testing. The anticipated total was to be between 800 and 1,000 students to be divided nearly equally between girls and boys. (The actual number in the study is slightly over 1,000). However, when the tests were collected all data were included in the analysis rather than limiting the study to a stratified sample.

The sections that follow include a review of relevant literature, presentation of findings, discussion of findings and their implications and the conclusion. The questionnaire used and the data collected will be described in the Methods section.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study could be that the study it is based on quantitative results without qualitative data, including classroom observations, or interviews of teachers, students, administrators or parents. The personal information on each student could yield interesting information, but has not been included as part of the study. On the other hand, the quantitative data will speak for itself with simple facts as to the achievement levels and gender differences, if any.

Another limitation may be in the test instrument itself. It appears to be a well constructed test, but a test designed to exactly fit the Afghan math curriculum may have yielded different results. It would also have been informative if there had been time and resources to analyze each test item to determine which types of questions were most difficult for both boys and girls to answer. The test instrument itself was reported as a "standardized test", and was used in the research under that assumption. With further investigation it proved not to be standardized in an official way, but was constructed based on the curriculum and textbooks for Afghanistan and given to many Afghan students. A report, Basic Competencies in Learning for Language and Math in Primary Schools, Grades 1-6, in Afghanistan, was not accessible or available to the researcher at the time of administration or during the data analysis phase.

A national sample study of student achievement would be an important step and is being planned by the Ministry of Education. This study is only a piece of a much bigger picture of

student performance that needs to be assessed in order to improve teacher education and school learning. Since the sample of the study was not randomly selected, the findings do not represent the province, district or school levels but only the schools included in this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An abundance of research studies and reports have been published in the past two decades revealing gender gaps in achievement levels between girls and boys, and the most glaring gaps have been found internationally in the subjects of math and science where girls are most likely to do less well than boys. Literacy and reading achievement scores show that girls generally are out-performing boys (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). While the overall picture of gender differences in education is of interest, this literature review focuses on the gender disparity in mathematics with particular relevance to of math performance of Afghan boys and girls in the 6th grade in selected provinces and schools.

This literature review, because of space limitations, will not focus on more general and abstract learning theories although such theories are important and are not ignored in considering solutions to the problems emerging in the data. The focus here is on differences in gender achievement not on teaching strategies that are compatible with theories of learning even though those theories are definitely relevant to the learning of mathematics.

Gender differences in math achievement internationally

Reports in the 1990s of girls' faltering achievement as compared to boys in the same classrooms brought a flurry of reaction from U.S. educators and parents. Good and Brophy, studied the effects of teacher expectations on learning outcomes in the 1980s, and by 1990, in Looking in Classrooms, documented the gender differences in teachers' classroom attention to boys compared to girls noting "that teachers give boys greater opportunity to expand ideas and be animated than they do girls and that they reinforce boys more for general responses than they do for girls." (Good and Brophy, 1990).

In 1994, research by Sadker and Sadker (1994) confirmed the 1990 finding. They wrote: "Sitting in the same classroom, reading the same textbook, listening to the same teacher, boys and girls receive very different educations." They commented further that upon entering school, girls perform equal to or better than boys on nearly every measure of achievement, but by the time they graduate high school or college, they have fallen behind. The Sadkers found that boys were far more likely to receive praise or remediation from a teacher than were girls

In How Schools Shortchange Girls Susan Bailey (1992) stated that girls receive less attention from teachers than boys and the attention that girls do receive in class is often more negative than the attention received by boys. In fact, examination of the socialization of gender within schools and evidence of a gender biased hidden curriculum demonstrates that girls are short-changed in the classroom. "The clear message to both boys and girls is that girls are not worthy of respect and that appropriate behaviour for boys includes exerting power over girls -- or over other, weaker boys" (Bailey, 1992).

This performance discrepancy is notable throughout Canada. In Ontario, Education Minister Janet Ecker said that the results of the standardized grade 3 and grade 6 testing in math and reading showed, "persistent and glaring discrepancies in achievements and attitudes between boys and girls" (O'Neill, 2000). Research from the U.K. also shows that girls frequently have lower math achievement scores than boys, but achieve as well as boys in science and better than boys in reading (Weinburgh, 1992). Another study showed that males performed better than females on mathematical achievement tests. However they noted gender differences do not apply to all aspects of mathematical skill. Males and females did equally

well in basic math knowledge, and girls actually had better computational skills. Performance in mathematical reasoning and geometry shows the greatest difference. Males also display greater confidence in their math skills, which is a strong predictor of math performance (Casey, Nuttall, & Pezaris, 2007).

Shafiq (2010) examined the achievement of boys and girls in mathematics in seven predominantly Muslim countries. The analysis showed that girls can do, and did do, as well as boys in Jordan and Azerbaijan. In all the other countries in the study (Qatar, Turkey, Indonesia, the Kyrgyzstan and Tunisia), girls scored lower than boys in mathematics. This research complements other research on gender gaps such as the reports by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 2009).

However, in a study by Leino (2007), girls in Estonia achieved better than boys in math. The explanation offered for this divergent result was the social/cultural legacy of the Soviet Union in which women were expected to be equal to men academically and professionally. The expectations for girls motivated intense study of classroom habits and competitive behaviour. An international aptitude test administered to fourth graders in 35 countries, showed that girls began to lose ground to boys after fourth grade on tests of both mathematical and science ability. These gender differences implications for girls' future careers and have been a source of concern for educators everywhere (International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement, 2007).

The consistent theme throughout these studies is that girls do equally well as boys, or even surpass them in math achievement in the primary grades, but by the 4th grade the achievement gap appears and grows steadily throughout secondary school. Reasons given for this difference in performance within the same grade levels, classes, and schools usually refer to socio-cultural expectations and classroom environment. However, Marshall & Reiharz (1997) pointed out that gender bias in education reaches beyond the bias in socialization patterns and is embedded in textbooks, lessons, and teacher interactions with students.

One of the major problems in girls' achievement in developing countries appears to be the difficulty of enrolling and retaining girls in school. In South Asia, only 47 percent of secondary school-aged girls are enrolled in school. In Sub-Saharan Africa, only 30 percent are enrolled Current estimates predict that only 27 of 118 countries studied are projected to reach gender parity in secondary education by 2015. UNESCO reported on the Gender Parity Index (GPI) that the GPI is still low in Afghanistan (0.44), Chad (0.68), Central African Republic (0.69), the Niger (0.73), Yemen (0.74), and Pakistan (0.78) (UNESCO, 2003).

Is it Nature or Nurture? Are biological differences an inevitable barrier to girls' math success?

Recently some researchers began to claim biology of gender as the primary factor including genetic-biological and brain differences. This new information appears to provide support for the age-old view that girls just naturally are intellectually inferior to boys, especially with regard to math, science, and logical reasoning. Even the classic feminist study *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Belenky, 1997) supported the idea that girls and women have unique biological as well as social ways of thinking and learning that are more relational rather than linear and masculine.

Recent medical and scientific studies of brain differences have revealed indisputable differences in brain structure between males and females, but the research also shows that changes in the brain are affected by experience and that the differences cannot be accounted for by genetics. Examples of findings include those of E.O. Wilson (1992), the father of socio-biology, who said that human females tend to be better than males in empathy, verbal skills, social skills and security-seeking, among other things, while men tend to be better in

independence, dominance, spatial and mathematical skills, rank-related aggression, and other characteristics.

Now, after many careful controlled studies where environment and social learning were ruled out, scientists believe that there may exist a great deal of neuro-physiological and anatomical differences between the brains of males and females.

"To say this means that men are automatically better at some things than women is a simplification. It's easy to find women who are fantastic at math and physics and men who excel in language skills. Only when we look at very large populations and look for slight but significant trends do we see the generalizations. There are plenty of exceptions, but there's also a grain of truth, revealed through the brain structure, that we think underlies some of the ways people characterize the sexes." (Frederiksen et al.,1999**)**

Courten-Myers (1999) concurs:

> The recognition of gender-specific ways of thinking and feeling -- rendered more credible given these established differences -- could prove beneficial in enhancing interpersonal relationships. However, the interpretation of the data also has the potential for abuse and harm if either gender would seek to construct evidence for superiority of the male or female brain from these findings

In summary, the research reported in the literature review shows several perspectives on gender and learning commonly expressed. First, much research on achievement has indicated a gender difference in math achievement favouring boys as the more proficient learners. Although the folk culture beliefs have long supported the notion that math was for boys and reading for girls, and that girls' natural abilities in math, subjects requiring quantitative thinking and logical reasoning were inferior to that of boys', the research of the 80s and 90s sought other explanations. Those explanations laid the responsibility for girls' lower achievement on the culture; the literature cited cultural attitudes and low expectations regarding girls' abilities that reinforced girls' low self-confidence and withdrawal from situations requiring math skills. Other explanations came from systematic observations in classrooms (Good and Brophy, 2007) where it was found that teachers gave greater attention and reinforcement to boys in terms of math expectations. Many other examples of classroom climate and self-fulfilling prophecies began to appear in the literature at that time.

The more recent publication of brain studies showing differences in male and female brains has been used to provide an argument to circle back to the old folk beliefs about male superiority and female inadequacy with respect to quantitative skills and logical problem solving. Even though the researchers of neuro-biology are hesitant to use their findings as evidence of inherent differences between girls and boys with respect to intelligence and cognitive capabilities, and even though they may insist that experience shapes the brain as well as genetics, the underlying suspicion that the old folk beliefs may actually be proved correct remains an undercurrent in educational thought.

In Afghanistan, the old beliefs are very much held to be true without having the benefit of brain studies. This traditional culture, despite constitutional law giving equal rights to women, remains in the shadow of medieval thought regarding women's capabilities. A woman of achievement in any field, but certainly in mathematics, is viewed as an exception not an expectation. It did little to change this view when the top achiever in the National University Entrance Exam for Afghanistan (the *Koncor*) was a young woman.

The school culture in Afghanistan is different from nearly all the settings in the literature review described so far. Now, we turn to Afghanistan itself for relevant studies.

Gender differences in math achievement in Afghanistan

It is both difficult and inappropriate to compare school achievement of Afghan girls with achievement of girls in other countries, even those in Central Asia, because of the history of conflict, repression by the Taliban, and conservative traditions of the country, reinforced by a topographical terrain that limits communication and hinders change.

It is well known that during the Taliban era, 1998 – 2001, the restrictions on females were severe including prohibition of schooling for girls. In addition, the infrastructure for education was demolished during the years of war with the Soviets, civil war among the Mujahadeen, and repression by the Taliban. In his master's thesis ten years ago, in reporting on math achievement of girls' in Afghanistan, Mansory (2000) said:

> Historically, girls in Afghanistan have had less access to schools than boys, particularly in rural areas. The view that schooling is not for girls has traditional roots but has during the last years been reinforced by a political ban from the Taliban government. However, there are at present more than 30,000 girls only in the primary schools supported by the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) in rural parts of the country, which means that in the countryside it is likely that there are more girl students than ever before in Afghan history. These girls are often the first females ever in their families to attend school and often the only females in their villages, who learn to read, write and count. It is therefore of special interest to find out about girls' learning outcomes in schools, what they learn, if they learn more or less than or the same as boys and whether there are certain factors that influence particularly girls' achievements. Understanding what factors that influence girls' learning in schools might be a means to further increase girls' participation in education. (p. 2)

Since the establishment of the interim government in December 2001, Afghanistan has experienced a dramatic increase in school enrolment, particularly for girls. The new constitution and the new government of Afghanistan put education and gender equity among the nation's highest priorities on the national agenda. (National Strategic Plan, 2007, and Education Sector Strategy for Afghanistan, NDS, 2007).

> The Constitution makes it illegal to refuse access to schools on the grounds of gender, faith or ethnicity. Although there has been progress in the past five years, at the national level the enrolment of boys in primary schools is nearly twice that of girls, while at the lower secondary level it is three times higher and at the higher secondary level boys are almost four times more likely than girls to be enrolled.... This dramatic difference is certainly influenced by the shortage of girls' schools and female teachers in the rural areas, especially at the post-primary level. It is also a product of long-term social and political exclusion… Significant gender gaps and geographic disparities exist with regard to access to education at all levels. The vast majority of students are enrolled in Grades 1-4; very few are enrolled in secondary education where the curriculum has yet to be updated. The education of girls is still facing threats and challenges due to political and socio-economic conditions. (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 3)

The Ministry of Education created the Education Management and Information Systems (EMIS) Department to collect and maintain comprehensive data on schools throughout the nation. In order to fulfill the continuous need for accurate and current data, the ministry conducted the annual school survey in mid-2007. This has led to the establishment of a provisional EMIS that is used as baseline data for planning, monitoring and evaluation purposes for both the internal and external users of education sector in Afghanistan (Ministry of Education, EMIS, 2009).

The EMIS provided national enrollment data on all the provinces that raised concerns about the representation of girls in the education system. As background for this study, these data were examined for the six provinces in the study. Table 1 summarizes those data. In primary school (grades 1-6) overall approximately 40% of the student population was girls.

The data showed that there was a decline in female enrollment. In the Lower Secondary School (grades 7-9) that proportion of girls dropped to 34%, and in Upper Secondary School to 31%.

Table 5:1 Enrollment Data for the Six Provinces in the Study

Province	**Primary enrolment**	**% girls**	**6-9 – enroll-ment**	**% girls**	**10-12 enroll-ment**	**% girls**	**Total**
Parwan	118,847	39	37,795	27	10,720	15	167,362
Panjshir	22,239	44	5,566	23	2,182	12	29,987
Logar	77,146	32	16,738	18	5,771	11	99,655
Wardak	96,696	40	21,203	9	7,851	2	125,750
Kapisa	73,205	35	23,625	27	7,809	17	104,639
KabulCity	442,216	45	187,933	41	90,394	38	720,543
Total	**830,349**	40	**292,860**	34	**124,727**	31	**1,247,936**

Starting with an enrollment of 830,349 in primary schools in the six provinces, the enrollment was 292,860 in lower secondary, and 123,727 in grades 10-12. The researcher used this information as background for looking at girls' achievement in math assuming that the lower enrollment figures for girls compared to boys may also translate into lower academic achievement especially in mathematics.

The variations in girls' enrollment in the different provinces may be of interest in the analysis of the results. Kabul city retained a fairly steady ratio of girls to boys from primary through secondary school. This is the highest ratio of the six provinces and is not surprising given the socio-economic demographics of the city which has more educated and affluent families than other parts of the country. Kabul also is home to several state universities as well as private schools and colleges. The probability of finding educated women employed as teachers is much higher here than in any other province or city. When women teachers are available, the opportunity for girls to attend school is much higher. The universities are also a draw for keeping girls enrolled in school. There is an attractive reality right within view of students and girls have stronger ambitions to continue their education when the universities are within easy travel distance. Table 2 shows that half of all teachers have completed secondary school, about 18 % have completed the two year teacher training program, and 7 % have completed a baccalaureate degree. This means that nearly one-third of all teachers have less than a 12^{th} grade education. Less than half, 44 %, of the female teachers have completed high school; 29 % have completed two years of teacher training college, and 14% have an undergraduate degree or above. Two percent have less than a 7^{th} grade education

Table 5:2 Educational Background of All Teachers and Female Teachers

	All teachers	**Female teachers**
Illiterate	0.1	0.0
Private	10	2
Grade 1-6	2	2
Grade 7-11	10	8
Grade 12	51	44
Grade 14	19	29

Undergraduate	7	14
Unknown	1	1

The number of women teachers and their levels of education, shown in Table 5:2, provide information highlighting the need for more and better educated female teachers if gender equality in enrollment is to be achieved and if girls educational achievement is to be supported. An interesting statistic shown in Table 2 is that, although there are far fewer female teachers than male teachers in Afghan schools, the level of education of the women teachers is higher than the average levels. The implication here is that the few women who are appointed to teach are, on the whole, educated at a higher level than their male colleagues.

Panjsheer is one of the provinces in the study and the data from the EMIS report reveal an interesting pattern. Girls in primary school are about 40% of the primary school population, comparable to Kabul although Panjsheer is a mountainous region, where it is difficult to establish, sustain, and reach schools. This has been one of the least stable provinces in Afghanistan, although recently the Teacher Education Department (TED) has established a teacher training college there with a girls' dormitory. What is interesting about the data on Panjsheer is that even though the primary school attendance for girls is equivalent to that of Kabul, the drop at each subsequent school level is about 50% each time: dropping from 44% girls in primary, to 23% in the 6-9 grade levels, and then by nearly half again, to 12% in the upper secondary school 10-12.

The study will draw on the literature review when examining gender differences, if any, found in math tests for sixth grade boys and girls in six provinces. An analysis of the findings will lead to a discussion of the differences, if significant, and the differences in Afghan education compared with the international studies on which the literature review is based.

METHODS

The quantitative research methodology is the heart of the study design, which used a test developed and field piloted by The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA). Unfortunately, the results of field test were not available to the researcher, but the test came highly recommended through the SCA. The test is composed of 21 questions in general arithmetic aligned with the topics and skills included in the National Curriculum for Afghanistan, and also aligned with international standards for grade six students´ expected achievement. Although short, this test has items that cover skills in computation, spatial relationships and understandings of distance and volume, and practical questions that require more complex thinking beyond formulaic resolutions. Individual information about the students and their teachers was collected in a brief questionnaire completed by each student and each teacher. However, the research focused on the test results without analyzing variables related to the information regarding level of parent education or similar questions of demographics.

Procedures

Provincial Education Offices were contacted with a letter of approval from the Minister of Education giving permission to administer the test in sixth grade classes in the 9 provinces identified. Two provincial education directors denied permission to give the tests despite the official letter from the central administration: Kandahar in the southern part of Afghanistan, and Balkh in the north. Nineteen schools were selected in the six provinces for the administration of the test. Six of the schools were girls' only, as is frequently the case in

Afghan schools, especially after grade four. Five schools were boys´ only, and eight schools were mixed. In Afghanistan at sixth grade there are no co-ed classes. The term "mixed" refers to schools that run separate sessions for girls and boys using the same school building. In other words, 8 of the 19 schools were "mixed", having double sessions but separately for each gender. Data are not reported on the gender of the teachers, although custom requires that girls at sixth grade and above be taught by female teachers. The research took place at the end of the fall school term in December, 2009.

The test was given under secure and supervised conditions on days near the closing of the school year. The Provincial Education Directors and District Education Directors approved the test administration and the training of the school administrators and teachers in how to administer the tests.

Data entry and analysis

When completed, the tests were sent to the TED of the Ministry of Education where the data could be entered into Excel, tabulated and analyzed by province and gender. Age was also entered, although nearly all students fell within the 11 to 12 year age range. The differences were then put into the formula for a one-tailed "t" test of differences of means and calculated.

Data for a total of 1017 students (nearly equal numbers of boys and girls in the study: boys, 505; girls, 512) were entered into Microsoft Excel and analyzed. Nearly half of the sample was from Kabul, the capital province: 507 (276 boys, 231 girls). Logar (144), Kapisa (116), and Panjsheer (98) followed in that order.

FINDINGS

A score of 50% correct answers was arbitrarily set as the requirement for passing, with 10.5 and above being 50% of 21 questions. (Table1) The total mean score was 15.77 items right, or 75% of the items. The mean for boys was 16.03 or 76.3%; the mean for girls was 15.51 or 73.8% correct. The range of scores overall was from 0 correct to a high score of 19 correct (by a girl). The average scores on the test were 9.16 and 9.00 respectively for boys and girls.

A "t" test shows that this difference between boys´ and girls´ mean scores is not statistically significant. Therefore, even though the boys scored slightly higher overall, this difference cannot be considered an important difference that could be used as a predictor of girls' lower performance. It does not support the hypothesis that girls will have lower performance than boys.

Table 5:3 Summary of Data by Province, Class Level, and Gender

Province	**Total Students**	**# of boys**	**# of girls**	**Age range boys**	**Age range girls**	**Mean age of boys**	**Mean age girls**	**Mean score boys**	**Mean score girls**	**Range scores boys**	**Range scores girls**
Wardak	60	36	24	10-20	10-14	13	12	13	12	8-18	7-19
Kabul	507	276	231	10-17	10-19	13	13	7	7	0-16	0-16
Parwan	92	47	45	10-17	10-16	13	12	10	12	0-16	5.5-16
Kapisa	116	47	69	10-16	10-16	13	13	5	7	0-14	0-16
Panjsheer	98	40	58	10-16	10-21	13	13	5	6	0-12	0-13
Logar	144	59	85	10-16	10-16	13	13	15	10	2.5-19	0-19
Total	**1017**	**505**	**512**					9.16	9.00		

The first finding consituted the answer to the basic question of whether or not significant gender differences would be found. The hypothesis predicted significant differences favouring boys over girls in maths achievement. Significant differences were not found based on gender.

The boys' passing rate, overall, was 39.4% (199 out of 505), meaning that they had 50 % correct answers or more. The girls' passing rate overall was 35% (178/512). The difference overall is not significant. Although an overall difference was found, it is not statistically significant. For the total population of students taking the test, the pass rate was 37 63%.

It turned out that the mean math scores across grade six boys and girls are not different in this Afghan sample. Given that the children tested came from centres from only six out of 34 provinces, the result could be only generalized to students that are similar to those in the sample.

This result was not expected, therefore the research question leads to additional questions which must be addressed including if there are no outstanding differences in the aggregated data, are the results satisfactory or unsatisfactory overall for all these students? Also, disaggregating the data by province leads to other questions that will be raised in the discussion section. The results will be presented at the province level. However, it is necessary to mention that no conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the findings at this level. The reason is that neither students nor schools have been sampled randomly. That is, the findings are generalisable neither to provinces nor to schools. One of the indications of the lack of representativeness is the comparatively large proportion of female students in the sample. (In the sample, more than 50 % are girls, while in the six provinces it is 34 % in grades 7-9 and in the country as a whole, female students constitute 31 % of all students.

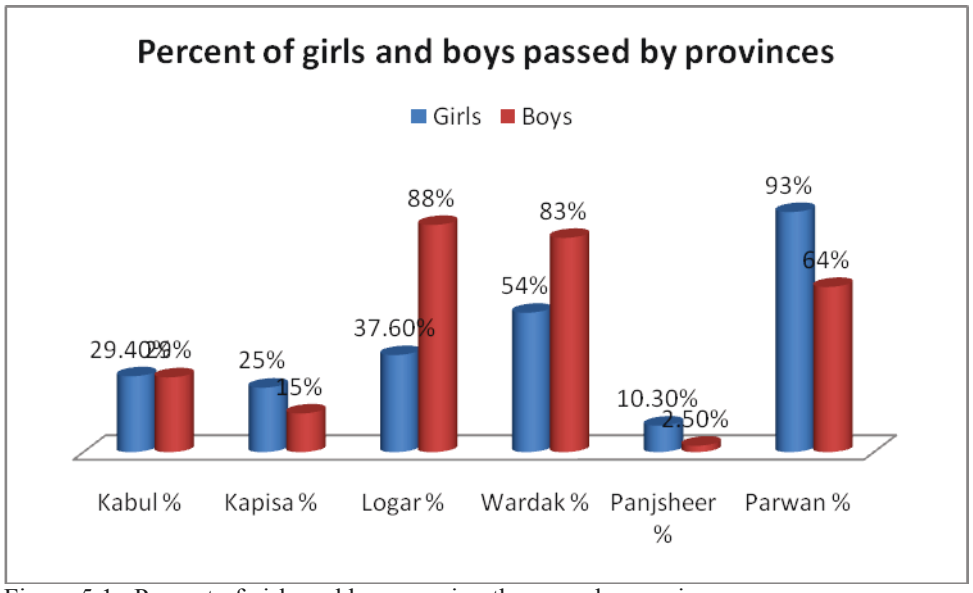

Figure 5:1. Percent of girls and boys passing the exam by provinces

When examining gender differences province by province, some interesting differences do appear. Kabul city and province, for example, show girls doing quite as well as boys, although neither passing rate is impressive.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis shows no significant difference, overall, in girls' vs. boys' mathematics performance as judged by results of a test. This finding supports the null hypothesis and rejects the predicted direction of outcomes suggested by the researcher. Why, in Afghanistan, is the data from this sample inconsistent with international trends showing girls falling behind boys? The literature review did show that in some Islamic countries the gender gap does not hold true

for girls; however, those countries are generally highly technological, industrialized, or do not have a history of gender discrimination and destruction of political/economic/educational infrastructure as in Afghanistan in the past two decades.

It is useful to consider the validity of the test for this study. The researcher unfortunately was unable, either before or after the test was administered, to find the documented data on previous uses of the test. The passing score was set at 50% of the items correct. This determination, although seemingly arbitrary, is not empirically based but follows the rules of the Afghan Ministry of Education for all tests regardless of standardization or normalization of data. Because of the limitations stated regarding absence of data regarding standardization, as well as the small number of items in the test, and the sample limited to 6 out of 34 provinces, one can speculate but not generalize about the meanings of the study for the whole of Afghanistan. As a pilot study, however, it does suggest some outcomes that may be confirmed in subsequent studies.

The number of items is small and may not have tapped the range of ability of students in the sixth grade. However, in examining the kinds of questions within the number given (21), the variety of items is excellent. Some of the questions require a low level of ability and knowledge as in simple computation; others require more advanced use of geometric formulas and practical conversions; others require some analysis of the problem and harder thinking holding several ideas in mind simultaneously. Still others require mental computation while looking at pictures of money or other practical items. The test itself does not appear to contain materials that are not part of the national curricula.

Although there appear to be pockets of achievement differential favouring girls, the girls are not alone, however, in their low achievement. This is a general pattern across the provinces in these data. Few groups attained more than a 50% passing rate. The research hypothesis was not based solely on the literature review and intuitive hunches of the researcher, but was based on a clear understanding of the barriers to education faced by women and girls in Afghanistan for the past two generations.

What stands out clearly is that neither boys nor girls are performing at a level that would be considered competent. The future of the nation rests upon an educated citizenry who can think critically and logically, solve problems requiring mathematical knowledge, and who are not inferior to their global neighbours with respect to their scientific and mathematical skills.

While remedial work and individual effort may lead many of these children to a higher level of mathematics ability, this should not be necessary in a thorough system of public education. All children can learn quantitative skills, and all children should be given a good start in the primary grades followed with interesting, challenging, practical, and fascinating opportunities to advance their knowledge through the upper primary and into high school and beyond.

After facing the results for the maths skills of children in this study, it is relevant to discuss the teaching methodology tradition in Afghan schools in mathematics and in other subjects. Teaching methodology and content presentation of mathematics in many countries have undergone a revolutionary reform in recent years from the days of the New Math projects in the United States and Europe, and even more revolutionary with the advent of the computer. Central Asia, and Afghanistan in particular, have produced great mathematicians. Today in Afghanistan it is not unusual to find individuals with outstanding skills in mathematics. Unfortunately, that is hardly the case in schools where mathematics is taught in a mechanical way by rote with rules and unvarying outcomes. Students often become lost in the maze of meaningless numbers, or become bored with the deadly routines of doing arithmetic as dull drills without application. To get the “right” answer quickly, without questioning is the mark of the “good” student. Learning in large groups where there is rarely opportunity for moving

ahead, for exploring number concepts more deeply, is simply not part of traditional teaching. The use of objects, models, projects with mathematical applications and practical use is almost non-existent in the Afghan curriculum as presented in schools today despite efforts to modernize pedagogy.

CONCLUSION

As in much research, more questions are raised than are answered. The results of the study, despite limitations mentioned earlier and despite the fact that the results did not confirm the research hypothesis, do remain intriguing from several perspectives. These data cast doubt on the assumptions of inferior ability or of deficit performance of girls relative to boys' performance.

The western research literature on gender difference also seems less important than initially presumed. The pattern presented in this study does not parallel that of most of the studies from the U.S. and Western Europe. Even the data from the studies of Muslim countries is not easily comparable to the results of this research. The literature review, however, provided a framework for the investigation and gave a foundation for data analysis and hypothesis testing.

Children do not learn mathematics, or other subjects, in a vacuum. To master and comprehend the concepts and skills in elementary mathematics there needs to be opportunity for application to meaningful life situations. Lessons need to be presented in ways that encourage exploration of concepts, playing with the underlying structure of number, experimenting with number patterns and different ways of thinking about the problem. Just memorizing the algorithm and drilling on facts does not encourage other ways of thinking or freedom to investigate routes to the correct answer. The focus on the *right answer* reinforces rote memory and inhibits divergent thinking. This may be found all too often in current Afghan education.

How much real on-task time is given to teaching and learning of mathematics in the schools? How does the teacher's skill affect the learning outcomes of the children? Would it be productive to have math specialists, who are trained specifically in primary and elementary mathematics teaching, to travel from school to school within a district giving more focused and powerful experiences in mathematics for children to increase their understanding, to promote their ability to apply their knowledge, and to inspire their interest in the subject?

Specialized programs for training teachers to teach children in new ways about mathematics could surely improve the achievement level, but the classroom climate is only one factor influencing achievement. Many outside of school social and cultural factors are playing a role. For example, Mansory (2000, p. 5), commenting on influences in learning outcomes of children in Afghanistan, argues that "student learning is determined by a variety of factors related to school as well as to family and student's own personal characteristics is well-known since long. In other words, school inputs are not the only factors determining school outputs; students' learning is influenced also by many non-school factors."

The findings of this study force us to look hard at the facts revealed by the low performance of all children in the study. The policy implications are serious at all levels: from the top of the Ministry of Education, through all departments of teacher training, curriculum development, down to the education districts in the provinces and the school classroom. Parents, too, need to be alerted to the potential damage being done in neglecting the mathematics progress of both their sons and daughters.

Is it time to re-think the content of the mathematics curricula in Afghan elementary schools to encourage and model mathematical thinking and problem solving rather than rote computation? How math score represent overall learning outcomes in Afghan schools is another important question for future research. Are the average math scores of grade six girls and boys from the remaining 28 provinces similar to or different from what this study revealed. We turn again to the importance of learning theories, not in explaining the data reported, but in planning for future strategies to ensure a better achievement outcome for Afghan children learning mathematics. The importance of having teachers who understand cognitive development, who understand how to provide experiences that enable children to think and understand quantitative concepts, and to have teachers who no longer focus on rote memory, drill, and test-taking skills.

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6. STUDENTS' LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT IN MATH AND LANGUAGE IN GRADES 3 AND 6.

Kanishka Shahabi

INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, Afghanistan has achieved great success in expanding network of schools across the country. There are however concerns that such quantitative expansion was made at the cost of quality of education. It is often said that the quality of education is lower in Afghanistan than in other developing countries (MoE, 2009). Similarly, there is the concern of what and how much children learn. There are many problems like lack of qualified teachers, appropriate physical facilities, good textbooks, etc that influence the quality of education in the country. With all these problems in the context, this study was performed with the main purpose of assessing the learning achievements of girls and boys in grades three and six in mathematics and language. The study was carried out in 56 government schools in rural areas.

Background and Problem Area

In Afghanistan, the public examination system is based on yearly final grade exam results. It is difficult to assess the results of these exams to know to what extent the students have learnt and whether their performance is related to the curriculum or not. This is so because the examinations are developed and marked by the individual teachers and not by the provincial or national examination authorities. This makes comparison of the learning achievement of the students quite difficult. This study has attempted to address this problem. The importance of this study lies in the fact that in Afghanistan there was lack of research based information on learning achievement in public schools in primary level (at the end of grades three and six) that would give analytical information on children's learning in mathematics and language and differences in girls and boys learning in these subjects. This study thus has fulfilled the lack of a standard scientific test for the purpose of analysis and comparison of the learning achievement of the students in grades three and six in public schools.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- To assess and explore the learning achievement of boys and girls in grades three and six in public schools.
- To examine factors influencing learning achievement of boys and girls.
- To look into the disparity, if any, that exists in the learning achievement of the boys and girls.

Research Questions

- How much have students learnt in language and math at the end of grades three and six in public schools?
- What differences were there between students' learning achievement in terms of school, parents and teachers' related factors?
- Was there any difference between the learning achievement of the boys and girls?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education is a basic human right and has been recognized as such since the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948. Since then several measures, strategies, programs, and commitments have been adopted to realize such right. One such commitment is the Education for All (EFA). Launched in 1990 EFA calls for providing quality primary education to all children, girls and boys, by 2015. Thus, quality learning and gender equality are two important aspects of EFA commitment. As the present study is basically related with these two aspects, this section presents a brief review of learning and gender concepts.

Learning

Learning is not restricted to the time spent in school. It begins at birth and continues all our life. Ongoing learning throughout life enables people to take advantage of new opportunities that arise as society changes.

Plato's recollection theory shows some interesting ways to think about learning. He has explained how a learner can learn new things. According to him, if someone does not previously know something she/he will not be able to answer the question related to that thing (Philips & Soltis 2003). Plato says, "If one does not previously know something, one cannot learn it now!" According to Plato's theory of learning, knowledge is innate, it is in place in the mind at birth, and for Plato; learning was a process of recalling. In other words, for Plato teaching is simply the helping of remembering process. Plato regarded learning as a rather passive process in which impressions are made upon the respective soul or mind.

John Locke (1632-1704) developed the theory of learning and he disagreed with Plato's theory that knowledge was innate. In his view, the infant comes in the world with a mind that is completely devoid of contents but goes on learning new things with examples and practices.

John Dewey (1859-1952), an American philosopher and educational theorist, was of opinion that learning takes places through experience and practice and such experience and practice should be of interest to learner. According to him, thinking is stimulated by problems that the learner is interested in solving. Learning takes place during this process as the learner is both physically and mentally active. According to him, education should allow to bring out one's full potential and capabilities not just for a simple learning but for a better living. He strongly supported activity methods for learning and argued that problems that were meaningful to the pupils most emerge from situations that fall within their interest and experience (Phillips & Soltis 2003). John Dewey's thoughts are evolutionary: thinking and learning have evolved because they have the function of enabling human beings to survive. As all other capacities, the human thinking has developed along the history (Karlsson & Mansory 2003).

One of the definitions of knowledge is investment, which means that the parents pay their children to gain knowledge from different sources, they pay for the school fees, purchasing of the books and other study materials, children spend their time while studying, and all these are the investment on their children. When children graduate they can gain more than they had spent for their studies by getting good jobs in different organizations.

Gender Differences in Learning Achievement at International Level

Gender is the role given by society to girls as well as to boys; it means these roles are not necessarily naturally caused by their biological body structures. Thus if a society sets a rule that girls cannot continue education beyond grade six, it is not based on their biological needs, but on the role set by the society. Therefore, it is changeable if the key members of the society are convinced that education is the right of a child rather than a need (Parajuli, 2009). Thus, gender refers to the different roles and learned behavior of males and females that are tacitly agreed

upon among members of a culture. It is the product of complex relationship between aspects like family, kinship, caste, class, religion, labor relationships, state, etc. The word gender also expresses the relationship between boys and girls, men and women (Parajuli, 2009). In recent years, gender has become a development dimension: international communities, national governments, and other developmental and social organizations all are giving more and more attention to gender issues.

Several studies have been carried out on gender differences in learning achievement (Good & Brophy, 1990; Bailey, 1992; Weinburgh, 1992; Fennema, Sowder & Carpenter, 1999; O'Neill, 2000). These studies have shown mixed results: some show higher girls' achievement while others have shown higher boys' achievement. One important point some of these studies have shown is that girls receive less attention than boys from teachers and this explains lower achievement of girls, particularly in mathematics, in some cases. A study conducted in 35 countries by the International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement (2007) showed that after grade four, girls fall behind on the mathematical tests and make way for boys. Marshall (1997) also mentioned that girls do equally well or even better than boys do in mathematical achievement in the primary grades, but by grade four, some of the gaps appear and grow in the achievements of the girls throughout secondary school. The reasons for these gaps are socio-cultural expectations, classroom environment, textbooks and teachers' interactions with the students.

UNESCO (2000) has shown that level of performance of the students is alarmingly low in developing countries. It has also pointed out that the students of grade seven from some developing countries could score the lowest scores in mathematics and science in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). UNESCO has also mentioned that in South Asian countries, many students even though they had been in school for five years or more, could not demonstrate basic literacy and numeracy and life skill competencies.

Perhaps more importantly, pupils in developing countries are frequently failing to meet the performance standards of their own ministries of education. For example, in Mauritius and Zimbabwe only about half of the pupils could attain the minimum level of the reading fluency, and only in Zimbabwe at least a third of pupils could attain the desirable level (UNESCO, 2000). In addition, a research called Monitoring Learning Achievement project showed that the result of pupils in Nigeria was generally poor. The main percentage of numeracy, literacy and life skill scores were 32 per cent, 25 per cent and 33 per cent respectively. Evidences showed that there were not many changes in pupils' performance in primary education in developing countries since Education for All Conference in Jomtien in 1990. For example, in Zimbabwe, the researchers reported that there had not been any changes and improvements in the main score of the grade six pupils.

Learning Achievements in Afghanistan

It is difficult to assess the learning achievement in Afghanistan and up to now because very few researches have taken place with this purpose and very little data are available in this field. Mansory (2000) had shown factors that influence the learning achievements of girls and boys in grade four in Afghanistan. He also developed a test on Basic Learning Competencies. According to him, the students who have secured the lowest score, their parents have higher or secondary education, while the students whose parents have no schooling at all secured score next to average. It is also mentioned that the parents' education did not have any influence on their children's learning achievements. Fathers' occupation had influence on their children's learning achievements; for example, the students whose fathers were administrators had the highest scores. The students whose mothers were teachers had also the higher score than average Mansory (2000).

Mansory has also added that students in co-educated and home schools have better average scores than students in other types of schools. The class size but the school size had some negative significant influence on students' achievements. Teachers' educational level and years of experience had no influence. Teachers with high education or long experience had no students with higher average scores. Students who got homework every day had higher average scores and very low scores were found among students who had repeated two or three years. May be there are some other factors that influence their learning achievements that need a deeper study. Mansory study has also presented students' achievements in mathematics from gender perspective. It showed that there were differences between the results of boys and girls.

Studies have shown that the learning achievement of the students is very poor in Afghanistan (Ismat, 2010). This Master degree study assessed 1170 grade three students (552 of them girls) through a test in the first language (Pashto/Dari) and mathematics. The students could achieve an average score of only 43 per cent in math while they could score 54 per cent in language. The study has also shown that the girls have achieved slightly higher scores than boys in math and language subjects. The students who were taught by male teachers had higher scores in both language and math than those who were taught by female teachers. This study has also shown that the distance from the home of the students to the school also has an influence to some extent. The students who have the distance to school of 30 minutes or less are expected to have higher learning achievement than the students who have the distance of one or more than one hour, because they spend more time on the way to schools and may have less time to study at home or they may get tired of walking.

A second master thesis based on data from 1017 students in 19 schools in six provinces showed that there were no significant differences between boys' and girls' mathematics learning performances in general (Wardak, 2010). This study did not support the hypothesis that girls will have a pattern of low learning achievement. No significant difference was found between the learning achievement of boys and girls.

The discussion made in the above paragraphs has shown that the learning achievement of the students in Afghanistan is very poor. These studies though have pointed out some of the factors that influence the learning achievement of the students; they did not present positive or negative aspects in learning achievement. . For this purpose we need a more comprehensive study that aims to explore the concerned issues more deeply. This is the main purpose of this study.

METHODS

This paper focuses on the children's learning achievement at the end of grades three and six at the primary level. Grade three was selected as the final grade of the first level and grade six as the final grade of the second level of the primary education. This study has used secondary data available at the SCA. The SCA had designed and collected the data through a test based on national curriculum and textbooks for the related subjects and grades.

The math test contained four main skills: Numbers, calculation, geometry and measurements and problem solving. The language test contained reading comprehension, structure and writing, grammar, and vocabulary and composition. There were overall 10 questions in language and 20 questions for math and all of them were multiple choice questions and the students marked the right response.

The data was collected at the end of the school year of grades three and six in the year 2009. SCA had used the simple random method for the selection of the study schools. If there were more than one classes of grade three in the selected school, one class was chosen again by using simple random method. SCA had collected data from 60 public schools in rural areas.

However, this thesis included the data only from 56 schools. 28 grade three and 28 grade six classes were selected from among these 56 schools, A total of 926 students of grade three taught by 28 teachers and 786 students of grade six taught by 28 teachers took part in this study. They had to complete the questionnaire within the given 90 minutes. The teachers, too, filled their questionnaire after getting information and instructions.

SCA had used a questionnaire to collect data about the students, schools and the teachers teaching either the mathematics or the language to the students who took part in achievement test. The questionnaire was pre-tested to make sure that it would give the good result. All the students of the selected classes participated in the achievement test. All the SCA School Consultants (SCs) had received instructions and trainings on conducting the test. Instructions were also provided for the management of the tests, including data entry, which was carried out by the trained SCA SCs. The answers and the data were coded and entered into EXCEL spreadsheets. The score of the students were analyzed related to students' sex, and teacher and school background.

Limitations

As this study has used the data collected and processed by the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan; following limitations were inherent:

1) The data was collected from 56 public schools in rural areas that may not be representative for all the schools in the country. Moreover, the data was collected from the cold climate schools (schools that remain close in winter). So the findings of this study will most likely differ from the hot climate schools (schools that remain close in summer)
2) The data obtained from the SCA was already coded and so the real responses for some of the questions could not be revealed.

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings related to learning achievements of the students in grades three and six.

General Findings

The average scores of the students in grade three were 54 in language and 43 in math (Table 1). The data showed that the students performed better in language than they did in math. 18 per cent of the student's could secure marks less than 20 per cent, 22 per cent secured between 20 per cent and 50 per cent and the remaining 62 per cent secured higher than 50 per cent marks. Likewise, in math, 37 per cent of the students secured less than 20 per cent of marks, 19 per cent secured between 20 and 50 per cent marks and the remaining 44 per cent of the students secured higher than 50 per cent.

The cause of the low learning achievement of the students in math is the low quality of math teaching in Afghan schools. During the test taken by the SCA students were asked first to answer the language questions and then the math questions. This might also have some reason in low achievement level in math. Some other reasons for low learning achievement might be school closure for a long period of time due to reasons like presidential elections, panic of swine influenza, and one month of summer vacation; unavailability of textbooks until the end of the school year; the multiple-choice questions in the questionnaire which the students were unfamiliar. A study carried out in India has noted that available environment, daily life activities, schools, teachers, parents, etc. influence the learning achievement of the students (Marg, 2000)

Table 6.1 Grade Three and Grade Six Students' Average Test Scores in Language and Math

Grade	Grade three	Grade six
Language	54	54
Math	43	47

The scores level in Table 6:2 shows that girl students in grade three have achieved slightly higher scores than boys in both the subjects. Girls' high average grade is more obvious in language. This point is confirmed by the international studies conducted in the years 1992, 1999 and 2000 that girls are better than boys in reading and mathematics in basic education (Wardak, 2010)

Table 6.2 Grade Three and Grade Six Students' Average Test Scores by Sex

Subject	Grade three		Grade six	
	Girls, N=395	Boys, N=532	Girls, N= 319	Boys, N=448
Language	57	51	56	52
Mathematics	43	42	40	51

The average scores of the students in grade six were 54 in language and 47 in math. That is, like in grade three, students performed slightly better in language than in math. However, students' performance was lower in grade six also. The reasons of low achievement might be the same as explained above in case of the grade three like low quality of teaching, inappropriate textbooks, school closure for long period, study related loads making it difficult for students to grasp all the subjects in a better way, etc.

Grade six test results showed that the girls were better in language skills while boys were better in math. The difference in girls' and boys' average score was more pronounced in math than in language. Girl's average score (40) was much lower than the boys' average score (51) in math. This might be due to the fact that by the time girls arrive at grade six they need to give time to household chores hampering their study, while on the other hand boys might be getting more opportunities in their study. The finding of this study is in line with the findings of studies conducted in 35 different Muslim countries in different years (Wardak, 2010). Such finding is in line with the general perception that girls' are poor in math learning.

Teachers' Sex and Educational Background and Students' Learning Achievement

This section now discusses students' learning achievement in terms of teacher background – their sex, education and training status. In grade three, students' achievements were better among students who study with female teachers (Table 6:3). This is the result which confirms previous findings by Mansory (2010).

Table 6.3 Grade Three and Grade Six Students' Average Test Scores by Teachers' Sex

Subject	Grade three		Grade six	
	Taught by female teacher, N=11	Taught by male teacher, N=17	Taught by female teacher, N=8	Taught by male teacher, N=20
Language	63	52	42	50
Mathematics	44	42	42	49

For the purpose of this study, teachers' educational qualifications are divided into three categories, below grade 12, grade 12, and above grade 12. In grade three, 11 per cent of the teachers had the qualification below grade 12, 75 per cent of them had the qualification of grade 12 and the remaining 14 per cent had the qualification of higher than grade 12 (Table 4).

The lowest level of the teachers' qualification in grade three was grade six and the highest qualification was of grade 14. Recruitment of new teachers to schools started after the year 2002 and most of the newly hired teachers have the qualification of grade 12 only, and this was the cause of the low quality of education in Afghanistan. In grade three, the students of the teachers with above grade 12 could score very high average score both in language and math showing some influence of teachers' education in students' learning. However, in this same grade, students' score in language taught by grade 12 teachers was lower compared to the students taught by below grade 12 teachers. Learning achievement of the students with teachers having two months of the MoE training was higher than the teachers having less than two months and also more than two months. This showed that the two months' training was important to improve the capability of the teachers.

Table 6:4 Grade Three and Grade Six Students' Average Test Scores by Teachers' Education

Teachers' education	Grade three		Grade six	
	Language score	Math score	Language score	Math score
Below grade 12	65	32	92	72
Grade 12	52	39	92	43
Above grade 12	82	72	70	53

Coming to grade six, students taught by male teachers could score higher average score compared to students taught by female teachers both in language and math. This difference might be explained by low level of formal education of female teachers compared to male teachers. Students' achievement in terms of teachers' qualification showed somehow surprising results in grade six. This is because in this grade, the students taught by lower qualification teachers (below grade 12) could score higher average scores while the students taught by higher qualification teachers (above grade 12) could score lower average scores both in language and math subjects. This showed that the teacher training program was not very effective or it might also be that the teachers were not assigned the appropriate teaching topic. There might also be some other reasons for such surprising findings, which need further and in-depth study to explain.

School Type and Students' Learning Achievement

Under this title, the schools are categorized into three types, boys' schools, girls' schools and mixed schools studying both boys and girls. In grade three, girls were found scoring high average scores both in language and math (Table 6:5). However, achievement scores of girls and boys in co-education school were surprisingly low requiring a more detailed study to explore the reasons. In grade six again, girls could score highest average score in language but in math, boys were the highest achievers. This finding is in line with the general assumption that girls are better learners in language than in math. Like in grade three, grade six students studying in co-education schools could score lowest average score. There are probably many reasons to explain such findings that need deeper study to explore.

Table 6:5 Grade Three and Grade Six Students' Average Test Scores by School Type

Types of school	Grade three			Grade six		
	Student number	Language score	Math score	Student number	Language score	Math score
Boys' School	460	54	45	371	53	53
Girls' School	344	60	47	297	59	44
Co-education	122	37	19	99	40	34

School						

Parents' Education and Occupational Background and Students' Learning Achievement

It was found that 44 per cent of the fathers and 12 per cent of the mothers have some kind of education (university, secondary, primary or Islamic education) while 54 per cent of fathers and 88 per cent of mothers were illiterate.

Generally, it could be assumed that parents' education would have influence on the learning of the students but this study could find no such clear relations in case of the learning achievement of the students in grade three. The parents with Islamic education had the children with highest scores amongst all the parents with some kind of education and this was true both in case of language and math (Table 6:6). In grade three, second highest average scores were obtained by those students whose mothers have above grade 12 education but in case of fathers, second highest average scores were obtained by those whose fathers have grade 12 education. The lowest average scores in grade three were obtained by those students whose parents had no formal education showing some relations between parental education and students' learning. It can be assumed that parents with education could support their children at home but parents with no education would not be able to do so. This might be the reason for lowest average scores of the students (with exceptions) whose parents had no education.

Like in case of grade three, no clear relations could be seen in grade six as well between parental education and students' learning achievement. The highest scoring students in this grade and in both subjects were those whose parents had education below grade 12. The lowest scores, however, were obtained by those children whose parents had no education.

Table 6:6 Grade Three and Grade Six Students' Average Test Scores by Parents' Education

Parents' education	Grade three				Grade six			
	Mothers' educ. & student score		Fathers' educ. & student score		Mothers' educ. & student score		Fathers' educ. & student score	
	Lang.	Math	Lang.	Math	Lang.	Math	Lang.	Math
Above grade 12	68	61	48	32	57	52	56	49
Grade 12	62	53	59	49	52	40	52	44
Below grade 12	56	46	58	47	64	65	64	64
Islamic educ.	77	76	73	70	61	42	62	56
No formal educ.	52	40	48	36	55	50	53	46

Table 6:7 below shows that in grade three, the students whose mothers have high status job could secure very high average scores both in language and math. It should be noted here that the proportion of such mothers was only 0.6 per cent of all the mothers. Nevertheless, it could be derived that these mothers provided good support to their children. Among fathers of grade three children, children of small business (shopkeepers) could secure highest average scores both in language and math. This could be explained as that they were available to keep an eye on their children so the children study regularly. A second explanation is that the children might have got the chance to practice their arithmetic in the shop, with their fathers. As mentioned by Mansory, (2010) such findings could be considered in line with the concept of "community of practice". In case of those children in grade three whose fathers or mothers were teachers, also secured high marks and the reason might be that they were supported at home. Mansory (2010, p. 9) has noted that "one cannot eliminate the role of "social capital", in Bourdieu's words, that teachers' have - at least on school level, which explains the difference".

Table 6:7 Grade Three and Grade Six Students' Average Test Scores by Parents' Occupation

Parents' occupation	Grade three				Grade six			
	Mothers' occupation		Fathers' occupation		Mothers' occupation		Fathers' occupation	
	Lang.	Math	Lang.	Math	Lang.	Math	Lang.	Math
High status job (doctor, engg. etc)	93	78	51	38	79	57	67	58
Teaching	58	47	59	43	58	42	46	42
Tailor	51	41	-	-	42	68	-	-
Housewife	53	42	-	-	52	47	-	-
Farming	-	-	48	36	-	-	48	43
Skilled labor (driver, tinsmith)	-	-	59	48	-	-	54	50
Small business (shopkeeper)	-	-	62	55	-	-	58	49
Imam	-	-	45	35	-	-	57	44

In case of grade six, children with high status job mother (there was only one such mother) could secure the highest mark in language but in math, the highest average scores were obtained by children of tailor mother. In case of fathers' occupation children of high status job fathers could secure highest average score in grade six but children of teachers were among those who could secure the lowest score in both subjects.

The analysis of learning achievements of girls and boys in both grades and in both subjects in relation to the occupation of their mother and father show little clear relations between the two. The general pattern that the children with high status job parents were found scoring high also could not hold true in case of grade three children whose fathers had high status job. Likewise, children of teachers were also not always among the highest scorers.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This study found that the students did better in language than they did in math, and their average scores were 54 in language and 43 in math in grade three, and 54 in language and 47 in math grade six. The reason for the low learning achievement of the students in math might be that it has been taught theoretically, or the teaching quality might have also been low. However, in general the learning achievement was poor in both subjects. The reasons might be several. One such reason could be the closure of schools for longer period and due to this reasons many schools were not able to cover the course. The design of the course itself might be one reason for low achievement. The test items were beyond the national curriculum and unfamiliarity of the students with such test.

Overall, the results of girls were better than the results of the boys in language in grades three and six. This supports the general assumption that girls are better in language than boys. In math also girls were in high position in grade three but not in grade six. Arriving at grade six, girls showed poor status in math learning. One Afghan reality explains this sort of situation. Girls are yet smaller in grade three and thus they do not have any specific household responsibilities. That is, till grade three they are free and could give time to study. However, by the time they arrive at grade six, they are bigger and are with many responsibilities in their house making them unable to give necessary time to their study.

One critical finding of this study is that students in coeducation schools were among the lowest achievers in both grades and both subjects. This probably showed that these schools are the neglected schools in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, a more in-depth study is essential to explain such finding.

As revealed by this study, qualification of the teachers were rather low in Afghan schools – only 12 per cent of the teachers in grade six and less than 12 per cent of the teachers in grade three had the qualification of higher than grade 12. This was one of the reasons of low learning achievement of the students. While analyzing learning achievement in relation to teacher variables, students studying with female teachers could score high than those studying with male teachers but this relationship was not maintained in grade six. Thus, while in grade three girls' or females' hold higher position, but in grade six boys or males hold higher position. Regarding teacher qualification, there was positive relation between learning achievement and teacher qualification in grade three but no such relationship was there in case of grade six – students with highest average scores were taught by lowest qualification teachers. The causes might include ineffective training of teachers or assigning teachers who are not trained for the subject. This study also showed no relations between short term teacher training and students' learning achievement illustrating lack of effectiveness of these training programs.

No clear relation was found between parents' education and students learning achievement in grades three and six. The students whose mothers and fathers had Islamic education could secure the highest average score in grade three and the students whose mothers and fathers had the qualification of below grade 12 secured the highest average score in grade six. However, the lowest average scores were obtained by those children (with exceptions) whose parents had no education indicating that home support and encouragement is of great value for the students' learning achievement.

Like in case of education, there was little clear relation between parental occupation and students' learning achievement. Children of high status job holders and shopkeepers were among the high achievers. This showed that the high status job holders were able to support their children – either by themselves or through private courses and tuitions. The children of shopkeeper fathers got opportunity to have some practices of their math skills in their shops as their daily work. Children of teachers (with exceptions) and Imams were among the low achievers and this showed poor professional status of Afghan teachers.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to analyze students' learning of language and math in grades three and six in public schools and to see any gender disparity in their achievement. The study also analyzed the teachers, schools, and parents related variables as factors influencing students' achievement. For the purpose of this study secondary data collected by the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan from 56 schools in rural areas were utilized. The SCA had performed language and math competency tests in grades three and six through Basic Learning Competencies test.

A total 927 students in grade three (532 boys and 395 girls) and 767 students in grade six (448 boys and 319 girls) were included in the study. The study found that the students' average score revolved around 50 per cent: above 50 per cent (54 in both grades) in language and below 50 per cent (43 in grade three and 47 in grade six) in math. Girls scored highest in language in both grades but only in grade three in math. In math, they were far below than boys in grade six. The reasons for such low learning could be that this year was a short school year. Nevertheless, such low learning showed only the poor quality of Afghan education.

The study found that a large majority of teachers had the qualification of less than grade 12 and that there were no clear relations between teacher qualification and student learning. Though some positive relations were seen between teacher qualifications and student learning in grade three, highest achievers in grade six were the students taught by lowest qualification teachers. Likewise, there were no clear relations between the teachers' sex and student learning. While students taught by female teachers could score highest in grade three, students taught by male teachers scored highest in grade six. Similarly, short-term teacher training also had no influence on student learning.

As students in coeducation were able to score lowest average scores in both grades and subjects, influence of the type of school was there in students' learning achievement. However, a more in-depth study is necessary to explain such outcome. Overall, no clear relations could be established between parental variables like their education and occupation and student learning achievement. Children of those mothers and fathers whose education was below 12 were among the highest achievers in grade six. However, children of parents without formal education were among low achievers in both grades and in subjects, if not always the lowest ones.

Likewise, there were no clear relations between students' learning achievement and parents' occupation. Children of high status job were the highest achievers but this was not so in all cases. Children of shopkeepers were also among highest achievers. On the other hand, children of teachers though were among the high achievers but were also among the low achievers. Similarly, there was also no pattern on parents' education and low achiever children. However, despite lack of clearly discerned pattern of relations between parental occupation and children's learning, it could be derived that those children are either the highest achievers or among the high achievers whose father and/or mother somehow could support them in their study. They were mostly high status job holders, shopkeepers, and teachers. This showed that cultural capital, as Bourdieu has described, of the parents or of family was one of the major influencing factors in children's learning achievement.

The findings of this study show the clear need for improving the quality of education in Afghan schools. As one example of such effort it is expected that the math learning should be made practice based and linked to the everyday life context of the learner. The findings also show that the home support, practice, and encouragement are as much important as teaching at school. One other important implication of the present study is the need for teacher quality enhancement. Improving their qualification as well as their teaching capability as per the needs of the students is important. Teachers' understanding of sociocultural context of students is also necessary. All these should be supported by appropriate teaching learning environment both in school and in home. In the light of the low achievement of children in coeducation schools, the need for improving conditions related to these schools is also clear.

This study thus has shown that learning achievement of students is rather poor in language and math in grade three and six in public schools in rural areas and this is more true in case of math. Girls are among high achievers in smaller grades and also in subjects like language. They were found lagging behind boys in subjects like math in higher grades. Among selected study variables parental or family related aspects were found having some positive relations with children's learning. School type was also one important factor influencing student learning. More conducive teaching learning environment in home and in school and better quality teachers are hence important requisites for better student learning achievement.

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7. GENDER BIAS IN PASHTO LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Ahmad Khalid Fahim

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Government of Afghanistan has adopted policies and strategies for achieving greater gender equality in education, to provide girls and boys with the same educational opportunities. As a result, significant efforts have been made in increasing access to education for girls, particularly in basic education. More attention has also been given to curriculum and new textbooks development. In 2002, the Compilation and Translation Department within the Ministry of Education was created and was tasked to initiate a process of systematic curriculum development. This department engaged in developing a new Curriculum Framework as a main curriculum policy document, stating the new learning areas (peace education, gender equality, life skills, human rights education etc), challenges and opportunities for learners in Afghanistan as well as the main orientations of the new education system.

In 2003 the new Curriculum Framework was developed. Based on this, new textbooks for grades 1-6 were developed. This process was finalized in 2006 and new textbooks were distributed to all schools in Afghanistan. The Curriculum Framework (2003), in addition to other areas, identifies equal educational opportunities for all, gender sensitiveness and anti-discrimination as important objectives for the first time in the history of Afghanistan. Through this research, it will be interesting to see to what extent the new textbooks are gender-balanced and conducive to the Afghan government's promise of gender equality and nondiscrimination.

Objectives of the Research

School textbooks are one of the important tools in the education process. They play an important role in the socialization of children. They present important messages to children on how social relations in their society should be organized. It is often important how male and female characters, roles and occupations are presented in textbooks. There seems to be an important omission in many textbooks. They omit accomplishments and roles of almost half of the human beings in society that are females. Research has revealed that women are placed in positions of subordination and passivity in textbooks (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008; Chung, 2000). Such presentations in textbooks affect children's psychological development. This research project has been designed to see how girls and women are described in grades 1-6 Pashto Language textbooks in Afghanistan. Thus:

- The first objective of this study is to see how girls'/women's and boys'/men's roles and occupations are described in illustrations and texts of the new grade 1-6 Pashto language textbooks. The presence of gender stereotypes will be looked into through the occurrence of gender-related issues.
- The second objective is to investigate how teachers perceive gender roles in society. Teachers are the ones who are directly in contact with students, they interact with students, manage classes and guide students on knowledge and attitudes acquisition, and thus make a big impact on students (Apple, 2004). In brief, what teachers think about the roles of men and women may play an important role in shaping students' beliefs about how men and women should be (Vu, 2008).

Research Questions

The following research questions have been formulated in order to fulfill the aims of my research:

- How are gender roles presented in the contents, illustrations and language of the new Pashto textbooks?
- How are sex-based occupational roles of males and females described in the new Pashto textbooks?
- What do teachers think about gender role in the new Pashto textbooks?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender and Education – Legal Framework

Education is a human right, as stated in international treaties and conventions that are legally obligatory on signatory states. The UN Declaration of Human Rights 1948 in its article # 26 refers to education as the right of every one that should be compulsory and provided free of charge particularly at primary levels. The article also further refers to making available technical and professional education as well as higher education accessible to all based on merit. The article also highlights the aim of education to contribute to the full development of human personality and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and also authorizes the parents to choose the kind of education to be given to their children (UN Declaration on Human Rights, 1948, Article 26).

The UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) that was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1979 and entered into force in 1981 also refers to equal education for men and women in articles 10a and 10b. The convention states that it is the obligation of the states to ensure eliminating discrimination against women and ensure equal access to education for both men and women. The convention further states that, "[t]he elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programs and the adaptation of teaching methods" (CEDAW, 1981, article 10c).

At the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) held 1990 at Jomtien, Thailand, the benefits and challenges of education to every citizen in every society were highlighted and discussed. Partners comprised a broad combination of national governments, civil society groups, and development agencies such as UNESCO and the World Bank. In response to the slow progress over the decade, the commitment was reaffirmed in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000 and then again in September 2000, when 189 countries and their partners adopted two of the EFA goals among the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2003/04).

After the world conference in Jomtien, primary education has been a priority for governments, donors and NGOs, mainly due to its perceived role in poverty reduction. In particular, facilitating and providing girls' access to education has been a major policy goal. This is not only a reflection of the very severe gender disparities that existed in literacy rates and school enrolment and completion rates, but it is also a recognition of the benefits of education to a woman, her family and the role that she can play in society.

Gender and Education in Afghanistan

Having in mind that the gender concept is rather recent (mostly after 2002) in Afghanistan, it is appropriate to reflect on the differences between the terms sex and gender, which are

sometimes misunderstood as interchangeable terms. This fact has also been confirmed by a study conducted by Wordsworth (2008) who states: "There are different understandings of gender in the Afghan context, including among ministry staff. Related to the difficulty translating both the terminology and concept of gender, respondents had mixed understandings of its meaning" (p.6).

The term sex means biological differences of males and females while the term gender means culturally and socially constructed differences between individuals. Sex refers to permanent and unchangeable biological characteristics of individuals in all cultures and societies while gender delineates assigned social roles and relations to individuals influenced by cultural, religious and societal norms and traditions. For example, in Afghanistan like in some other countries, generally men's role is perceived to be breadwinners of families while women to be mainly housewives who look after domestic chores and children. Women live in subordination to men. The sexual division of labor is taught to boys and girls in families from the very beginning; i.e. girls have to help their mothers in domestic chores while boys have to help their fathers with the farm work or go to market and supply food items (Karlsson & Mansory, 2007).

Afghanistan's National Development Strategy (ANDS, 2007) states that "[t]he net enrolment in primary school for girls and boys will be at least 60 percent and 75 percent respectively by 2010". It refers to gender equity as "an important precondition for the success of Afghanistan's development goals is the reversal of women's historical disadvantage in Afghan society. The Government's vision is a peaceful and progressive nation where women and men enjoy security, equal rights, and opportunities in all spheres of life" (Government of Afghanistan, 2007, p. 17). The National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) for 2006-2010 highlights eight priority areas including Curriculum Development and Learning Materials with the goal: "To develop a quality modern national curriculum for primary and secondary schools based on Islamic principles and values that will meet national, regional and international standards" (Ministry of Education, 2006, p.66). The document also focuses on the provision of equal educational opportunities to both boys and girls.

Gender Equality in Education

The United Nations Millennium Development Project has suggested that gender equality includes three main dimensions: (a) capabilities, including education, health, and nutrition; (b) access to resources and opportunities, including access to economic assets, such as income and employment, and to political opportunities, such as gender representation in political bodies; and (c) security, including reduced vulnerability to violence and conflict. Together, these dimensions contribute to women's individual well-being and enable women and girls to make strategic choices and decisions, that is, to be empowered (ADB; UNDP; UNESCO, 2006)

But lately, more consideration has gone into what gender equality in education should involve. Herz (2006) was one of the first to present a simple formula for improving gender equality in education: making girls' education affordable, making education a practical reality, making schools more girl-friendly, and improving educational quality.

One of the aspects of gender equality in schools is to offer quality education. Several studies suggest that standard aspects of school quality have a stronger impact on girls' education than on boys' education. For instance, a study in Bangladesh found that increases in teacher quality raise girls' enrolment or reduce their drop-out probability, while having no effect on boys. It was also observed in the same study that having separate toilet facilities for boys and girls increased girls' enrolment and improved their grades (Khandker, 2001). According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report (2008), three sets of provisions are essential both in general and for girls in particular: 1) reforming curriculum and textbooks; 2) enhancing

the number and quality of teachers, including female teachers; and 3) making the teaching-learning process itself, including the school environment, more child- and girl-friendly.

Gender Bias and Stereotyping in Textbooks

In the broadest sense, gender bias in education means the reinforcement of sex-stereotypes and the discriminatory treatment of girls in schools that disadvantage girls. This issue came to the forefront of research since the 1970s when several studies on the subject were undertaken in the United States of America and other countries by feminists and educators (Chung, 2000). These studies revealed that sex bias was intensely present in schools, reflected in curricula, in textbooks and other instructional materials, and in the way teachers treated girls and boys. They argued that this sex bias decreases girls' self-esteem and steer them to adapt to traditional female courses and careers and thereby prevents girls from achieving their full potential (ibid).

The American Association of University Women (1992 cited in Chung, 2000), elaborated the key forms of sex bias in textbooks as (i) the exclusion, or invisibility, of girls and women from textbooks, (ii) sex-stereotyping, (iii) the subordination of girls or women to boys and men in the text, and (iv) the lack of female figures in history books. Not only the textbooks influence gender consciousness in children, but family, television and other media also influence children. But still textbooks have an important influence and schools have the responsibility for challenging existing sex stereotypes.

Many countries have initiated the revision of curricula and textbooks in the post-Dakar period. In Afghanistan also, after 2002 the task of curriculum revision and textbooks development was given priority. The new curriculum framework was put into practice in June 2003 (Ministry of Education, 2006). This document defines a curriculum as "all the learning activities and targets regarding students' development that have to be achieved in schools" (Ministry of Education, 2003, p.4). The analysis of a curriculum and of textbooks is a useful first step in learning about quality and equality issues. It highlights the importance of asking questions regarding what girls and other previously excluded learners are being taught about themselves, whether they can effectively participate and whether the situations of girls are enhanced or diminished by the education they receive. A curriculum can reproduce ideas about caste, class, religious and ethnic identities and other divisions. But curriculum and textbooks development in many South Asian countries tends to be a male dominated process. In Nepal for example most textbook writers are male with potentially inadequate sensitiveness to gender issues in education. In the then developed materials men are shown as breadwinners, doctors, principals and scientists, and women as nurses, teachers, mothers and servers of food (Heijnen-Maathius, 2008).

Some countries have initiated 'gender audits' of textbooks to remove stereotyping of sex roles. Mongolia did so in 2005, and in 2007, Thailand carried out a comprehensive review of student textbooks through secondary education, eliminating both the paucity and passivity given to girls and portraying more women as role models in non-traditional areas. There is now greater awareness among curriculum makers and textbook writers of the value of designing more gender-sensitive educational inputs (UNICEF, 2009).

Several studies conducted in this field indicate a gender bias in image portrayal of women in textbooks. According to one study carried out in Kenya (Obura, 1991), it was found that women are nearly invisible in textbooks, even in books on agriculture where they are very productive and contribute much of the labor. In another study by Alrabaa (1985) in Syria, a total of 28 textbooks used in grades 8-12 were analyzed and found to be male-biased in content and language; indeed, the author concluded that females were derogated and victimized. The books' annual readership was over 500,000 students and the texts spanned all major subjects. Alrabaa points out that the bias in these textbooks occurred despite: (1) a 1963 education policy making the preparation and approval of textbooks a highly centralized, mostly state-controlled

enterprise, (2) a 1965 Syrian Government proposal to create a curriculum conducive to sex-role equality, and (3) a 1975 campaign which called upon Syrian citizens to remove any practice derogatory to the dignity of women. Kalia (1980) also analyzed the images of men and women in Indian textbooks. The study revealed that males were the exclusive leading factors in 75 % of the lessons with women taking precedence in only seven % of the lessons. Females were most often described for their beauty, obedience and self-sacrifice, men for bravery, intelligence and achievement. A total of 463 occupations in the textbooks were counted, and of these, 84 per cent were filled by males and 16 per cent by females. Therefore, instead of fostering the basic equality between men and women, the messages given to schoolchildren in textbooks sanction the dominance of males. Instead of freeing individuals from conformity to sex roles, the textbooks fortify a sex-division of labor.

Findings of a survey report by Friends for Education, that is a forum to uplift education, culture and civic sense in India (cited in Pandey, 2007)**,** show that an average primary textbook in India is about 115-130 pages carrying 80-100 illustrations with 52 percent depicting men and boys, 28 per cent neutral objects, 14 per cent mixed and only 6 per cent portraying girl-children. Women, however, are not only losing in terms of numbers, but strong discrimination can be found when we see the constant association of certain traits with males and females. According to the survey report, men in the texts and illustrations appear in stronger roles like engineers, lawyers, professors, pilots, mechanics etc. Girls in most cases are shown as passive observers where the boys are performing important experiments. Even in the class six mathematics books of primary school, men dominate in activities representing commercial and marketing situations. Not one woman has been shown as a merchant, executive, engineer or seller. Also jobs dealing with money like transactions in a bank or saving schemes are all managed by men.

A study on 122 Pakistani secondary school level textbooks concluded that the educational content aimed only at males by maximizing their potentials and skills to take advantage of the opportunities around them. However, the content did not represent the changing social status of Pakistani women from doing unpaid housework to production, service, and wage work (Zeenatunnisa, 1989 cited in Ozdogru et.al, 2002).

In order to eliminate gender stereotyping in textbooks, we need to address the issue of image portrayal. Removing traditional gender stereotypes from textbooks and other instructional materials and providing strong role models in their place might motivate girls to higher educational achievements. This would imply making the curriculum more relevant to the girls.

METHODS

Research Design

In line with the nature of my research questions, I need to get an insight into the Pashto Language textbooks of grades 1-6 and also to know about teachers' perceptions of gender roles. In order to do this, the study focuses on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of texts, illustrations, words, images, patterns of occupations, etc. in the textbooks and on interviews with teachers. It will be investigated to what extent women and girls vs. men and boys are visible in the texts, illustrations, activities and social roles. Also, a quantitative comparison of the texts, illustrations, words, etc. that depict male and female roles/characters is included. This research is a case study because it is about a single subject (Pashto Language), in particular grades (grades 1-6), in a specific country (Afghanistan), and during a specific period of time (after 2003 when the curriculum was revised).

Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

Pashto Language textbooks of grades 1-6 have been chosen for the following research purposefully because language textbooks tend to be part of the most important subject in primary school, as they form the basis for most of the other subjects than can only be taught when literacy is achieved; i.e. teaching the basic reading and writing skills is the prime objective of language textbooks. Also it is obvious to say that children in primary school are mostly exposed to language textbooks as compared to other textbooks.

In addition to textbooks analysis, I interviewed ten teachers (five male and five female) in order to know their perception of gender roles in the new Pashto textbooks. Four open questions were asked from teachers (for interview questions see annex 2). Teachers from five different schools were interviewed.

Pashto textbooks in grades 1-6 were not sampled; instead all of them, i.e. one for each grade, were analyzed in order to see the prevalence of gender bias and stereotyping in all grades. Thus, the findings from textbooks analysis can adequately be generalized, while the sampling for teachers' interviews is limited and the findings from teachers' interviews do not represent the views of all teachers in Afghanistan. But they still it can provide an insight into how some of the teachers perceive gender roles in Afghan society and how they are reflected in the new Pashto language textbooks for primary schools.

The data collection consisted of two parts: (1) reviewing the textbooks and extracting the relevant data for textbooks analysis and (2) interviewing teachers in order to know about their perception of gender roles.

Analysis Methods

The textbooks were analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis can be either quantitative or qualitative. Through quantitative content analysis presence or absence of target words, images and messages are investigated while through qualitative content analysis implicit or underlying meanings are investigated (PROMISE, 2001 cited in Ozdogru et al., 2002).

In textbooks analysis, both texts and the accompanying illustrations were analyzed as I believe that both are of the same importance. Representation of male and female characters in texts and illustrations influence the creation of beliefs and stereotypes referring to male and female gender roles. In order to reach the objectives of this research, the following set of criteria was used:

Quantitative:

- The presence of boys and girls in pictures
- The presence of men and women in pictures
- Presence of male and female names in texts
- The number of male and female textbook authors
- Frequency of words that relate to one or both parents
- Lists of occupations and presence of men and women in different occupational roles
- Presence of boys/men and girls/women in examples

Qualitative:

The procedures used in quantitative and qualitative content analysis may be similar. The difference is in the analysis phase. Through quantitative content analysis, statistics are gathered while in the qualitative analysis phase implicit and underlying meanings are interpreted (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2003 cited in Vu, 2008). Through qualitative content analysis I looked at how the gender-related character traits are presented. How are the relations between both sexes described in the texts? Are boys/men leaders? Do they make decisions, or do girls/women do

that? Also, I analyzed and interpreted the occurrence of male and female characters in texts and illustrations.

Furthermore, qualitative content analysis is used to analyze the transcriptions of interviews conducted with teachers.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the fact that no previous studies on textbooks from gender perspectives have been conducted in Afghanistan in the past, the findings cannot be compared to other studies on Afghan textbooks yet.

One limitation of the study is its limited scope, looking only into Pashto language textbooks, and not into the textbooks of other subjects. Also only textbooks of grades 1-6 are analyzed, and not those of the other grades. Furthermore, interviewing was done with only ten teachers, and not with other possibly relevant persons, such as curriculum experts or lecturers and students in teacher training. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all the existing Afghan textbooks of all subjects and grades. Also, since the curriculum framework and textbooks have recently been revised it might mean certain improvements in regards to gender roles, which can better be tracked through a comparative study of new and old textbooks, which is also not the scope of this study.

FINDINGS

I have classified the findings into findings from Textbooks Analysis and from Teacher Interviews. The findings from Textbooks Analysis are subdivided into several categories of *Illustrations, Texts, Diversity of occupations and roles by sex in the texts* and *Authorship* followed by the findings from the interviews.

Findings from Textbooks Analysis

Gender representation in illustrations:

In the illustrations analyzed it was revealed that women were involved in passive roles such as being at home preparing food, taking care of domestic chores, preparing children in the morning for school, sewing etc. while men involved in more active roles such as playing sports, shopping, working outside home in the fields and in offices etc.

In the illustrations of the books of all grades 1-6, men/boys outnumber women/girls. In total, from 306 pictures of children, there are 100 (33 per cent) girls and 206 (67 per cent) boys. In the illustrations of adults, which sum up to 329, women are only shown in 54 cases (16 per cent) compared to 275 men in pictures (84 per cent). Girls' presence in pictures from grades 1-3 is relatively high (between 31 per cent and 47 per cent), but in grades 4-6, boys' illustrations remarkably outnumber girls (between 89 per cent and 92 per cent). When it comes to the presence of women, the results are even more striking, i.e. men's presence in pictures in all grades remarkably outnumbers that of women's presence. In grade 4, only three women appear in picture while in grade 6, there is no presence of women in pictures at all.

Gender stereotypes stemming from these illustrations are that it is the women's place to be at home, and that the men, being more competent, work outside home and earn the living. In grade three, in one of the illustrations, a woman is also seen outside home involved in farming but mainly in a supporting role towards her husband.

Looking at the roles of children, there is almost the same number of school activities for both boys and girls. Still, when it comes to sports activities, boys engage more in playing sports even in schools and in other public places. Moreover, in the grade 3 Pashto textbook, boys' and girls' games are separately described both in texts and pictures. For example, playing dolls and

roping are shown as games being played by girls whereas for boys it is swimming, football, volley ball or *buzkashy,* an Afghan sport in which men ride horses.

Adult men are mostly presented in roles practiced outside home, e.g. working in the field, shopping in the market or in their professional roles like a teacher, doctor, office worker, shepherd, farmer, judge etc. Women are usually presented in family and parental roles such as cooking at home, taking care of children, milking the animals, weaving wool. Women have been illustrated in two professional roles outside home which is teaching and being a vaccinator.

Table 7:1 Occupations and roles for adults in pictures (grades 1-6); if occurring more than once, the number is shown in brackets

Female	**Male**		
Teacher (4)	Farmer (7)	Goldsmith	Sailor
Cooking	Shopkeeper (3)	Hunter	Seller
Milking	Carpenter (2)	Judge	Shoemaker
Reaper	Doctor (2)	King	Shopping
Sewing at home	Shepherd (2)	Mason	Soldier
Vaccinator	Teacher (2)	Mullah	Swimming
Weaving	Cook at hotel	Office Worker	Tailor
	Gardener	Reaper	Tinsmith

Gender Representations in Texts:

In Pashto language unlike most other languages, common nouns referring to males and females in singular form are spelled differently while in plural form they are spelled the same. For example the common noun *teacher* referring to male and female is spelled differently. Also, other occupational common nouns such as doctor, cook, headmaster, etc. are also spelled differently. The common noun referring to a male doctor is spelled as (ډاکټر , Doctor) while to a female doctor is spelled as (ډاکټره , Doctora). Moreover, Demonstrative Pronouns referring to males and females are also different.

Analyses found that male-centered language was used (specifically, masculine common nouns such as "teacher", "doctor" as well as the accompanying demonstrative pronouns) were used. (…) In the texts in all grades, when the word *teacher* is used in singular form, it often is spelled in masculine form except in one lesson (page 20) in grade 2 where the word *teacher* is spelled in feminine form. While in plural forms, both genders are addressed neutrally.

At the beginning of each textbook, there is a message from the Minister of Education mainly describing the objectives of the national curriculum, the completion of the revision process of the curriculum and the textbooks. In part of the message, he refers to the role of the young generation where he uses male-centered language. In Pashto language when young boys and girls are addressed, the words for them are different. For example, *zwan* is used to refer to a young boy and *pighl*a is used to refer to a young girl. The plural forms are also different such as *zwanan* (plural of *zwan*) and *pighly* (plural of *pighla*). In the minister's message only young boys (*zwanan*) are addressed. Thus, the girls are discriminated/excluded from the very first page of the textbooks.

The topic of lesson three in grade 6 textbook is "know yourself!" In the content of the lesson there are certain sentences that refer to only males. For example, in some of the sentences it is said that a country's prosperity depends on young boys (zalmian) hard work. In another sentence it is asked that in the capacity of a competent and brave young boy, what you should do in practical life. The lesson is clearly male-centered.

Jirga is a traditional all male assembly, where community elders and influential people come together and discuss various community and individual issues and disputes. The *Jirga*

plays an important role in local governance. Historically, women are excluded from participating in these local *Jirga*. This exclusion can result in serious consequences for their status and the protection of their rights (Government of Afghanistan, 2007). In each grade there is at least one lesson about *Jirga*. Both illustrations and texts describe *Jirga* in its traditional and historical role. In none of the illustrations and texts is women representation/participation in *Jirga* referred to.

The analysis of textbooks further revealed (cf. table 7:2) that a total of 386 male and female personal names were used out of which 15% were feminine names and 85% were masculine. (If the same name is repeated in the same text, it was counted once only, but if it appears again in a different lesson and with a different role, it has been counted again.) The result clearly suggests the invisibility of females in texts. Often the examples in lessons contain male names. It is also worth to note that male names were often associated with roles and occupations outside home while female names were associated with passive and domestic roles. For example, one of the lessons in grade 1 (page 43) is about the importance of vegetables. The text that illustrates these different roles is quoted as below: "Aslam brought vegetables from the market. Salma washed the vegetables", whereby Aslam is a male and Salma a female name.

Table 7:2 Presence of male and female names in texts

Textbook	Female	Female %	Male	Male %	Total
Grade 1	14	22	49	78	63
Grade 2	4	17	20	83	24
Grade 3	11	15	63	85	74
Grade 4	10	13	66	87	76
Grade 5	15	16	76	84	91
Grade 6	5	9	53	91	58
Total	59	15	327	85	386

In another quantitative analysis, the words *father* and *mother* were used relatively proportionately in texts. In total, the words *father* and *mother* were used 267 times in the texts out of which *mother* was mentioned 124 times (46%) and *father* was mentioned 143 times (54%). The analysis also revealed that the word *mother* was often associated with domestic and familial roles. For example, lesson 42 in grade 2 is about respect towards the mother. The text says that my mother is very kind. Before going to school, she prepares breakfast for me. The word *father* in its parental role is associated with more demanding situations, those that call for a certain amount of seriousness and responsibility. For example, lesson 44 in grade 2 (page 96) is about rights of the father. In the text it is said that the father is the head of the family. He is responsible for winning bread and buying clothes for his children.

The concept of who is the leading character denotes whether the lesson is mainly about male, female or both. Male characters in lessons are clearly in majority, as is shown in table 3. In 78 cases (73%) of the lessons, males are the leading figures, while in only 21 cases (20%) of the lessons they are females.

Table 7:3 Sex ratio of leading actors in lessons

Textbook	Females as leading actors	Females %	Males as leading actors	Males %	Males and females as leading actors	Both %	Total
Grade 1	5	29	10	59	2	12	17
Grade 2	3	17	15	83	0	0	18
Grade 3	7	28	14	56	4	16	25
Grade 4	3	16	16	84	0	0	19
Grade 5	2	12	13	76	2	12	17
Grade 6	1	9	10	91	0	0	11
Total	21	20	78	73	8	7	107

Diversity of Occupations and Roles in the Texts:

A total of 47 occupations/roles were found in the textbooks, which were classified into three lists: (1) occupations/roles assigned to both males and females, (2) occupations/roles assigned to only males, and (3) occupations/roles assigned to only females. Out of these, five were filled by only females (housewife, vaccinator, sewing, milking and raising hens at home), six by both sexes (cook, scholar, poet, doctor, teacher and reaper) and 36 by only males (king, kaliph, shopkeeper, gardener, tailor, hero, office worker, scientist, minister, horse rider, farmer, inventor, shepherd, goldsmith, head teacher, factory worker, musician, actor, press worker, fisher, milk seller, swimmer, head of family, prophet, carpenter, leader, writer, tinsmith, watch maker, passenger, artist, business man, potter, wrestler, breadwinner and hunter).

It was found out that males were depicted in a much wider variety of occupations/roles in settings both inside the home and outside of it and are more achievement-oriented. The occupations/roles filled by only males involved exercise of leadership/power over others such as king, minister, head teacher, leader etc. The occupations assigned to only females involved no exercise of leadership/power over others. Females in occupations/roles appear in supporting and in a service-oriented capacity. They are depicted in roles such as milking, being a housewife, raising hens at home. The only exceptions are *Bibi Aysha,* the wife of *Hazarat Mohammad* (peace be upon him) and *Zainab* (daughter of the Afghan king *Mirwais Nika*) who are referred to as scholars in the texts. Also in grade 4, *Malaly* (heroin of the second Anglo-Afghan war) has also been mentioned as leading character in lesson No. 6.

When one has a look at stereotypical views of men, what is most obvious are the most common field works, ploughing and sowing, implying physical strength, and historical and mythical roles of great warriors, but also great poets and fighters for freedom. Another critical finding is that men are presented as inventors. Almost in all textbooks, inventions done by males are exemplified.

Table 7:4 Occupations and roles for adults in texts (grades 1-6); if occurring more than once, the number is shown in brackets.

Female	Male		
Cook (3)	Poet (12)	Head teacher (2)	Milk Seller
Poet (2)	Farmer (7)	Tailor (2)	Minister
Scholar (2)	King (6)	Tinsmith (2)	Musician
Doctor	Prophet (6)	Writer (2)	Office worker
Heroin	Caliph (4)	Actor	Passenger
Housewife	Doctor (4)	Artist	Potter
Vaccinator	Inventor (4)	Breadwinner	Press Worker

Milking	Teacher (4)	Businessman	Reaper
Raising hens at home	Carpenter (3)	Factory worker	Sailor
Reaper	Gardener (3)	Fisher	Scholar
Sewing	Leader (3)	Head of family	Scientist
Teacher	Shepherd (3)	Hero	Swimmer
	Shopkeeper (3)	Horse rider	Watch maker
	Goldsmith (2)	Hunter	Wrestler

Authors of the textbooks:

The quantitative analysis was not only limited to counting the main authors of the textbooks. Instead, the total of males and females who are either main authors or illustrators, composers and review committee members have been summed up. In total, 130 such persons were recorded in all the textbooks, 90% of them are male, and the differences between the numbers according to the grade level of the books are small. When it comes to main authors, in total there are five main authors out of which two are females. Three textbooks are written by only male main authors, two are written by one male and female main author while only one textbook is written by only a female author.

The findings discussed above under illustrations and texts cannot be ascribed to inadequate representation of female authors as no direct relationship between the sex of the author and the level of gender fairness promoted in the texts was found. For example, the grade 6 textbook was written by the only female author, but the sex ratio of male/female as leading actors is 90/10 as well as the frequency of male/female names in the texts which is also 90/10.

Findings from Teacher Interviews

Ten primary school grade 1-6 teachers (5 male, 5 female) from five different schools were interviewed in order to explore their opinions about gender roles. Three open questions aimed at knowing their opinion about the current roles of women/girls and men/boys in our society, what roles they expect, and in what roles/occupations both sexes should be described in school textbooks. In addition, a number of occupations/roles were listed for the teachers so that they could choose the ones considered appropriate for women/girls and for men/boys or for both.

In regards to current roles of women/girls and men/boys in our society, all interviewed teachers (both males and females) agreed that men and women are not treated equally. However, in the answers from men, it was revealed that four male teachers believed that in most instances males and females should play the same social roles but in certain cases, based on the physical ability and competence, their roles should vary. As one of the male teachers put it: “males and females have almost equal rights”. Female teachers also shared males’ opinions that men and women are not treated equally and, thus, are having different roles to play. But unlike male teachers, almost all female teachers indicated the causes as male dominance in the society and family, as one of the female teachers writes that people think that women must be at home and should not be seen outside home. Another female teacher states that only men should hold higher positions and be politicians, but that:

Women should be provided with right of access to resources for example education. In some rural and remote areas, women are deprived of their rights. Even in some areas, they are treated like animals. Women don’t have the right to defend their rights. Girls are forcedly married. They are sold. Girls carry out so many heavy tasks at home. All these are due to low literacy. Women should raise their voice against this oppression of men and defend their rights. I think it is not bad if men and women are working together at office or school.

All teachers (males and females) clearly and in details described the current roles of women/girls and men/boys. But when it came to know their expectations of how they would like to see these roles, almost all teachers did not respond very clearly. Yet, the findings

revealed that almost all male teachers were insisting on the social roles for women to be in line with our societal constructions and norms. One of the teachers put it as follows:

Men/women and girls/boys have their own roles in society so that the various roles coordination results in bringing about economic, political, cultural and social development. Practically, women/girls' role is visible in our society but theoretically it is perceived to be non existent i.e. women are involved in certain social activities.

The majority of female teachers, unlike male teachers were insisting on equal roles to be played by both sexes. One of the female teachers stated that in addition to the family, the community also needs women. Women can solve problems better and more quickly and are good thinkers.

In response to the question how women/girls and men/boys should be illustrated and described in textbooks, the majority of the teachers could not clearly state the way that they would like to see the roles for men and women. This could be due to the fact that the curriculum and textbook revision and production historically is a very centralized task and is carried out by the Ministry of Education with non-existent/minimal involvement of teachers. Yet, one of the male teachers responded in a relatively clear way and stated:

> In my point of view, textbooks should contain contents, illustrations and examples in conformity to human and Islamic principles. If there are illustrations and texts that reflect Western values, they should not be taught to girls as they are not good for them. We live in an Islamic society and, thus, all contents must be based on Islamic values and principles. They should not be based on the values of Western democracy. Also, the roles of men and women at family must be in line with their physical abilities.

In regard to roles/division of work based on sex, it was clearly found that the majority of both male and female teachers believed that certain occupations are male exclusive such as driver, president, carpenter, national army soldier, while certain others are female exclusive such as kindergarten teacher. Interestingly, the majority of female teachers also believed that it is not possible for women to be national army soldiers, carpenters, farmers and drivers. The common reasons stated by female teachers included in some instances women's physical inability and in some other instances social restrictions and the fear of being abused by men. Another interesting finding was that two of the female teachers believed that women could not be leaders. One of the female teachers stated the reason that, "women are jealous and a woman leader might cause problems for other women" and another female teacher stated the reason as, "it is a difficult role and it is impossible for women to be leaders". On the contrary, however, all male teachers thought that women could be leaders.

Three of the male teachers thought that women cannot be president while all female teachers thought so. One female teacher was stating that it is good for women to be president but she doubted if they would be able to take this challenge. Men are thought to be better suited to be president as they are braver than women and are good in decision making. Four male teachers thought that women cannot be national army soldiers and the majority of the teachers did not state any reason for that while two teachers said, "being a soldier requires physical strength also that it is a heavy work". Three female teachers also shared males' opinions and the reasons stated by women were: 1) women are not courageous enough, 2) women cannot take part in fighting, 3) women soldiers can be abused by their male counterparts.

All male teachers thought that both women and men could be kindergarten teachers. All female teachers shared male teachers' conclusion for women to be kindergarten teachers but three of them thought that men could not be kindergarten teachers. Female teachers thought that women are more kind than men and that men cannot look after children well.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the present study are corresponding with studies on gender biases in textbooks in many developing countries. There are major quantitative differences in the presentation of the two sexes and important discrepancies in the way the gender roles are depicted. The following analysis is compiled under the categories of inside vs. outside, traditional sex roles, and teachers' stereotypical and biased thinking.

Inside vs. outside

Both in illustrations and texts, girls/women are presented in roles such as being at home preparing food, taking care of children. Except female teachers and women working in the fields to support husbands, women were basically shown at home settings. In one instance a woman was shown to be a doctor. Traditionally, Afghan men prefer female doctors to examine female members of their family. Afghanistan has one of the highest mother and child mortality rates in the world (Government of Afghanistan, 2009). This is partly because of scarcity of female health workers in remote rural areas. Thus, being a doctor for females I interpret as a traditionally accepted (feminine) role rather than an active role outside home.

Presenting girls/women in such roles means lack of role models for girl students that could open up a wider range of life opportunities. Females in domestic roles may lead to an impression that female students are expected to be future housewives. Given the low enrolment rates of girl students in both general education (grades 1-12) and higher education, indicating active roles for females in future could lead to increased participation of girl students in education. According to World Bank (1999), curricula and textbooks presenting favorable adult role models only for boys hinder girls' participation and ability to learn.

One big issue of concern can be that what happens to active and capable girl students when they grow up to be mothers and housewives, closed indoors and passive, without professional lives. Would a presentation of girls/women in an educational system with textbooks in which authors mostly address males and with lessons and examples that reassert the passive position of women not prevent girls from developing their full abilities?

Boys/men are presented in more active roles and having traits of self-confidence, decisiveness and adventurousness in both illustrations and texts strengthening the prevailing stereotypical thinking in Afghan society that males are stronger than females. Males are presented in a wider range and higher level job opportunities. Also, frequently, occupations that require physical strength such as farming, potting, carpentry, are male exclusive, which projects an exaggerated view of male power.

As noted under findings, males as leading actors outnumbered females. This also denotes a clear discriminatory approach towards females, who are half of the society. This clear imbalance between the number of females and males points to fact that the slogan for gender equality is present in the newly revised curriculum, but its actual support is not there.

Prompted by injustices and anarchy during wartime, Afghanistan has prioritized curriculum and textbooks revisions considering certain national priorities such as social cohesion and is striving to use it to foster democracy, human dignity, equality and social justice. The contents of the new textbooks in general are dedicated to these values. This prioritization has probably resulted in not treating both sexes equally in textbooks development.

Traditional Gender Roles

As in many other countries, traditionally, looking after domestic chores is considered to be the major responsibility of females in Afghanistan. The analysis of selected textbooks clearly shows that the patriarchal socialization patterns emanating from Afghan cultural norms and

values still hold true for the Afghan educational system. No gender sensitive orientations, which open up possibilities for constructing different perceptions of gender roles and gender relations are observed. In most of the analyzed textbooks gender roles still reflect traditional, stereotypical and binary male/female divisions. Female roles include a couple of stereotypical and traditional ones, usually mother or extensions of mother figure, like the one of a female teacher, vaccinator or female doctor. Male roles are no less stereotypical; they are only more diverse. Many of them are historical and mythical, such as heroes and fighters.

How gender roles are portrayed in books contributes to the image children develop of their own role and that of their gender roles in society. Although it is true that books transmit a society's culture, they could nevertheless at the same time be used to develop a more egalitarian prospect and affirmative outcomes for female students (Delamont, 1990 cited in Ozdogru et al., 2002). Contents of the books could be modified to restructure existing social values and provide richer socialization opportunities. However, restructuring existing social values and norms in Afghanistan has since long been a sensitive issue. Historically, any reform which aimed at enhancing women's status in Afghanistan by separating her from her family and community has been challenged and resisted by tribal leaders and community that sometimes led to the overthrow of the government (Ghosh, 2003). King Amanullah was attempting to modernize Afghan society, which included the liberation of women from traditional cultural norms. His hasty modernization efforts resulted in provoking tribal and community leaders to protest and finally topple Amanullah's regime in 1929. Such patriarchal traditions and anti-modernization resistance do not stem from the fact that almost 99 % of Afghans are Muslims and in no way should be interpreted as tenets of Islam. Patriarchal traditions are also prevalent in other Asian countries such as Vietnam, India, and China, which are non-Muslim countries. The major problem in Afghanistan is that people often interpret traditional norms and values as tenets of Islam. Moghadam (1997 cited in Ghosh, 2003) rightly points out that, "the issue of women's rights in Afghanistan has been historically constrained by (a) the patriarchal nature of gender and social relations deeply embedded in traditional communities and (b) the existence of a weak central state, that has been unable to implement modernizing programs and goals in the face of tribal feudalism" (p. 3).

According to Ghosh (2003), "[i]n Afghanistan, as in other traditional societies, women do not exist outside the family and community. Yet, family and kinship networks do not necessarily have to be destroyed in order to improve women's status through education, employment and access to resources. But they must be rearranged" (p. 10). I agree with Ghosh that the focus should not necessarily be on detaching women from family and community "where not only honour of women but also their survival is based" (ibd., p. 11) but instead a move that ensures a balance between their role at home and outside home should be initiated.

This can be done by bringing about changes in curricula, textbooks and pedagogical practices to help promote respect for diversity. Pure Westernized changes will not help improve the status of Afghan women but might in turn lead to increased turmoil and unrest in the country. Western ways of the liberation of women might not be liked by many Afghan women either, especially by those residing in rural Afghanistan where almost 80 % of the population lives. As stated by Ghosh (2003), despite the fact that women in most Muslim countries due to fundamentalist ideology live in subordination to men, many women still prefer their lives to the lives of Westernized women who are thought as "corrupt", "licentious" and "anti-family". However, these attributes to Western women may be common, but are not necessarily true. Also a clear distinction between fundamentalism and Islam should be made. Fundamentalism is a political movement and Islam is an individual and social belief system. On the other hand, women also often fear that destruction of kinship and family structures might mean disruption of their daily lives. Given the current degree of dependence of women on families and kinship structures and the poor economic status, women fear losing the security that they currently

enjoy inside home. In order to ensure a smooth change process, as a pre-requisite, awareness raising and community mobilization efforts through full involvement of women, religious, tribal and community leaders should be undertaken prior to any modernization efforts to ensure understanding and ownership of the changes by communities. The efforts should and must consider conveying the message that patriarchal traditions and Islam are different entities. As a matter of fact, it should also be highlighted that every change in favor of girls and women is not caused by or a sign of Westernization.

Teachers' Stereotypical and Biased Thinking

When the responses by teachers were being analyzed, it was found out that almost all teachers had confused rights with gender roles. Mostly, the respondents were referring to men and women's rights rather than their roles in society and family. This could be due to the fact that Afghans have only recently become aware of the differences between sex and gender.

The findings from teacher interviews clearly show a stereotypical thinking. This can be due to the fact that in Afghanistan traditionally, culturally and historically women rights are violated and are discriminated. Men in Afghanistan are generally believed to be physically stronger, task oriented and more productive than women while women are believed to be physically weak, service oriented and less productive. These beliefs were supported by findings from my teacher interviews analysis. This does not only apply to Afghanistan, but it holds true for many other societies as well. According to Stromquist (1999, cited in Karlsson & Mansory 2007), it is difficult to eliminate gender stereotypes in many societies because it is expected that men are "task oriented", strong, rational and productive while women are "soft", "emotional", "obedient" and sensitive. These stereotypes are reinforced at family, games, plays and textbooks of which textbooks might be the strongest reinforcement. Through pictures and messages in textbooks, the stereotypes are strengthened even more.

Analyzing the teacher interviews, it is found out that teachers were consistent in their responses i.e. the majority of teachers (males and females) were saying that men and women are not treated equally in society. But when it comes to say in what roles/occupations they would like to see males and females to be depicted in textbooks, they lean towards labor division based on sex for occupations that require physical strength. This indicates that the majority of teachers had contradicting views when referring to unequal roles of men and women in our society.

Interestingly, some female teachers were also thinking that women cannot be pilots, national army soldiers, carpenters and the reasons stated were physical inability of females to undertake such occupations. The findings from the teacher interviews indicate deeply rooted beliefs perpetuating the unequal treatment of girls and boys in Afghan families, schools and society. Teachers in Afghanistan are also the ones that grew in Afghan families and schools that have had their effects on the way they perceive gender roles. Such perceptions of gender roles, intentionally or otherwise, also affect children's perception of gender roles and, thus, remain as a wicked cycle in the society.

CONCLUSION

Female and male roles depicted in illustrations and texts in general are very stereotypical ones. Women still figure significantly less prominently than men as leading actors in texts, but primarily in the role of housewife and mother, and when they are depicted as working outside the home, they tend to occupy traditional female jobs. Women/girls tend to be portrayed as passive and dependent while men/boys are shown as more intellectually inclined, active, adventurous, and forward-looking. Men/boys are depicted in occupations/roles both inside and

outside home that are more achievement-oriented and involve exercise of leadership/power while women/girls are depicted in a service-oriented capacity and the occupations/roles assigned to women/girls involve no exercise of leadership/power over others.

Male-centered language was used in the analyzed texts. Male words and common nouns were used to refer to all human beings. The women/girls are discriminated/excluded from the very first page of the textbooks in the message from Minister of Education. In Pashto language, when boys and girls are addressed, the common nouns referring to boys and girls are spelled differently. In the official message from textbooks issued by the Ministry**,** common nouns referring to only boys are used.

Findings from teacher interviews show that almost all teachers admitted that women/men are not treated equally but at the same time in some instances they believed that roles/occupations that require physical strength and competence should be male exclusive. When it comes to women's roles outside home, the majority of male teachers wanted these roles to be in conformity with Afghan patriarchal and societal constructions and norms. Some female teachers also shared male teachers' conclusions, which indicate deeply rooted beliefs perpetuating the unequal treatment of girls and boys in Afghan families, schools and society.

As noted in the literature review, the under-representation of females in textbooks does not only occur in Afghan textbooks but is quite common in most countries especially in developing countries. Furthermore, the uniformity in terms of: (a) use of male words that refer to all human beings, and (b) traditional gender stereotypes of male and female activities in occupational and familial spheres, is noticed in textbooks used in many countries but with varied intensity (Kalia, 1980; Alrabaa, 1985; Obura, 1991).

By analyzing the selected textbooks and findings from teacher interviews, it can clearly be concluded that the government did not fulfill its promise of gender equality and nondiscrimination. Patriarchal, traditional and stereotypical socialization patterns emanating from our norms and values still hold true for our educational system. Yet, the policy objectives of the National Curriculum Framework urge providing equal opportunities for all students, males and females, children and youngsters as well as to fight against all kinds of discrimination and to demonstrate gender sensitiveness. When talking about equal opportunities one has to think beyond girls' access to education. Gender equality has to ensure that girls remain in school and make educational achievements. This is enhanced if the learning environment and teaching materials are not gender-biased and conducive to girls' learning. After 2002, Afghanistan has had considerable gains in regards to gender parity in enrolments, now it is time to tackle and monitor second level problems such as gender bias in textbooks and curricula.

After the fall of the Taliban government in 2001, Afghan women have made important advancements in enjoyment of their human rights and political participation. At the normative level, the new Constitution enshrines gender equality as one principal building block of the new Afghan society. In order to further the advancement there is a need for the government to make women more visible in the textbooks and to represent them in a greater variety of settings, activities, and roles. This would at least better reflect the current circumstances, in which a significant proportion of women in Afghanistan are working outside their homes especially in major urban settings, hence their participation in the economy and in public life should be depicted more accurately in the textbooks.

Given the limited scope of this research, looking only into Pashto language textbooks of grades 1-6 and interviewing only ten teachers, future research with a wider scope is recommended so as to content analyze more textbooks and interview more teachers, students, policy makers, textbooks reformers in order to get a wider picture of gender roles perceptions. It will also be interesting to do a comparative study of the newly revised textbooks and the old

textbooks to track if improvements in regard to depicting male and female roles/occupations in texts and illustrations have been made.

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8. GENDER IN PASHTO LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS DURING DIFFERENT HISTORICAL PERIODS

Mohammad Nabi Shahab

INTRODUCTION

The last three decades in Afghanistan have been of great influence on school textbooks. In 1979 Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan's regime was overthrown with the help of the Soviet Union and in a brief period of time the school textbooks were subject to change. Even the first page where usually the education minister used to address school children was replaced by Communist slogans, i.e. the Red Revolution, house, bread and clothes, patriotism, curse on feudalism etc. The Mujaheddin's rivals of the Communist regime, on the other hand had also developed their own textbooks in Peshawar, Pakistan. These textbooks talked about Islamic values, patriotism, holy war, sacrifice for religion and country, bravery, martyrs etc. In the Taliban period, the textbooks were only subjected to unity and religious values.

The debate on gender roles and its changing efforts have been more of a political nature than something in the real interest and benefit of Afghan women (Karlsson & Mansory, 2007). As a misfortune, whether it was in the period of foreign invasion, or Afghans themselves in rule, females were more deprived of schooling than males. When the former Soviet Union invaded the country, very few so-called *Roshan Fikar* (intellectuals) families used to send their girls to school. The concept of *Roshan Fikar* has been connoted more to political slogan than to believe in gender equality in reality.

After 2002, one of the pre-conditions for donors' support has been changes to be carried out in school textbooks, which also include changes in values such as gender roles. These changes are sometimes seen as Western values and some people view them as a continuation of the historical conflict over the content of education (Karlsson & Mansory, 2007). In the last three decades, the country has experienced very rapid political changes guided by contradicting ideologies: Pro-Soviet, Pro-Islam and finally Pro-Western Democracy. These ideologies have been influential on school textbooks among others. Thus, the textbooks in schools are one of the contentious issues especially in the recent history of the country.

Due to its geo-strategic importance, since years, the Afghan territory has been of high importance and interest for the World powers. This foreign intervention sometimes turned into civil war. As a result, the country could never flourish. Infrastructure, economy, democracy, military, and all other administrative machineries were destroyed. But especially the education sector of the country went through a huge disaster. Beside other reasons, two could be associated as the main reasons to this catastrophe. First, the academia left the country due to war and took refuge in other countries. Second, both invaders as well as the Afghans who ruled the country wanted the education sector to be used as a tool for practicing their will and supremacy.

In different periods, those who were ruling the country or were in power, wanted to develop a curriculum that could support their ideology. The textbooks in the Communist period depicted Communist ideology for living a prosperous life. Many of the Islamic subjects were excluded of the curriculum of that time. This notion led to societal anger and enmity with the regime and besides turning into a big war catastrophe, affected female education as a whole. Similarly, the curriculum in the Taliban period caused negative consequences on female education as they were not allowed to attend school. Besides subjects like Sports and Fine Arts other subjects were also excluded from the curriculum. Females' physical presence in schools was suppressed to an extreme. The situation continued till the fall of the Taliban and the emergence of the new transitional government in 2001.

The picture of gender parity in different periods in Afghanistan needs to be explored and for this reason I have tried to find out to what extent the primary level school textbooks have been gender sensitive in the recent history of the country, in terms of presenting females in important social roles. The Ministry of Education has indicated in all policy level documents that gender parity in the textbooks will be the aim while developing the curriculum and textbooks. Also the experts who were assigned to this very task have expressed that they have been careful in addressing gender parity while developing and revising school textbooks. However, as far as I know, to prove this claim true or wrong, no one has hitherto conducted any research on gender roles depicted in the primary textbooks in Afghanistan.

Objectives

In this research I have tried to investigate whether there has been improvement in terms of gender stereotypes before and after the curriculum revision by different regimes in the recent history of Afghanistan. Irrespective of their nature, man and woman are considered two wheels for running the lifecycle. However, many societies have adopted discriminatory behaviors towards females. Men are labeled provident, powerful, authoritative and self-sufficient. On the other hand, females are termed soft, obedient, emotional and improvident. Societies support gender stereotypes in different ways. Stromquist (1999, cited in Karlsson & Mansory 2007) says that families support and strengthen these discriminatory ideas from childhood. Perhaps the strongest reinforcement takes place in the textbooks. Similarly, Heijnen-Maathuis (2008) views women in less important roles in textbooks where females are presented performing secondary social roles. Strengthening the idea of gender parity in all programs of expansion (development) can also be applicable in devising policies for textbooks development. Hence, it is important to depict females in equally important social roles in textbooks. As stated above, the changes in the textbooks may not fit the real needs of the society and are argued to be imposed by those in power.

The main objective of this study is to explore how females have been presented in important social roles in textbooks in different epochs of the recent history of Afghanistan, namely the Communist, the Mujaheddin, the Taliban period as compared to the present government.

Research Questions

It was explored how males and females are depicted in the primary level Pashto language textbooks of grades 5-6 in the four different periods of the recent Afghan history (in terms of females' presence in illustrations, important roles etc.). The reasons to choose grades 5 and 6 for research were: Firstly, language textbooks tend to be the essential in primary school providing the basis for initiating literacy skills. Secondly, for many children grades 5 and 6 may be the last grades of their schooling, especially for girls, and thus will be the end of their school career altogether.

The research questions are:

1. What roles have been seen as gender appropriate in different periods and reinforced in textbooks?
2. In which aspects do these roles differ from each other, if at all?
3. Are the roles depicted in the current textbooks in line with the concept of gender equality?

For obtaining the desired data, I have explored the presence of females and males in terms of frequency of female and male names, pictures, and titles of lessons and so on. Secondly, I have explored females' presence in the targeted textbooks in terms of important social roles i.e. as

politician, nurse, doctor, teacher, police officer, military officer and so on. History has witnessed that Afghan females have proven their potentials in different fields of life. It is said that during the Communist regime women were working in almost all spheres of life, i.e. they were in cabinet, they were secret agents, and they were in the army and so on. Similarly, in the Mujaheddin time, many females took part in the Holy war against the Communist regime and performed miraculous deeds. The same situation can be witnessed in today's Afghanistan where in urban areas females are performing duties in almost all fields of life. Therefore, I have studied how textbooks in these different periods present females in different social roles.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is gender?

Sometimes it is hard to understand exactly what is meant by the term "gender", and how it differs from the closely related term "sex". "Sex" refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women. "Gender" refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. To put it another way: "Male" and "female" are sex categories, while "masculine" and "feminine" are gender categories (http://www.who.int/gender/whatisgender/en/). Some examples of gender inequalities:

- In the United States (and in most other countries), women earn significantly less money than men for similar work.
- In Viet Nam, many more men than women smoke, as female smoking has not traditionally been considered appropriate.
- In Saudi Arabia men are allowed to drive cars while women are not.
- In most of the world, women do more housework than men (ibid.).

> In most societies, the behaviors expected from men and women present rigid stereotypes difficult to eradicate. Men are expected to be task oriented, forceful, rational and effective and women soft, emotional, obedient and intuitive. Men must be intellectual, curious and competitive while women should be caring and nurturing, unselfish and modest. From early childhood, these stereotypes are strengthened in the family. Gender roles are also reinforced through games and plays. Maybe the strongest reinforcement occurs in school, not least through messages and pictures in the textbooks
> (Stromquist, 1999, cited in Karlsson & Mansory, 2007, p 75).

International agenda on gender

Gender has been one of the core human issues at international debates. In September 2000 147 heads of states and 179 representatives from different nations gathered in order to draw a clear and firm line for human development, termed Millennium Development Declaration. The Declaration envisaged eight goals to be achieved till 2015, i.e. the reduction of poverty and hunger, diseases, with a special focus on HIV/AIDS, illiteracy, environmental crises and discrimination against women. These aims are known as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Gender inequality in education entails serious losses for society. Where girls and women are more educationally disadvantaged than boys and men, shifting the balance towards girls will, over the

> medium term, improve economic growth, increase farm output and the incomes of the poorest, nourish citizenship, enhance the well-being of children, reduce fertility, and improve the prospects for future generations. For a large range of reasons, removal of gender gaps in education should have first priority in all programs of expansion and qualitative improvement
> (UNESCO, 2003, p, 266).

Article 26 of The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (1948) calls upon all the members' state of the United Nations to provide basic and primary education to their citizens as their fundamental right. That is why all member states of the United Nations have given importance to education as a milestone for an ideal development of their country. Afghanistan is one of those countries, where education is now free up to university level for all citizens without any geographical or gender discrimination. "Education is the right of all citizens of Afghanistan, which shall be provided up to secondary level, free of charge by the state". (Article 43, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2004).

Gender and Islam

"O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you with Allâh is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa. Verily, Allâh is All-Knowing, All-Aware", says Al- Quraan, verse 13 of Sura 49. The last Prophet of Allah, Muhammad (peace be upon Him) has stressed the importance and value of females to mankind in both of the major Hadith Collections (Bukhari and Muslim). One famous account is: "A man asked the Prophet: 'Whom should I honor most?' The Prophet replied: 'Your mother'. 'And who comes next?' asked the man. The Prophet replied: 'Your mother'. 'And who comes next?' asked the man. The Prophet replied: 'your mother!' 'And who comes next?' asked the man. The Prophet replied: 'Your father'" At another occasion the Holy Prophet said: "The best of you are they who behave best to their wives". These verses from the Holy Quraan and Hadith clarify that human beings do not have supremacy over each other. It is only deeds or good actions, which bring about their importance with Allah.

Gender in Textbooks

Berns (1994) views school textbooks as including various forms of bias where women are invisible, female roles are always stereotyped, and where male and female balance is ignored in terms of their presentation, realistic depiction of equality and language. Heijnen-Maathuis (2008) claims that curriculum development in South Asian countries as a matter of fact has been a process for male dominance. It is said that most of the textbook developers in Nepal are men with potentially inadequate sensitiveness to gender issues in education. In these textbooks, men are presented in the role of doctor, school principal, breadwinner, scientist and so on while women only in a very few social roles like nurses, teachers, mothers etc.

Michel (1986) says that women and girls are given only emotional, maternal and domestic roles in textbooks. In France, Norway, Peru, Zambia, Ukraine, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Democratic Yemen, stereotypes in textbooks have been found in a wide range of aspects as follows:

- Under representation of females
- Restricted female roles and role models for girls
- Narrowed career orientation for girls
- Higher Education only for males
- Less acknowledgment for females
- Females are depicted as incompetent
- Home is a female domain
- Boys can play adventurous games while girls play passive games
- Females are described as submissive, subordinate, and oppressed

The American Association of University Women (1992 cited in Chung, 2000) elaborates on the main forms of gender disparity in textbooks as exclusion of females from textbooks, sex-

stereotypes regarding them, girls and women to be subordinated towards boys and men in the texts and less depiction of females in history books. Besides the textbooks, family behavior has a great influence on children. Hence, schools should address the existing stereotypes in school textbooks.

In a wider sense, gender discrimination means strengthening stereotypes regarding girls and unfair treatment towards them (Chung, 2000). The 1970s were the era when the issue of gender bias became prominent in research in some countries and especially in the United States of America. Revealing the gender bias found in school textbooks, learning materials and teachers' discriminatory behavior, the feminists claimed that this discrimination hurts girls' ego and affects their cognitive skills (ibid).

Thailand and Mongolia have revised school textbooks as "Gender Audits" for the removal of the stereotypes and gender discrimination. Thailand in particular has taken steps for a comprehensive review of student textbooks through secondary education, eliminating both the paucity and passivity attributed to girls and portraying more women as role models in non-traditional areas. There is now greater awareness among curriculum makers and textbook writers of the value of designing more gender-sensitive educational inputs (UNICEF, 2009).

Research in Kenya has found that females were hardly visible in the textbooks. They were portrayed in less important activities, i.e. cooking, taking care of children etc., even in textbooks on agriculture; in social reality they are very productive and contribute much of the labor (Obura, 1991). Another research conducted in Syria on textbooks from grade 8-12 revealed derogatory treatment towards females both in content as well as in language in the books. In this research, 28 books were analyzed and the number of the readership of these textbooks was half a million students. The discrimination towards females was found in the books in spite of the fact that the analyzed versions had come into being after the citizens' strong demand and the government's approval for developing a centralized and gender conducive curriculum (Alrabaa, 1985).

METHODS

In the following study primary school Pashto language textbooks of grades 5 and 6, issued at four historical periods, have been compared: the Communist period, the Mujaheddin period, the Taliban period and the period of the current government. When the present government is mentioned, this refers to the situation in the year 2008, after the curriculum reform with the new textbooks. For this purpose, a quantitative analysis of the titles, pictures, occupations and roles given to both sexes was done. Since the research was conducted in a particular language subject, which is Pashto, and in particular grades of primary level (grades 5 and 6), it is a case study in the field of textbook research in Afghanistan. But its novelty lies in the fact, that different historical periods are compared.

Sampling and Data Collection Procedures:

For obtaining the desired objective, the research has been conducted on the grades 5 and 6 textbooks of Pashto language. The reasons to analyze these language textbooks from gender perspectives have to be explained. Firstly, language textbooks tend to be the essential subject in primary school providing the basis for initiating literacy skills. Secondly, besides the need to reduce the number of books to be analyzed, the choice of books for grades 5 and 6 was that for many children, especially girls these may be the last grades of their schooling.

Analysis method:

I have content-analyzed the targeted textbooks in a quantitative manner. In content-analysis, we discuss the structure or overall theme while in discourse-analysis the underlying meaning or message is brought to light. Promise (2001, cited in Ozdogogru et.al, 2002) describes quantitative content-analysis as a process of investigating the presence or absence of words, images and messages while in qualitative content-analysis hidden meanings are explored.

The study was meant to draw a sketch of the overall presence (names, illustrations, historical and social roles etc.) of females and males in the targeted textbooks. The following aspects were analyzed for acquiring the desired objectives.

- Number of male and female pictures in the textbooks
- Depiction of males and females in textbooks by occupation
- Famous characters (historical, writers, political, etc.) which are given to females as compared to males in the new and the old textbooks
- Frequency of females and males in the title of a lesson
- Frequency of females' traditional events (weddings, games, funerals)

Limitations of the study

The following problems were faced while carrying out this research:

1. Since I explore primary textbooks of only grades 5 and 6, there is no certainty in generalizing the results to the other four grades (grade 1-4).
2. I could not get any reference, literature and previous research that have been done regarding gender and textbooks in Afghanistan.
3. Another such limitation is that the obtained results of textbooks cannot be generalized to the rest of the subjects, like mathematics or other.

FINDINGS

For the sake of a clear understanding, the findings are categorized as females and males depiction in the textbooks in terms of names, pictures, occupations, social roles and so on. All data refer to the analyzed Pashto language textbooks of grades 5 and 6 only (and not to all the primary school textbooks). Similarly, for a clear understanding, a brief introduction is given on the top of each table and a brief explanation below each table. This is meant to demonstrate why this specific information has been explored in each table.

Frequencies of male and female names used in the books

As seen in Table 1 below, counting female and male names in grade 5 and 6 textbooks could be the first step for measuring gender parity in the textbooks. The question is whether male and female names are mentioned equally (by number) in the entire book.

Table 8:1 Number of male and female names depicted in the textbooks

	Frequency of names			
Historical period	**Male**	**Percentage**	**Female**	**Percentage**
Communist period	1041	69	458	30
Mujahiddin period	467	86	71	13
Taliban period	164	78	45	21
Present government	469	85	103	14

As seen in Table 8:1, the Mujaheddin and the present textbooks have fewer female names than the Communist and the Taliban period textbooks. This means that gender disparity in the textbooks still exists even after the textbooks revision in 2008, which among other things aimed at improving gender equality in textbooks.

Frequencies of male and female pictures used in the books

In the light of the proverb "*A picture is worth a thousand words",* gender parity can also be judged through the numbers and roles given to females and males in a textbook. Therefore I have tried to compare male and female pictures by number in the targeted (grade 5 and 6) textbooks of the mentioned four periods.

Table 8:2 Male and female pictures in the textbooks

	Frequency of pictures			
Historical period	**Male**	**Percentage**	**Female**	**Percentage**
Communist period	68	90	7	9
Mujahiddin period	0	0	0	0
Taliban period	9	0	0	0
Present government	76	85	13	14

As seen in Table 8:2, 68 male and only 7 female pictures were found in the two books (grade 5 and 6) of the Communist period which means that females are depicted nearly 10 times less than males in pictures. No male and female pictures were found in the Mujaheddin period, while nine male and no female pictures were found in the Taliban period in the targeted books which means females presence in terms of picture in this period was zero times. However, the interesting finding here is the nine male pictures in the Taliban period which is totally against their ideology since in Islam unnecessary pictures are *Haram,* i.e. not permissible (perhaps this could be linked to children's toys which are not *haram* in Islam). In the newly revised textbooks also no progress could be seen in terms of gender parity as we see females are presented in picture nearly six times less than males. As a whole, females are presented almost only performing homely duties in these pictures in all the four periods.

Depiction of males and females in important social roles

A balanced society comes into being with mutual and equal efforts of males and females; therefore, there should be no discrimination between males and females in terms of offering services to the society. In Afghanistan, traditionally females have been seen performing only homely duties while males should be enabled to serve the society as doctor, engineer, teacher, advisor etc. But it is very important to show female presence in different social and occupational roles in textbooks. Therefore, I have tried to analyze the targeted textbooks from this perspective.

Table 8:3 Frequency of important social roles i.e. teacher, doctor, housewives, farmer etc

	Frequency of males and females			
Historical period	**Male**	**Percentage**	**Female**	**Percentage**
Communist period	50	67	24	32
Mujahiddin period	67	71	27	28
Taliban period	39	81	9	18
Present government	46	79	12	20

As seen in Table 8:3, females are depicted two times less than males in important social roles in the Communist period, two times less in the Mujaheddin period, four times less in the Taliban period while six times less than males in the present government. However, the interesting point about the Communist period is that male and females are equally presented in important social roles i.e. laborer, teacher, mother, hard worker, writer, student, country defender etc. In the Mujaheddin time, they have been presented only in the role of mother, teacher, and student, as a wise and innocent person. In the Taliban period, females are presented only in the role of mother, teacher, student and laborer. In the present government females are presented in only two roles i.e. teacher and doctor while all other pictures present males in important roles i.e. as shopkeepers, inventors, tourists, savers, advisors, priests, heroes, patriots etc. It is noteworthy that the number of females in important social roles decreases form 32% in the Communist Times to 18% in the Taliban period, and that the present situation (20%) is nearly equal to the Taliban times.

Males and females as title of a lesson

In the following Table 8:4, I have counted the titles of a lesson in the targeted textbooks of the four periods in order to see how many times females and males are presented as title of a lesson.

Table 8:4 Females and males presented as title of a lesson

	Frequency of males and females			
Historical period	**Male**	**Percentage**	**Female**	**Percentage**
Communist period	5	71	2	28
Mujahiddin period	22	88	3	12
Taliban period	15	75	5	25
Present government	11	84	2	15

As seen in Table 8:4, females' percentages as title of a lesson have been very low compared to males' in all the four periods, however the interesting point here is that the percentages for females in the Communist and in the Taliban period are higher than that of the present government.

Female and male depiction in important historical roles

Females have proven their abilities in different fields of life in history. They have proven themselves as heroines, writers, poets and so on. Table 8:5 below shows to what extent males and females have been depicted in leading roles in the targeted textbooks.

Table 8:5 Famous historical roles given to females and males

	Frequency of males and females			
Historical period	**Male**	**Percentage**	**Female**	**Percentage**
Communist period	3	75	1	25
Mujahidden period	21	77	6	22
Taliban period	7	77	2	22
Present government	26	89	3	10

As seen in Table 8:5 above, females' depiction in famous historical roles in the Communist period is three times less than males, in the Mujaheddin and in the Taliban times nearly four times less and in the present government nearly nine times less than males. This means that females are not depicted in important historical roles as they should be. In this case, the textbooks of the present government have even the lowest scores of all four periods.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the study show that females are underrepresented in all the four periods. The Communist period however has been to some extent more generous towards females in this regard. As a whole, women are depicted mostly in lower positions compared to men. Male's dominance has been shown in almost all spheres of life. The ultimate aims of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Education for All (EFA) goals and the Afghanistan National Education Strategic Plan are to ensure that children receive an education that enriches their lives, expands their opportunities and empowers them to participate in society. Therefore, it is necessary to devise adequate policies that can equally address the issue of gender disparity in school textbooks and beyond.

Female and male depiction in the targeted textbooks in the four periods

The study presents similar results on gender biases in the textbooks as were obtained from the previous researches in many developing countries. Considerable differences in line with the patriarchal model of the traditional Afghan society were found in terms of male and female depiction in social, historical, occupational and domestic roles. However, this difference in the Communist period was not to that extent as in other three periods. This fact can be associated to the Communist ideology as females in that period used to work in almost all spheres of life, i.e. they used to work as doctors, engineers, military persons, cabinet member and so on. In the Mujaheddin and present government period males' dominance has been depicted to a large extent compared to the Taliban period.

Except the Communist period, females have been depicted mostly performing homely duties. They have been depicted only in two important social roles, those of a doctor and a teacher. Traditionally Afghan men prefer females be examined by female doctors. But female doctors are not available everywhere especially in rural areas of the country that is why Afghanistan comes in the categories of those countries where mother and child mortality rates are extremely high (Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2009).

Females in the textbooks to a large extent were shown performing only homely duties that may strengthen traditional concepts and impressions that in spite of attending school, females will ultimately be the future housewives. Such unattractive role models do not stimulate female students to strive for higher education, as a result, a huge number of female students discontinue their education only after completing their primary school, which consequently disturbs the national development process.

World Bank (1999) argues that when only male roles are described in favourable ways female participation and girls' ability to learn are hindered. Besides this, males have been depicted in more active roles having qualities of self-confidence, decision-making, accepting adventurousness, strengthening the existing stereotypical view that men are stronger, wiser, more provident than females. They are depicted in wider and high status job opportunities. Also they are presented performing difficult jobs that require physical strength, such as farming, carpentry and making pottery. These jobs are male exclusive and convey the impression of their supremacy over females.

While discussing the newly revised textbooks, one can dare to say that there has been a considerable gap between the government's plans and its actions in terms of addressing gender disparity in the school textbooks. The disappointing point is that in spite of the full support of the international donors, the curriculum department of the Ministry of Education has not been successful in revising the previous textbooks in accordance with the international standards, especially from a gender point of view. Females in the new textbooks are still viewed in the conventional manners and are shown physically unfit for physical games and sports, which is a wrong depiction of the current Afghan society as we have witnessed female participation in almost all games both inside and outside of the country. Men on the other hand are shown more powerful than women. Such discriminatory patterns in school textbooks towards females may have strong implications on small children which might further support the existing traditions of the Afghan patriarchal model on the one hand and might bring about an imbalance of the educational development on the other hand.

CONCLUSION

This part refers back to the research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis: What roles have been seen as gender appropriate in different periods and reinforced in textbooks? In which aspects do these roles differ from each other, if at all? Are the roles depicted in the current textbooks in line with the international concept of gender equality? The analysis of the targeted textbooks in the four periods of the recent history of Afghanistan has enabled me to answer these questions as follows:

The study shows that females' depiction in terms of frequency of names, pictures, important social and historical roles and their related events are less than males. Similarly, their presence has been shown in very few important social roles. However, in the Communist period they have been presented working in some important roles compared to the other three periods. This can be associated to the facts that in the Communist period females used to work in leading roles i.e. laborer, teacher, writer, country defender etc. The more disappointing point in this regard is females' less depiction in the present government's period in spite of the fact that the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) has given assurance regarding gender parity in all aspects of education including school textbooks. In the new textbooks developed and revised by the present government, females are depicted only in the role of doctor, teacher, student, laborer and cook, while all other important social roles are given only to men which indicates a big difference between the present government's commitments and actions. This discrimination on the one hand indicates gender disparity in schools and carves deeply into students' psychology on the other hand.

Now, a question arises: why has this discriminatory behavior towards females in these textbooks taken place? There might be several answers to this question. In my personal perception, however, the following three reasons can be linked to this issue:

Difference between government policies and actions

Although the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) has followed a policy regarding gender parity in all aspects of educational development in the country, yet the study indicates that no progress has been made in terms of addressing gender disparity while developing and revising school textbooks. This shows a remarkable gap between government's policies and actions.

Social behaviour towards females and lack of awareness

Since centuries, females in Afghanistan have been under males' dominance due to male made traditions, which is an explicit deviation from Islamic teachings. Traditionally, many illiterate

people think that men are superior to women, and this is why they show discriminatory behavior towards females. As a bitter reality, male children are given more importance than female children in many illiterate societies. This discriminatory behavior is against the Islamic principles and teachings, but still people cannot get rid of this discrimination toward females due to the social restrictions and ties. For example, many educated parents wish their young daughters to attend schools so that they could lead a decent life, but they cannot fulfill their desire as other society members, or maybe from their own family, criticize them if they let their young daughters attend school. This influence of the society can also be associated to the textbooks development process. Another sign of male dominance here could be the list of the textbooks authors as almost all the authors were males.

Lack of curriculum development experts

The findings of the study support the claim of some critics that the curriculum team did not have the required expertise for developing and revising the textbooks. They also are of the view that the curriculum was revised in hast, that is why many of the important aspects were ignored in the 2008 revised version of the curriculum.

Gender discrimination in school textbooks cannot be limited only to the educational development of a country as it also shapes school children's minds, which might have serious implications for the entire society. Therefore, the government should take serious actions in addressing gender issues in school textbooks. However, given the limited scope of this study, exploring gender issues in only textbooks of two grades (5 and 6), further research with a wider scope is recommended in order to explore and analyze textbooks of other grades and school subjects for the sake of validity and generalization of the study

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9. PARENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS GIRLS' EDUCATION.

Aminulhaq Mayel

INTRODUCTION

Female participation in education has been low compared to boys in many countries of the world, particularly in poor countries. Women have lower literacy rate than men in Arab countries, East, West and South Asia, the Pacific and Sub-Saharan Africa, which, according to the Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2008), is mainly due to cultural and religious traditions and practices that favour male domination, combined with a poor economy.

In Afghanistan, the combination of cultural and traditional beliefs and practices and more than three decades of war and internal conflicts has been very destructive to the education system and specifically, to female education. The continuous insecurity has made a majority of parents in almost half of the country reluctant to send their girls to school. Currently, only 39 per cent of all students' are girls. Only 28 per cent of the teachers are female. In rural areas the situation is even more problematic. Gender Parity Index (GPI) is 0.1 in the province of Urozgan, while it is 0.8 in Herat (Ministry of Education, 2009a). There is a large gap between men and women as regards the adult literacy rate. Women's literacy rate is estimated to 12 per cent and men's 39 per cent (National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment, NRVA, 2007-08). Among the population aged 25 years and more only six per cent of the women have attended any type of formal education (NRVA, 2007-8). Girls' enrolment rate is only half of that of boys in primary level and around one-fourth at secondary level. In the rural population girls' enrolment in secondary education makes one-tenth of boys' (ANDS, 2008).

Schalkwyk et al. (1997) have listed six factors that hamper girls' participation in education:

a) opportunity costs - the contribution that girls would otherwise make to the family;
b) perceived benefits - girls are seen to gain fewer benefits than boys from education;
c) cultural norms - standards of propriety may require separate education for girls;
d) safety - (sexual) harassment of girl students and female teachers;
e) quality of education - quality of instruction, class size, facilities and materials;
f) direct costs - fees, books, supplies, clothing and transportation.

In Afghanistan, some factors such as insecurity, lack of female teachers, lack of girl schools, distance to school, early marriages, son preference, can be added to this list.

In the aftermath of the wars refugees have returned from abroad and internally displaced people have settled; however, not always at their original sites of living. Many have had to reside in new locations with different circumstances and opportunities. Many residents of Shamali Plain north of Kabul belong to this category of people; they have been moving around to safe places within the country as well as in the neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Iran. Qarabagh district, where this study has taken place, is located in Shamali Plain, has a total population of around 150,000. The Ministry of Education supports totally 34 education institutions in the district (20 boy schools, six girl schools, six mixed schools, one teacher training centre and one madrasa). The number of students reaches to 18,250, out of which 3,750 are girls. During the wars practically all residents of Qarabagh fled their villages but in 2002, a majority of the displaced people returned. The area was comparatively well provisioned with basic and development services, including education. However, girls constitute only 25 per cent of the total student population. To know the causes of this low participation, in-dept studies are needed; however, parents' attitudes towards girls' education can be assumed as one of the factors.

Parts of the original population of Qarabagh district have settled in Kabul city after the return, while others have remained in their home villages Families of the same tribes and similar background, culture and traditions are now placed into two different geographical locations and in different environments.

This study explores some factors attributed to parents' attitudes that may negatively affect girls' participation in education, either in terms of low enrolment or discontinuation in eductaion. At the same time, the study has tried to explore whether the shift in context, the move from rural and urban areas with different circumstances, has impacted the parents' opinion as regards sending their girls to school.

Objectives of the study

The primary objective of this study is to explore obstacles pertaining to parents' attitudes towards girls' participation in education at primary level. The second objective is to investigate whether a shift in location from rural to urban areas makes a difference in parents' attitudes towards girls' education.

Research Questions

The study has been designed so as to find the answers to the following questions:

1. Does the sex of teachers make any difference as regards girls' attendance in school?
2. Does distance and safety on the route to school affect girls' participation in terms of enrolment and continuation?
3. Does a shift between rural and urban areas make any difference in parents' attitudes towards girls' education?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender and Education

> *"…education is a fundamental right for all people, women and men, of all ages, throughout the world."*
>
> World Declaration on Education for All; Jomtien, 1990.

Gender equality in education or equal participation of males and females in all aspects of education is a top priority in many countries. Gender Parity Index (GPI), is a measuring tool used worldwide, "Gender is a significant fact in determining who is in school. The lower participation rates of girls in most regions of the world result from a complex mix of both supply and demand factors…" (Schalkwyk et al, 1997, p. 2)

Many countries have failed to eliminate gender disparities in both primary and secondary education by 2005 – only 59 out of 181 countries for which data is available could achieve the GPI goal. However, positive changes and improvements are seen in curriculum as well as in the contents of textbooks in terms of gender sensitization since 1980s in many parts of the world. Research has shown that educational institutions provide opportunities in exploring the diversity of gender images and roles among teachers and students (Stromquist & Fischman, 2009).

Researchers have further proposed that the role of teachers and administrators should be redefined so as to better demonstrate the role of both men and women in a gender sensitive manner rather than adhering to existing traditions, which dominate state-run schools (Lugg 2007, cited in Stromquist & Fischman, 2009). Schalkwyk et al. (1997) describe some factors in the educational system, which reinforce gender inequalities in society:

- Stereotyped images in textbooks and educational materials show images of girls and women in typically female activities and occupations and, in contrast, men in typically male affairs.
- Curriculum, textbooks and educational materials take gender inequalities for granted. Girls and women do not have opportunities to be aware of existing legislation in favour of human rights and women's rights and are not able to reflect on social issues, which affect their life.
- Courses open only for girls or boys guide their ideas towards socially divided roles for men and women; for example, cooking, sewing and household maintenance for girls and agriculture and industrial skills for boys.

Training of teachers should be designed in such away that they become aware of the school's culture – its various actors and interactions (Bank 2007, cited in Stromquist & Fischman, 2009). Stromquist and Fischman (2009) recommend that "Training should also enable teachers and administrators to develop the ability to identify and effectively respond to conflict, misunderstanding and miscommunication regarding gender issues" (p. 472).

Education alone cannot make the changes, but the education system can significantly contribute in shaping attitudes and conditions in a longer perspective by providing girls and boys with gender sensitive knowledge and information (Schalkwyk et al. 1997).

Female education in Afghanistan in the light of laws and strategies

The Afghan Constitution

The Afghanistan Constitution (2004) ensures the right of education to every individual, irrespective of sex. Article 43 says

> Education is the right of all citizens of Afghanistan, which shall be provided up to the level of BA free of charge by the state. The state is obliged to devise and implement effective programs for a balanced expansion of education all over Afghanistan, and to provide compulsory intermediate level education as well as the opportunity to teach native languages in the areas where they are spoken.

Article 44 specifically mentions female education: "The state shall devise and implement effective programs for balancing and promoting education for women, improving of education of nomads and elimination of illiteracy in the country". This level of commitment has placed Afghanistan among the few UNESCO member states that have provided free education up to tertiary level as a basic right of its citizens (MoE, 2009b).

Afghanistan National Development Strategy

Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) sets 60 per cent girls' enrolment in primary schools, 35 per cent female enrolment in universities and 50 per cent female teachers as medium-term benchmarks for the education sector to be achieved by 2010. However, in the present situation where girls only constitute 35 per cent of the total students and only 28 per cent of all teachers are female, in combination with the current barriers facing girls' participation in education, achieving these benchmarks is not only challenging, but looks too ambitious.

ANDS identifies 'Equity' as one of the three policy goals[18]. The National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) emphasizes specifically girls' education by prioritizing girls' increased enrolment, especially in rural areas. Important strategies include the establishment and

[18] Quality and Relevance are the other goals

upgrading of girls' secondary schools, and relocation of female teachers to rural areas through an incentive scheme. In addition, the Ministry will increase its efforts to enrol girls from rural areas.

The importance of female teachers

The existence of female teachers has often been, if not in every part of the world, at least in South Asian countries and particularly in rural Afghanistan, a major issue when parents consider education for their daughters. In this region, women are only scarcely available in the teaching profession. According to the UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report (2003), girls' enrolment is increasing as a result of the increase of female teachers. Therefore, much attention is paid to recruitment of female teachers as a strategic measure to decrease gender inequality in education as well as empowering women through education. An increase of female teachers may be a way to ensure girls' protection in schools and avoid sexual harassment and violence by male teachers. The presence of female teachers makes schools safe spaces and gender sensitive, thereby making parents more confident to send their daughters to school (Mathieu, 2006). Moreover, "…female teachers are perceived as role models by girls, thus encouraging them to achieve academically" (ibid, p. 47).

In Afghanistan, since most female teachers are concentrated in the capital, the lack of female teachers in remote areas has been identified as a major factor to the low enrolment of girls. 85 per cent of interviewed children in Kandahar, 81 per cent in Jawzjan and 79 per cent in Nangarhar believed that if there were more female teachers more girls would complete primary education (Peterson, 2009). Another study in Baghlan province indicates that girls' enrolment is increasing with female teachers and 15 per cent complete primary education, while where males are teaching this figure does not exceed four per cent. (Jones, 2008, cited in Peterson, 2009)

Safety on the way to and in school

One of the six issues affecting girls' participation in education as indicated by Schalkwyk et al. (1997) is a safe route between home and school. In South Asian countries (including Afghanistan), the lack of safety on the way to school is an impeding factor for parents to allow their girls to school; however, the risks and threats differ from country to country. In Bangladesh, for instance, most women and girls on the way to school have faced sexual violence, and the police, those in political positions and staff within the educational institutions have exploited their power positions, abused the law or have at least failed to support the victims. Instead they have blamed the victims (Mathieu, 2006).

In rural areas of Afghanistan, due to limited presence of national security forces or police, there is a lack of government control over the warlords, opposition forces and illegal armed groups. Consequently, there is a strong risk for girls' abductions by these groups on the way to school. Therefore, parents are afraid to allow their girls to school. The risks also include schools put on fire, explosions on the way or near schools as well as threats to female teachers, all factors that negatively impact on parents' confidence to send girls' to school (ibid).

Rural/Urban Variations

Historically, there have been big differences between rural and urban areas in Afghanistan in terms of services, facilities and opportunities. Afghan governments have never reached out to very remote areas to provide even the basic needs of the population. That the past three decades of war and internal conflicts have been concentrated to rural areas have further widened this gap, which has resulted in an influx of rural people to the cities. Some NGOs, however, have strived to focus their services in remote areas, but the resources they have at hand and the services they have provided have never been sufficient in relation to the needs. This under-

provision combined with the dominating traditions have caused the most vulnerable, the girls and the women, to suffer more than others. They have often been deprived of their basic rights, for example the right to education. The gender parity index (GPI) is very low, particularly in rural provinces hit by insecurity: only one girl to ten boys. (MoE, 2009). Female teachers constitute 28 per cent of the total teacher force but in some provinces only three per cent of the teachers are female. In Kabul, on the other side, 60 per cent of the teaching force are women (ibid.).

A study by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) in Charasyab (a rural district of Kabul province) shows that 95 per cent of the school age boys in a sample group attended school while the percentage of girls in the same sample group was only 22 per cent. The same study found in another sample group in an urban location that 68 per cent of the boys and 35 per cent of the girls were enrolled in school. The study attributes (based on interviews/conversations with the target people) the low enrolment of girls in Charasyab district to the perceived value of education for boys. The study also refers to some social barriers such as movement limitations, customs, shame, fear of being insulted by others and early marriages as major factors for the low enrolment. The study also indicates, however, awareness among the parents regarding the importance of education in the present conditions of the country. This general support to education did not, however, imply parents to favour girls' education.

METHODS

Attaining the objective and responding to the research questions of this study required a quantitative data collection and analysis. A field survey using ready-made questionnaires was conducted in the target areas. Given the fact that this research was supposed to study mainly those families/parents who restricted their girls from attending school plus those families who had shifted from their rural villages to urban Kabul, as illustrated in the research objectives and questions, a purposive sampling method was used for collection of data, as described, for example, by Cohen et el. (2008). Thus, the survey targeted the population of four villages in Qarabagh district of Kabul province plus a number of households of the same ethnic group living in District 11 of Kabul city. The purpose of this selection was to identify existing obstacles facing school age girls in the rural villages as reported by the parents. At the same time the purpose was to explore whether the shift to urban life had caused any difference in attitudes towards education of girls. By this way, the study has tried to find out whether the parents' decision in regard to their girls' education is due to the dominating practices in the rural communities or their own way of thinking. In the selection of the target villages efforts were made to make a combination of conservative and open minded communities. The samples for interview were selected based on the respondents' willingness to answer the questionnaires.

Considering the respondents - primary level students and often illiterate parents - a structured questionnaire with pre-given options was used. Respecting the custom of the target people and ensure the privacy of female parents and girls a local female data collector (a teacher) accompanied the researcher during the data collection process. The female data collector received necessary training on how to conduct the survey and fill out the questionnaires.

Totally 48 parents in two geographical locations were targeted: 24 in the rural area (14 fathers, 10 mothers) and 24 in the urban area (10 fathers, 14 mothers). In addition, a separate structured questionnaire was used for 24 girl students of primary level (Grade 1 – 6) in the rural area in order to collect their opinions on obstacles girl students currently face as regards girls' participation in education.

To allow for a better and in-depth analysis data on the respondents' background was collected; see Table 1 in the next sector. Through cooperation with elders in the targeted villages as well as use of a local surveyor, a list of households with school age children was prepared in both locations. Out of 160 households in the rural area, 24 households were selected, mainly those who did not send their girls (totally or partially) to school. 24 girl students were selected through the same process. As for as the urban area, 24 households were introduced by their relatives in the rural area. No students were interviewed in the urban area since no indications that girls in the urban are had faced any special problems or restrictions to attend school.

Due to time constraints no piloting was done, at the data analysis stage some further clarifications from the respondents were required, which was collected by the surveyors. The field study started on February 16, 2010 and was completed on March 15, 2010.

Findings were analyzed, taking into consideration the context of Afghanistan as well as similar findings in studies of regional and international contexts.

The findings of the study cannot be generalized; rather the findings and conclusions are expected to reflect some of the existing realities in the specific geographical locations.

Limitations

Realizing that every study has certain limitations that might affect the validity and reliability of the research findings, the major limitations to this study are predicted as:

The study has been conducted in Kabul city and some rural parts in a district of Kabul province; the latter cannot represent a remote population with very traditional customs and conservative perspectives; rather, the views and opinions found in both geographical areas can be said to be based on urban or semi urban culture and practices.

In Afghanistan context in general, as seen in this study too, men are the main decision makers at family level and they are often the ones who express the parents' views. Therefore, the views raised by female members of the targeted households (the respondents) are less expected to reflect the real decision of the household.

The relatively sensitive issue of female education in the existing political context of Afghanistan in combination with the expectations created automatically by just approaching the respondents in the target villages, seemed to make the respondents hesitate in telling their opinions and instead trying to provide the "right" answers[19]. This might have undermined the realistic aspect of the findings and analysis.

FINDINGS

The respondents

Table 9:1 below provides some background data collected from the target population.

[19] Although before starting the process of data collection and any interview, the purpose of this study was fully explained to the target people, still during the interview it was felt that the respondents were expecting to receive something as exchange.

Table 9:1 Summary of facts and figures about the respondents

Row No.	Details	Location	
		Rural	Urban
1	Parents interviewed in Group A and Group B	24	24
2	Mothers interviewed in Group A and Group B	10	14
3	Fathers interviewed in Group A and Group B	14	10
4	Students interviewed (Group C)	24	0
5	Girls (age 6 – 14) in Group A and Group B	49	28
6	Girls (age 6 – 14) going to school in each group	18	28
7	% of girls (age 6 – 14) going to school out of total girls in each group	37	100
8	Boys (age 6 – 14) in Group A and Group B	24	27
9	Boys (age 6 – 14) going to school in each group	20	27
10	% of boys (age 6 – 14) going to school out of total boys in each group	83	100
11	% of mothers with higher education (over grade 12)	0	0
12	% of mothers with secondary education (grade 7-12)	10	21
13	% of mothers with only primary education (grade 1-6)	0	14
14	% of illiterate mothers	90	65
15	% of fathers with higher education (over grade 12)	7	20
16	% of fathers with secondary education (grade 7-12)	14	60
17	% of fathers withonly primary/Islamic education (grade 1-6)	14	10
18	% of illiterate fathers	65	10
19	% of mothers working outside home (teacher, government employee, private business…) in Group A and Group B	10	7
20	% of fathers having official business (teacher, government employee, NGO worker…) in Group A and Group B	7	40

Some important notes

1. Group A represents 24 parents (14 mothers, 10 fathers) in the urban area, Group B represents 24 parents (10 mothers, 14 fathers) in the rural area and Group C represents 24 girl students of primary level (Grade 1-6) in the rural area.
2. Given the above numbers of mothers and fathers in Group A and B, 10 per cent of mothers in Group A represents exactly one person while one person correspond to seven per cent of mothers in Group B. The other way around is the fathers' case.

3. Since multiple choice questions were used in the questionnaires allowing the respondents to choose more than one option for each question, the percents reflected in table are based on different totals – the totals of the selected options.
4. During the data collection process additional discussions occurred and observations made beyond the questionnaires, which have reflected in the report occasionally.

Rural and Urban Variations

42 per cent of the rural parents did not send their girls to school, while the daughters of all the urban parents attended school. The question related to appropriate level of education for girls to attain, the minimum level expected for urban girls was grade 12, while parents in the rural area suggested different grades. See Figure 9:1 below.

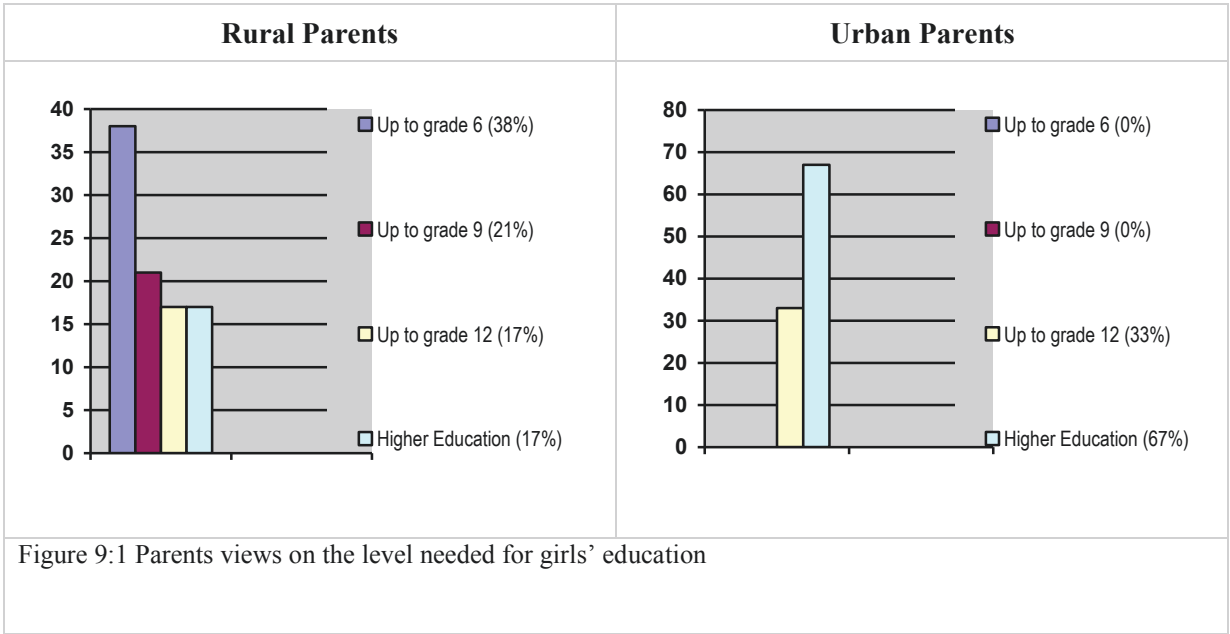


Figure 9:1 Parents views on the level needed for girls' education

When asked why not allowing girls to go to school most parents (31 per cent) raised the distance to schools as the major preventing factor. Some other factors also were raised as illustrated in Figure 9:2 below.

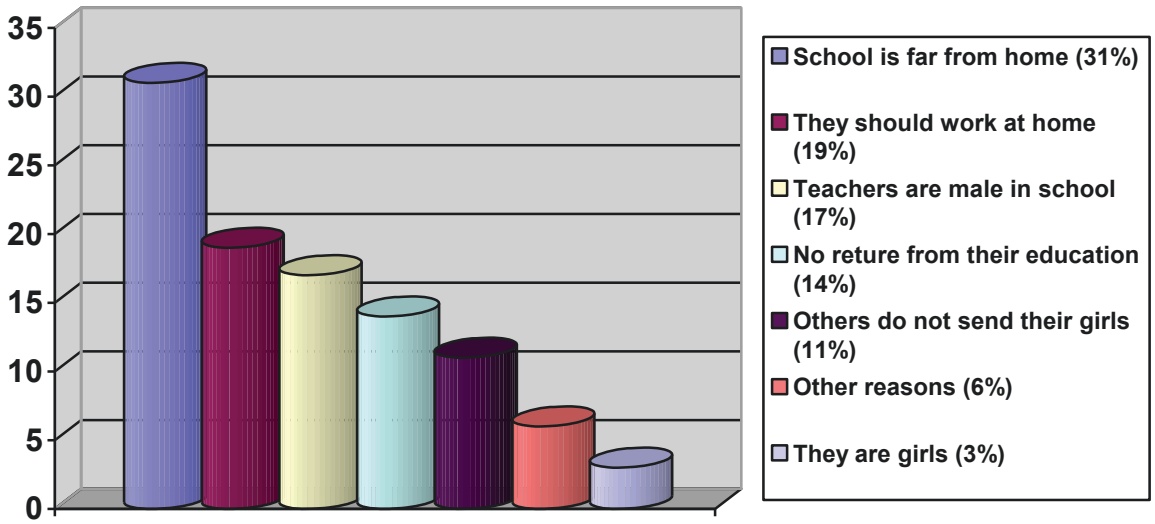


Figure 9:2: Factors affecting parents' decision on sending their girls to school

Regarding the parents' expectations from their girls' education, a majority of the parents wanted their girls to become teachers and teach other girls. However, most of the urban parents expected their girls to become active members of the community after completed education. See Table 9:2 below for further details.

Table 9:2 Parents' expectations on education of their girls

Parents' expectations from girls' education	Rural	Urban	Total
To become teachers and serve other girls	6	10	16
To be a good wife	2	6	8
To be a good mother	2	6	8
To be an active member of the family	1	6	7
To be an active member of the community	2	12	14
To work and support the household economy	1	9	10
No expectation, but an obligation as a Muslim	3	2	5
Total	**17**	**51**	**68**

The importance of female teachers

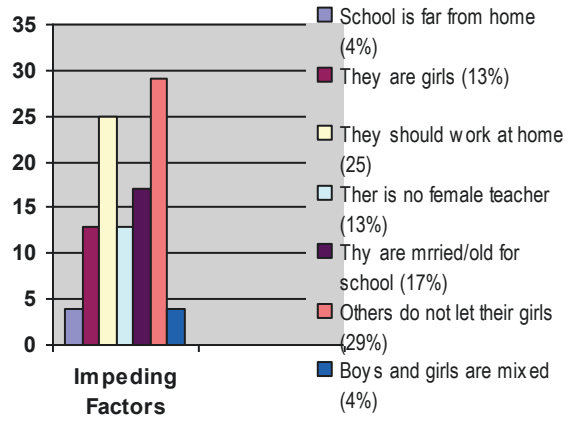
When the rural parents were asked why they did not allow their girls to go to school or to continue education beyond a certain grade, six out of 38 (16 per cent) indicated male teachers in schools as a barrier.

Table 9:3 Parents' reasons for not sending their girls to school

	Options	%
School is far from the village	11	29
Other villagers will reproach us	4	11
Teachers are male in the school	6	16
There is no return from their education	5	12
Enough for a girl to learn reading and writing	0	0
They become older and should not go out of home	0	0
They should work at home	7	18
They are girls	1	3
Others do not let their girls to go to school in the village	0	0
They will be married	4	11
Total	**38**	**100**

When the same question was put to students, only four percent of all respondents raised the lack of female teachers as a preventing factor for discontinuation of education; however, 13 per cent said that their parents did not allow their older sisters to go to school because of this problem.

Why do your parents not allow your older sisters to attend school?



Why are you are not allowed to continue your education after grade x?

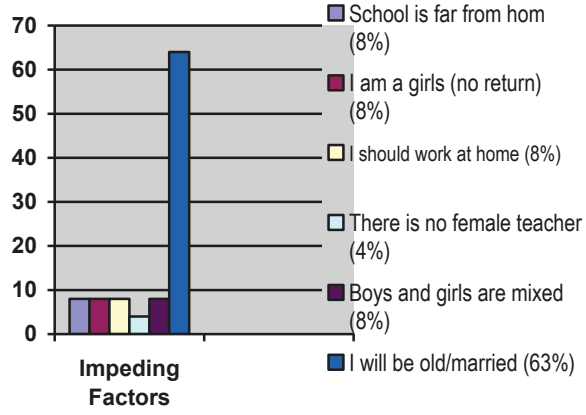


Figure 9:3 Factors preventing girls from going to school from the students' point of views

In response to another similar question - if you were to live in Kabul, would you allow your girls to school? - 87 per cent of the respondents expressed willingness to send their girls to school; 25 per cent of the willing parents put availability of female teachers as a prerequisite to do so. When the same question was put to urban parents - if you were to live in the village, would you allow your girls to school? - only four per cent put availability of female teachers as a precondition. See Table 9:4 below for further details.

Table 9:4 Parents' preconditions to allow their girls to schools if they live elsewhere

Reasons/Preconditions	Rural Parents		Urban Parents	
	Options	%	Options	%
If there is a girls school available	12	50	5	19
If there are female teachers available	6	25	1	4
If nobody will reproach us	1	4	0	0
If others also send their girls to school	2	8	2	8
If girls will not be very busy at home	2	8	0	0
Girls need education in Kabul	0	0	0	0
Other reasons	1	4	18	69
Grand Total	**24**	**100**	**26**	**100**

Parents whose daughters who were students of Community Based Schools (CBS) were asked whether they would allow their girls to attend a formal school in case there was no CBS available. Out of 11 respondents with 'No' answers, only 18 per cent expressed the sex of teachers as a point of concern.

Distance and Safety

As shown previously, the distance to school was a big concern for the rural parents but not for the students. As seen in Figure 9:3, 29 per cent of the students believed that parents do not let girls to go to school because other villagers do not do so. However, no parent put others' views

as a reason for their own opinion, (see Table 9:3). When this question was further explored, two aspects were evident: the matter of standing against the dominating custom of the village and the matter of safety. One father exclaimed: "How could I allow my small daughter to walk across the village alone to reach the school?" When the rural parents were asked if they would they allow their girls to attend school if they were to live in Kabul, only four per cent of them answered positively and added that the security is not good in Kabul. When the urban parents were asked if they would they send their girls to school in case they lived in the village a clear majority said they would. Eight per cent said yes on the condition that other villagers did so too. The answer is probably a concern of safety. See figure 9:5 below.

Urban parents:
If you were to live in the village would you send your girls to school? If yes, under which conditions?

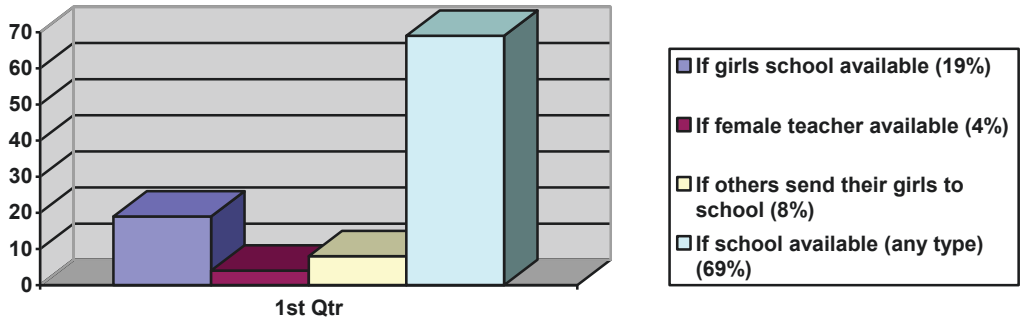


Figure 9:5 Opinions of urban parents on conditions for girls' education

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Some of the findings shown in Table 9:1 were expected at the very initial stage of the study. That 37 per cent out of the total school age girls in the rural area attended school compared to 100 per cent in the urban area is an important issue to focus on. However, the fact that 92 per cent of all school age boys were enrolled in the rural area compared to 100 per cent in the urban area indicates that not only rural girls are victims; nonetheless, they are certainly the first to suffer. Both girls and boys suffer but in different magnitudes.

A deeper look at the findings shows that the low enrolment of girls in the rural sample compared to those in the urban is due to several factors: lack of female teachers, lack of girl schools, distance of school, the need for girls' labour at home, and safety and security problems. The distance problem gets the second rank (36 per cent). One argument for the of rural parents' interest in CBS was that this school is available within the village and girls do not have to walk a long distance to reach school. Cultural restrictions limit girls' mobility and parents may feel ashamed or fear reproach by others in case they send their girls, particularly teenagers, to school. Another type of cultural barrier is parents' belief that girls cannot be taught by male teachers.

Signs of parents' ignorance are, for instance, the common thinking that girls' education is not *farz* (compulsory) in Islam or that girls do not need education. The lack of awareness is also evident in the idea that there is no return to be expected from education of girls. Such views reflect the low level of education of the rural parents – more than 75 per cent were illiterate and among those with education less than four per cent had higher education (see Table 9:1). Only four percent of the mothers had ever been to school.

Marriage, although not affecting girls' enrolment in primary schools, is yet another obstacle to girls' continuation in school beyond primary level. This was an issue not only in the rural sample. 33 per cent of the parents in Kabul city considered marriage to be a barrier for girls' education beyond grade 12. As per my experience and observations, early marriages have been a very negative practice in Afghanistan in both urban and rural areas. Whenever a girl is engaged the first restriction from the in-law family is to prevent her from continuing in school or university. In this study when the girl students were asked about the reason for not being able to continue after a certain level 21 per cent selected the option 'Other Reasons' in the questionnaire. When this was further explored the girls just laughed and kept silent – indirectly indicating 'marriage'.

The importance of female teachers

From the literature and before compilation of the data, it was expected that the principle prerequisite the parents put for allowing their girls to school would be female teachers. However, when looking at the findings, a short distance to school seems to be the first priority and a female teacher the second. However, the responses of the questionnaires do not allow for an in-dept analysis of the reasons and logics behind this issue; there might be additional aspects to consider.

One of these can be that all the CBS had recruited female teachers, i.e. people's demand for female teachers had been satisfied and the issue was therefore not considered as a major problem any longer. Another reason, based on my own observation, is that the very limited number of girl schools in the district - six girl schools against 20 boy schools - made the distance to a formal school a major problem. Another possible factor can be, as per my own observation, that almost all the male teachers in the formal schools were local teachers, certainly relatives to many villagers. Since no male (strange) teacher came from outside this issue was not so sensitive. Another reason can be, which is referred to in the section on limitations, that the target villages are not, compared to other parts of the country, to be considered as very remote areas. The residents may not be as conservative as people in other parts of the country. It can also be argued that since the problem of sexual harassment in schools – a problem in many other countries - hardly exists in this area, the need for female teachers is not felt as urgent.

Nevertheless, the shortage of female teachers is very obvious. The majority of the CBS female teachers is students of grades 11 or 12 half the day and teaches in CBS the rest of the day. Also, when looking at the low percentage of educated female mothers, the need becomes evident.

Distance and Safety

The big difference between parents and students considering the importance of the distance to school as a hampering factor is open to discussion. For the parents, it was a very important factor and made them reluctant to send their girls to school, while only one student mentioned this obstacle. Three arguments can be derived from this difference.

The majority of the interviewed students were studying in CBS, a school inside the village. Those who studied in formal schools were from a village very close to the school and therefore did not experience any difficulty in getting to school.

Parents seemed to be more concerned about their older girls than their junior ones and most of their daughters were students in the village school, the CBS. 33 per cent of the parents referred to the distance problem when they said no to sending girls to a formal school in case no CBS was available. In the Afghan context small girls are less vulnerable to risks of being teased or attacked on the way to school. The problem of distance occurs in particular at secondary level since secondary schools are only rarely available in villages. Traditionally, the

limitation on girls' mobility in rural areas is applied on teenage girls. This cultural barrier is felt more by the parents than by the children. It is a social obligation for the parents to consider cultural values and costumes and therefore the parents consider the distance to school when deciding to allow their girls to school or not.

Rural/Urban Variations

As expected, there are certain differences between rural and urban parents in terms of their way of thinking in regard to education of girls. By looking at Figure 9:1, we can easily see these differences. For instance, 67 per cent of the urban parents did not put any limitation as regards the level of education of their girls, while only 17 per cent of the rural parents shared a similar opinion. Similarly, the minimum level of education for girls recommended by urban parents was the completion of grade 12 while most of the rural parents limited the level to grade six of primary school. Furthermore, if we look at parents' expectations, we find that the urban parents have a wider view than those in the rural area. 50 per cent of urban parents see the benefits of their girls' education from a societal perspective while the rural parents' thinking is limited to the household level. For instance, the urban parents anticipate their girls as teachers after completion of education, while the rural parents see the aim of education as becoming a good wife.

However, it is difficult to say that the shift from rural life to urban life have made an absolute change in parents' thinking and attitudes; urbanization has hardly put such a magic effect. Rather, the gaps of access to education facilities and services as well as the differences in rural and urban parents' background are facts, which differentiate them. 90 per cent of the mothers and 65 per cent of the fathers in the rural areas are illiterate while these figures correspond to 65 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively, in the urban areas. Moreover, in the urban area 40 per cent of the fathers were professionally active as government officials or businessmen; only seven per cent of the fathers in rural areas had similar jobs. Nevertheless, some indicators show that attitude changes are ongoing. For instance, when urban parents were asked if they would they send their girls to school if they were to live in the village, most of them responded positively and a majority did not put any precondition, only availability of (any type) of school.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the findings from the three aspects under study - the importance of female teachers, the distance to and safety in school and rural/urban variations - match to a large extent the findings and conclusions of other research at national and regional levels, although not in every facet. For instance, if we consider the sexual harassment and violence school girls are exposed to in, for example Bangladesh, it is an issue not at all existing in this study.

The sex of the teachers was a major issue for most parents, particularly for the rural parents, although not to the extent expected, which is likely due to the fact that female teachers are provided to primary school girls in CBS. As for the girls aged 14 and over (the secondary level), the teacher sex was a major barrier towards continuation of education.

Distance to and safety in school are core issues for rural girls and have to be addressed by any possible means. Again, the secondary level students remain particularly suffering, as CBS only serve primary level children.

Given the nature of this case study, it is impossible to generalize the findings to a larger population or to a wider geographical area. However, at least at the local level (the district) there are no big differences between the residents in terms of culture of access to basic services

etc. Therefore, we can say that most of the findings would be similar throughout the target area. A shift from rural life to urban life seems to be contributing in changing the attitudes of parents, however, and most probably, if the same facilities and opportunities were provided in rural areas as they currently are in urban areas, much fewer rural girls would be deprived of their rights to education.

The problems and limitations as regards girls' participation in education cannot be limited to the three aspects addressed by the research questions in this study; rather, there are additional issues to be addressed and considered as indicated in the findings and analysis in the current report.

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10. PARENTS' ASPIRATIONS FOR THEIR CHILDREN'S' SCHOOLING

Rahmani Rahmanullah

INTRODUCTION

Parents' involvement in children's education play significant role as it helps them in attaining and completing education at any level. Parents provide the foundation of all round development and enable the children to understand various issues (Shabnum, 2003 cited in Qadiri & Manhas, 2009). Likewise, parents play an important role in early childhood care and education (Lau & Lueng, 1992 cited in Qadiri & Manhas, 2009). Thus, parents' involvement in children's learning positively affects their school performance including higher academic achievements (Yan & Lin, 2000 cited in Qadiri & Manhas, 2009). In Afghanistan, however, parents' involvement in their children's education has neither been documented and promoted in national education policy nor has been paid attention to promote such practice at the local level as a crucial element for reaching the designed goal of education for all.

Despite immense and daunting challenges, Afghan education has made some impressive and prominent achievements in the recent past. However, according to the Ministry of Education (2010), Afghan national education indicators are some of the worst in the world. There might be many problems for such situation. One such problem might be that the question of parental involvement in their children's education, especially in learning, has not received the necessary attention in Afghan education policy and practices. This study is an attempt to address the question of parental participation by exploring their perceptions and aspirations on their children's schooling. The study was designed and carried out as a qualitative research.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

- To analyze parental perceptions and understanding about their children's learning in school.
- To investigate parental understandings on their role, participation and influence on their children's learning in school.
- To explore parental aspirations for their children when they have graduated school.

Research Questions

- What are the perceptions and understandings of parents about their children's learning in school?
- What do parents understand on their role, participation and influence on their children's schooling?
- What do parents expect from their children's schooling when they graduate from their school?

Significance of the Study

This study will contribute in a number of ways: understand the present situation of parental participation in their children's study, help establishing parental rights and obligations about their participation in children's learning, improve teaching learning environment in schools, support children's learning, build people's awareness on the need and importance of education, support developing national policy and practices regarding parental participation, and eventually improve the quality of education in Afghanistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parental involvement in school processes depends upon what the government approach is in this regard. The government of Afghanistan wants to motivate and involve parents to contribute to re-building the school system that was completely destroyed during the past decades of unrest in the country, to keep the school functioning, and to send their children to school. Increasing their involvement could provide security and protection to schools and enhance the quality of education. The Ministry of Education has adopted the strategy of encouraging people, parents and communities to provide their contribution for a sustainable development of education in their areas. This is to be achieved by establishing educational councils in villages (MOE, 2010). Such councils aim to involve parents and community members in school management and safety, increasing enrolment, building infrastructures, etc. The government is also providing some small grants to those councils to use for improvement and sustainability of the school and encourages them to be active in protecting the schools from insurgents' attack, re-open them if closed by anti-government bodies, and help in establishing outreach classes for children to increase access to education. Such policy, though is important for its purpose, however, will not help increasing parental participation on children's learning process. Thus, no attention has been given in Afghanistan to involve parents in learning process of the children. There could be no debate on the importance of parental involvement on children's development process.

Benefits of Involving Parents in their Children's Education and Learning in Schools

According to Lewis et al. (2007) research evidences have suggested different significant factors as the benefits to school on involving parents in their children's education and learning in schools. These factors are:

- Students get more interactive and positive attitudes and behavior in both learning and social life
- Parents' involvement provides improved level of achievements of their children. Parents active encouragement and support for children's learning produce tangible academic benefits that promote a child throughout her/his school life
- School and parents will have opportunity to share information on how to tackle problems and misunderstanding at early stage
- Parental participation and support will improve the life and work of school and the schooling process that will influence the learning of children. Such work will lead to increase parental understanding and perception of their children's learning in school
- Parent-child conversation at home will get more value in terms of enhancing children's school achievements and parent perception of learning.

Children require different levels of support from parents according to their cognitive, social and emotional development. Martinez (1996, cited in Family and Parenting Institute, 2005) has noted that children's learning is induced by parental modelling and attitudes and strategies. Parents use a diversity of methods of different range from cognitive to social strategies and ways to facilitate their children's learning at home and outside the home. Hence, it is important that schools invite parents to participate and contribute to school processes. Depending upon the context, schools could use several strategies to increase parental involvement in school such as school newsletter, encouraging parents to contact or visit the school, special events for parents, gathering parents' view as school evaluation, and parents' involvement in class room activities (Lewis et al., 2007).

Barriers to Involvement

Despite agreeing on the need and importance of parental involvement in their children's learning, there are many barriers that prohibit such involvement and are particularly true in Afghanistan. Such barriers include, among other things, poverty, lack of parental awareness on their responsibility towards their children's learning, unwelcome attitude and behavior of school teachers, social ties and commitments, poor skills in parents of contacting and visiting school, distance to school and lack of government policy to promote parental involvement in their children's learning process. As discussed above, there is no government policy to promote such participation and whatever few initiatives are their parents are not aware about them. Following paragraphs discuss some of the barriers in some details:

Poverty

According to Desforges (2003) parents who are less involved in their children's education tend to be from poorer social classes, who, in most cases, are the only source of income for the family. Thus, they cannot miss even a day of their work to visit school or take part in any other activities. The irony is that when some parents show some willingness to take part in their children's learning at school they are not promoted.

Social ties and commitments

Afghan society has unique feature of extended family including grandparents to grandchildren living together in the same house. There might also be other dependents who need to be supported. In some cases some parents are only the main source of earning and caring such big and joint families. In most cases, parents have several social commitments beyond their children's schooling, like managing multiple social acts. According to William et at. (2002, cited in White Paper, Higher Standards, Better Schools for All, 2005) because of their many commitments and social obligations, many parents struggle managing multiple demands on their time and resource. All these do not allow parents to take part in the children's learning process.

Skills

Parents are not familiar with the concept of involving in school and learning of their children. As there was no such practice people have little idea that they should be involved in their children's learning and they do not know what actually they need to be doing and how. According to DfEs (2003, cited in White Paper, Higher Standards, Better Schools for All, 2005) some parents lack the skills and confidence to be involved with their children's learning, particularly in school setting. "Concerns about their own ability prevent parents from helping children with their home work" (Welsh, et al., 2004). "Parents are also concerned that they might be doing wrong because teaching methods have changed since they were at school" (Williams, et al., 2003).

Unsupportive behavior and attitude of teachers and school staff also do not promote parental involvement in school and their children's learning. It is generally seen that parents feel fear while going or entering to the school where their children study. Some parents even feel threatened by school and school staff attitudes and unhelpful behavior. According to Crozier (1999, cited in Desforges, 2003) negative experience of their own time in school prevent parents from being involved in a child's learning and schooling process.

School distance and other practical barriers

In rural areas, long distance to school also discourages parents from involving in school and learning of their children. As they often are busy with their other social and family obligations,

long distance to school often becomes excuse for not going to school and discussing with teachers.

Government Policy on Parental Involvement

Government policy documents are not clear on their approach to parents' involvement in their children's learning. Measures and steps undertaken for parents' involvement are not well defined and organized for practical implementation in Afghan context. Little efforts have been made to utilize the potential of parents' involvement in their children's learning and school process to improve learning achievements and overall educational quality. As already noted above, focus of government policy documents are in getting community support to 'protect school' and 're-open closed schools' (Ministry of Education, 2010, p.68). While Afghan policy documents are not clear on this important aspect, there are examples of good policy provisions in other countries (Reynolds, 2005, cited in Desforges, 2003).

Parents' Involvement Initiatives

It is not that nothing has been done to support parents' involvement in their children's learning and schools. The government has taken initiatives to support parents in their parenting role and the role as the child's first educator. It has also allotted a significant amount of money into parent support initiatives implemented by voluntary sectors that include Sure Start, The Parent Fund, The Children Fund and the Family Support Grant. Efforts are also made to develop legal provisions on parents' right to information about their children's learning status. Schools are obliged to provide parents with information about National Curriculum and child progress in learning. This provision has now further been improved by expanding the meaning of parents' right to information which now includes consultation with parents as part of inspection process, information about child progress in the form of annual report, access to students' educational record and information about school curriculum.

Access to nationally available information has been enhanced through the Government's Parents' Centre Website and through publications. The government has plan to enhance information opportunities further by improving Parents' Centre Website by creating link to school profiles, prospectus, admission arrangements, transport arrangements to schools, etc. Likewise, there are plans to improve the site by providing opportunity for two way communication between parents and school on individual student such as reports on student progress and make sure that parents have opportunity of face-to-face discussion with teacher. Parents will be able to log-in to find out if their child is registered in lesson that day, report on child behaviour and home work provision.

METHODS

The present study was carried out as a field research with in-depth interviewing of ten parents regarding their perceptions, understandings, participation and aspirations on their children's schooling. Emphasis was given on exploring their narrations and not on collecting numeric data. This was in line with what Bryman (2008) has noted, a qualitative research strategy emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of the data. Distinctive approaches and methods were used for analysis and interpretation of thus collected qualitative data. The respondent parents for this study, irrespective of their sex and economic status, were selected from Kabul area using non-probability methods. All of them had at least one child going to school at the time of the study. The study was thus carried out in an urban context where almost all parents send either all or some children to school regardless of their

sex. In urban areas in Afghanistan, sending children to schools is considered as a normal phenomenon.

I planned and carried out my interview sessions in an interactive way. I had an interview schedule with some key questions related to my study. The schedule consisted of two parts: general information about themselves and their perception and understandings as well as aspirations on their children's education. I also made some probing questions to stimulate them to be active and narrate their experiences without any hesitation. They were assured of the confidentiality of the ideas and opinions they share with me as a researcher. Interviews were conducted at interviewees' home for about one and half hour each. While in the field, I tried to follow Ritchie & Lewis (2008) for their advice on high degree of planning and management about the fieldwork and managing discussion with participants.

I began my data analysis trying to understand the meaning out of the data. Using analytical approach, a data analysis framework was developed for this purpose. This frame was developed on the basis of key themes that were emerged out of the interview data on the basis of relevance of meaning and common characteristics of the content in the data and were as following:

- sending children to school
- children's learning in school
- subjects children learn in school
- benefits of children's learning
- parental role on their children's learning
- parental involvement in their children's learning
- parental aspirations on their children's education after their graduation

Limitations of the Study

This was a short term research carried out to fulfill the requirements of master's degree and was undertaken in a small area with small number of respondents (parents). This research thus does not represent the whole country or region. Moreover, several aspects that could have role on parental aspirations on their children's schooling were not included in this research.

KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents key findings and analysis of the research, which are organized as per the main themes as discussed above.

Sending Children to School

Key findings

- Parents were from Muslim society where learning and education were obligatory for the individual. The Muslims have been motivated by Islam – their beloved religion – to learn. Islam has asked parents to provide opportunities of learning for their children. Likewise, Muslim pioneers have encouraged parents to provide learning opportunity to their children.
- Parents were of opinion that sending children to school was necessary because those with school learning respect parents and were aware of their obligations towards parents. According to parents, children do so as part of their moral values that they learn in school.
- Most of the parents were saying that learning was the right of the children, which was also secured by the constitution of the country where it was stated that primary level education was compulsory for all children regardless of race, gender, religion and ethnicity. Hence, it was necessary to send children to school.

Analysis

While exploring parents' reflection on reasons for sending their children to school, they said that learning was a child right and it was also ensured by state policy. According to the Afghan Republic State (2001a), all Afghan children, both boys and girls, will have equal right to education. In Islamic society, Muslims are invited to learning. The Ministry of Education has been assigned to provide learning environment based on spiritual, philosophical and cultural background of the children of Afghanistan (ibid.). Parents have also realized that school learning makes children aware of their obligations towards parents. Learning makes children capable to support their parents when they get old. In a broad sense, learning brings development in all aspects of societal issues. It was interesting to find that parents were aware on education as the right of the child. This should be taken as a supportive factor in the expansion and strengthening of education in the country.

Children's Learning in School

Key findings

- All interviewed parents were enthusiastic on their children's learning in school. They were describing that only schools could provide modern education for their children which would contribute to improve their life. Parents also expressed that with school education, children themselves would be able to decide upon their future life-course.
- Parents were of opinion that school is the place where children get both secular and Islamic education. They were aware that this was important from a religious and cultural point of view as well as for career advancement in today's context.
- Parents stated that those who learnt in school were enjoying their life – having high social position and having facilities better than those who did not go to school.
- Parents indicated that there has been high increase on demand for education. According to them, school based learning was necessary these days to be able to cope with new world values.
- Eight out of ten parents mentioned that they now understand that school is the second place of learning for children, after their home. School contributes to improve children's social behaviour and paves ways for the integration of social, cultural and economical development of the child.

Analysis

Regardless of their social status, all parents were sending their children to school. Their perception, attitude and view on the need for their children's learning in school have changed considerably compared to just few years ago. Parents were found believing on the role as well as capability of the school in educating their children. They have realized that school education is the gateway for their children's prosperous future in the changing world-order. It is important to note that the parents have shown concern on the need for both Islamic and modern education in schools. According to parents, both types of education were important for children. They think that their children need to stay close with religious and cultural values and get modern education for the purposes of progressing in the modern world.

Subjects Children Learn in School

Key findings

- All parents who were interviewed were not involved in preparing curriculum for their children but they said that they were familiar with general concepts of the subjects being taught in schools. All parents stated that they believe that the subjects taught to children fulfill the requirements of the societal demand for their children's learning. They were

confident that the school curriculum prepared by Afghan scholars has been helping to provide an improved spirit of moral and ethics to children from what they learn in schools.

- Nine out of ten parents interviewed said that they believe school was the unique place for learning of both secular and Islamic subjects which will have a significant role in strengthening and improving the social behavior of Afghan children. Only one of ten parents said "I believe that Islamic learning takes place only in Madrassa and secular learning takes place in schools and I am of opinion that only Islamic learning can guarantee the improvement of children's social behavior".
- Some parents also expressed doubt that school learning will lead children to non-Afghan values. Some parents, on the other hand, were saying that if their children learn in school they would be able to enter into the globalized world where they will get wider opportunities of good economy and communication means.

Analysis

Children's learning in school depends on the curriculum, which is supposed to be the representative of socio-cultural norms, values, ethics and morals of the society. An Afghan curriculum is also expected to derive from the principles of Islam. Depending upon their understandings, some parents like to send their children to school and some others like to send their children to mosques and madrasa. However, the recent trend is that people send their children to school instead of madrasa. This showed that they want both secular and Islamic education for their children. By sending their children to school parents expressed their attraction towards secular knowledge, which takes its shape from national and international experiences, standards and norms. But at the same time, by showing concerns towards the Islamic subjects they also expressed their good faith on Islamic values. Though parents might not know the content of the current curriculum but they believe that the content is prepared by those who know the pulse and spirit of the society. Moreover, parents have also indicated that distinction and separation of secular subjects and Islamic subjects is not necessary. Our national constitution has a distinct position on this issue where it is described that what children learn in school should be in accordance to national values and objectives set out by certain societal norms.

Benefits of Children's Learning

Key findings

- Parents stated that they have perceived the benefits of children's learning in a comprehensive way in various areas of life. They were of opinion that children's learning in school contributes to improve their personal, social and economic life.
- One of the parents told that all parents believe and know that children get self-confidence, self-esteem, well-being, and emotional sensitivity if they attend school.
- Almost half of the parents said that by attending school children improve their learning of life skills, which can be regarded as a spiritual form of benefits children get from their school.
- Parents also noted that learning enhances children's ability to think analytically, get information on national and international issues and problems and thus play an active role for the betterment of the society.

Analysis

The data analysis indicates that the benefits of education, on the one hand, goes directly to the child's future life and on the other hand, goes indirectly to parents and community. According to parents, by attending school children achieve self-confidence, which is essential for economic and social improvement in their future life. Parents were convinced that learning in school would help children improve their self-esteem, personality and dignity. With all these qualities children will get a distinct position in their family and in society as well as in

enhancing their economic status. When a child achieves all these things their parents would also be benefited and their social and economic status will also be raised. Parents were aware that when children learn basic life skills in school that means they learn about basic health issues like avoiding diseases through self-hygiene and environmental cleanliness. Parents also noted that by learning life skills children also learn to greet and respect elders. Children also understand elder's rights and know how to help people when they are in need. Thus, according to parents learning benefits children to enhance their spiritual and materialistic aspects due to which they could hold good position in their social life. One other point parents noted was that with learning children's become able to contribute on broader social issues. This becomes possible as learning enhances their ability to think analytically, they can get information on national and international issues and play role for improving the society.

Parental Role on their Children's Learning

Key findings

- All parents agreed that their active role would positively influence their children's learning. They were also aware that they could enhance their children's learning potentialities.
- Parents expressed that with their active role, their children's learning could get improved because they will do their homework regularly, their absenteeism in school will decrease, and they will give more attention to their study. It was also noted that with increased parental role on their children's learning even their teachers will feel responsible and school monitoring will be enhanced,
- One parent noted that the decision on sending their children to school and encouraging them for learning were the most important roles parents could play in their children's learning. It was also noted that parents' choices and decisions were always in favor of their children's intellectual enhancement and so parents devote their time and money for their children's well-being that could be possible through learning.
- Viewed in regard to all the possible supports by parents in terms of money, encouragement and motivation to their children's learning, parents noted that the most important support to their children could be some simple emotional words like 'well done', 'very good' 'alright', etc.
- It was also noted that the present government policy of involving parents in school management could also contribute to increase their role in children's learning process. It was expected that with their increased involvement in school management process, their attitude and understandings towards their own involvement on their children's learning will positively be changed.

Analysis

The data showed that parents were aware on the need and importance of their support in their children's learning in school. Parents were also aware on their role in enhancing the learning potentialities of their children. They expressed that with their active role they could be contributing towards children's increased regularity and attention in their study which will eventually contribute to improve their learning. It was found that based on parental ties and families' social principles parents were taking decisions to send their children to school. In itself, this decision was important parental support to their children's learning. Parents could also provide financial, material, moral, and emotional support to their children in the learning process. Parents could assess their children's learning needs and based on such assessment they could help their children in obtaining necessary materials like books and stationeries, in doing homework regularly, in providing support in many other forms like paying for home-tutors, etc. Parents have also noted the importance of encouragement, moral and emotional supports they could provide to their children in their learning process. Sometimes when parents see some problem in their children's learning, then they could contact the school, teacher and school

management. When parents see that their children were making good progress they could encourage their children either by good words or by giving some gifts. Bringing all these points during interviews parents indicated their concern in the learning of their children. Moreover, this also indicates how an Afghan parent thinks and supports her/his children. It was also discussed that in case of those parents who were not giving enough attention to their children's learning, the present government policy of involving parents in school management will contribute to increase their attitude and involvement in their children's learning.

Parental Involvement in their Children's Learning

Key findings

- The interviewed parents were actually not involved in their children's learning in the sense of visiting schools and in supporting children in their lessons in home in the past year. This means parents support to their children's learning was confined in enrolling them in school, providing learning facilities and environment at home and motivating them for good quality learning.
- Parents would like to involve in their children's learning process but because of traditional social rules as well as because of their illiteracy they were not able to do so.
- There were confusion or lack of clarity on what was expected and how was expected of parental participation in their children's learning. Neither schools nor parents were clear about these questions.
- As per the Afghan family traditions, children were getting support in their studies from their uncles and cousin brothers.

Analysis

It was unfortunate to find that despite their awareness on the need and importance of their participation in their children's learning in the sense of visiting schools to participate in school activities and in home providing support to children in their lessons, parents who were interviewed were actually not involved in those activities during the past year. This was mainly because traditional social and community bounds and ties as well as illiteracy of some of the parents. They were enthusiastic about participating in their children's learning but they neither were aware nor were informed about what and how about participation. That is, parents had no knowledge on how they could participate and contribute to improve their children's learning. There was no practice that parents take part in activities carried out in schools. The father would not go to the girls' school and the mother would not go to either girls' or boys' school to participate in activities there. The mothers could not go to school because of social barriers on women and fathers could not go to school because they do not have time and also because they do not know what to do by visiting the school. Likewise, both mother and father do not support their children in their lessons while in home. Poverty, social ties, school distance and lack of knowledge make parents reluctant to take part in their children's learning process. The father is the only earning person to support the large family and the mother has to devote all her time in managing household works. Parents also feel fear of visiting school because the teacher may take the parents' visit to school as inspection or interruption in their professional work. If some parents go to school they might feel something like unwanted guest because teachers and other staff in some schools do not behave them properly. Distance to school is another factor that restricts parents' participation in their children's learning. However, Afghan children are getting support in their study from their uncles in the family. As per the Afghan family traditions, all elders in the family have the responsibility for providing learning support to the family children. Accordingly, uncles and cousin brothers were providing support to family children in their learning. This practice has been rooted in traditional obligations, norms and principles of Afghan society.

Parental Aspirations on their Children's Education after Their Graduation

Key findings

- All interviewed parents wanted that their children acquire quality learning from their school and then quality profession in the future that could contribute to their own progress
- Parents also wanted high income from their children which would facilitate in managing their daily requirements as well as could support in getting distinguished status in the society.
- Parents also wanted that their children contribute to physical, economical, political and cultural development and rehabilitation of the country.

Analysis

Effective quality learning based on children's capability was the first desire of all interviewed parents. At the second step, parents were looking for an active role in the areas of their children's professional field, which they acquire during their schooling. Parents stated that the good profession skills contribute to increase the social status of the individuals and their families. They also wished for good employment opportunity for their children with high rank position. The graduated children's employment was seen necessary not only for the children but also for the family in order to secure a better life. Parents were also expecting a good position in the society with their children's education. Thus, the parental aspirations on their children's schooling were mainly the good learning and good job for their children, which would bring good earnings and good status in the society for the children as well as for the whole family. Parents were however not confined in these individual and family benefits. They would also like to see that after graduation their children contribute to the development of their community. Moreover, parents were also expecting that the children should contribute to the national development process. They were of opinion that graduated youths should work not only for themselves but also for physical, economical, political and cultural development and rehabilitation of the country. Parents were however aware that expecting such contribution from all graduated children might not be realistic. Depending upon those children's attitudes, culture and behavior some might be contributing to social and national wellbeing and some might not be doing anything. That is why one of the respondent parents noted, "There is a poem in our national language Pashto saying that human beings are similar from moral point of view but some of them make themselves and some make mankind"

CONCLUSION

Decades of severe disruptions and imposed critical situations in the country badly demolished the education system. Since 2001, upon the emergence of the new political waves, the national education system has also been taking a new shape. With the support of the international communities, the Afghan education system is coming to its real shape. Schools are reopening and teachers and students are returning to schools and new developments are taking place. With all these positive changes, the education system has been gaining the trust of the parents and other stakeholders. Accordingly, more and more parents are now sending their children to school, though there still are many weaknesses to be addressed.

Based on these contexts, this research explored parental aspirations on their children's schooling. While doing so some other related aspects like their understandings on their role and involvement on their children's learning, benefits of learning, subjects children study in their school, etc. were also explored. According to NESP (MoE, 2010) the Ministry of Education has started an initiative by establishing community councils and a school improvement program to facilitate parents' roles and to promote their involvement in improving the management and governance of schools. The role of the council is to increase girls' enrolment, provide

facilitation on school buildings and help re-opening of schools. However, this policy focuses only on parental involvement to support the management and governance of schools and not on enhancing their children's learning in school. Hence, there are barriers for such involvement which include lack of the government policy promoting parental involvement, parents' poor skills of contact and their limited knowledge on such involvement because of absence of such culture, parental poverty and illiteracy, unwelcoming behaviour of school teachers, distance to school, etc.

This research has found that the parents were aware on the need for sending children to school. This was necessary because the Islam has asked all parents to provide learning opportunities to all their children. Moreover, the constitution of the country has also made provision that education is the right of the children irrespective of their race, gender, religion and ethnicity. Sending children to school was also necessary because the schooled children were more aware on respecting parents and fulfilling their obligations towards parents.

Parents believed that the education their children were getting in their school would fulfil the requirements of the social demand of today's time because children were getting both Islamic and secular education in their school. While Islamic education was important to maintain the cultural values of an Afghan society, secular education was necessary to assure prosperity in the life in this globalised world. Though parents did not know what exactly their children learn in school, they had expressed their full trust on the school and its curriculum. They were aware on different benefits of schooling of their children. These include their own personal, social and economic benefits along with their enhanced capability to support their family, society and the country as a whole. They become able to make such contribution because of their enhanced self-confidence, life-skills, emotional intelligence, and analytical capability that they acquire during their schooling.

All parents agreed that their active involvement would bring very positive results in their children's learning. However, they were not actually involved in their children's learning process. Their support to their children's education was confined in sending them to school, providing learning facilities and environment at home and motivating them for good quality learning. The reasons for their non-involvement in their children's learning included absence of such culture of involvement, social and cultural practices, lack of government policy, parental illiteracy, unwelcome behaviour of teachers of some schools, etc. While talking about parental aspirations on their children's education, it was found that they were aspiring good learning and good job for their children, which would bring social and economic prosperity for the children themselves as well as for the whole family. Not only this, parents were also hoping a very positive contribution in the social and economic development of the society and the country as a whole.

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11. TEACHERS' COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ahmad Jawid

INTRODUCTION

According to the Ministry of Education (2010), the education sector has progressed since 2002 with a seven-fold increase in the enrolment of students. There are now more children in school than ever before in Afghanistan's history. The prime aim of the Ministry is to ensure that all children and adults have access to education (ibid).

However, not only quantity is important; there is also a strong need to improve the quality of education. One aspect of quality in education is how teachers communicate in class, for example, how they ask questions, how they respond, how they address, correct and disciple students and whether they use corporal punishment. Prevention of corporal punishment, physical as well as psychological, is a much debated issue in Afghanistan. Often, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is referred to. According to Article 19 of the CRC, children must be protected from "all forms of physical and mental violence" while in the care of parents and others (article 19) (http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/frame.html), which is interpreted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child "as requiring prohibition of corporal punishment in schools (http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/pdfs/SchoolsBriefing.pdf).

Teachers in Afghanistan commonly believe that that corporal punishment is a way to maintain discipline and control students although it is prohibited by law. The use of violence in school prevents children from "learning effectively while in school and remaining in school long enough to benefit fully" (UNICEF, 2010). But not only the use of corporal punishment is a critical issue in Afghan education, the way teachers communicate with and relate to students in general is considered important. If teachers communicate properly in class, it may create positive feelings among students and may contribute to making parents more positive to education. In 2008 the rate of out-of-school children is approximately 46 per cent of school age children and in 2009 around 300,000 children had lost access to education due to different reasons (Ministry of Education, 2010).

The persistent low pupil retention and poor learning achievements have resulted in more attention to the quality of education in general and teachers' communication with students in particular. This study discusses some aspects of teachers' communication in class based on classroom observations and teacher interviews in eight primary schools in Kabul and Nangarhar provinces. More specifically, this paper attempts to accomplish the following objective and research questions:

Objective

To explore how teachers, male and female, communicate with students in grade one and six in 16 classes of eight schools in Kabul and Nangarhar, Afghanistan.

Research questions

To reach the objective it is needed to find the answers of the following questions.

1. Do teachers treat students equally when asking questions and when responding to students' answers?
2. Do teachers treat students equally when addressing them?

3. How and to what extent is corporal punishment used? How and to what extent is psychological punishment used? How and to what extent are other types of corrections used?
4. What are the teachers' views on corporal and psychological punishment?

Equal treatment when asking and responding students includes for example whether teachers ask questions to some or all students and whether teachers allow more time for responding to certain students. It is also an issue of encouragement: who is praised and who is blamed and what is the differentiation among students as regards correction by the teachers. Equal treatment is also about teachers' use of proper names to students, and the use of positive or negative nicknames. Psychological punishment is for example about teachers' humiliation of students by ridiculing or insulting them, by pulling student's both ears in front of the class or making a student stand on one foot only. When teachers who scream a lot in the classroom and scare students it may also be characterized as a form of psychological punishment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Students' rights and class room environment

As humans, children have human rights and in addition they need special care and protection. Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) declares: "Children have a right to protection from all forms of violence." and article 28 states that "States Parties recognize the right of the child to education and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity." (http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm)

UNICEF (2010) explains the background of the CRC:

> …human rights set minimum entitlements and freedoms that should be respected by governments. They are founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each individual, regardless of race, color, gender, language, religion, opinions, origins, wealth, birth status or ability and therefore apply to every human being everywhere. With these rights comes the obligation on both governments and individuals not to infringe on the parallel rights of others. These standards are both interdependent and indivisible; we cannot ensure some rights without—or at the expense of—other rights (http://www.unicef.org/crc/).

The Ministry of Education in Afghanistan (2010) has declared that all children and adults are ensured access to quality education in accordance to their needs. "According to the Millennium Development Goals for Afghanistan, all Afghan children, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling by 1399/2020" (ibid., p. 5).

To achieve this goal, several challenges have to be tackled; one of these relate to classroom learning environment. "Classroom learning environment has been defined as an array of inner characteristics that differentiate one school from another and could influence the behaviours of every teacher" (Hoy & Miskel 2005, cited in Khalil & Saar, 2009, p. 144). Khalil & Saar (2009) refer to several researchers (e.g. Hansen and Childs, 1998) who claim that positive environment influences teaching and learning. They add

> A classroom learning environment is a major component and one of the most vital factors in creating successful programs. Without a positive classroom learning environment, which induces harmony, and a fully functional school, achieving high academic accomplishments is hard to reach, if not impossible (p. 144).

Based on the above citation one may claim that classroom environment also affects students' enrolment rate.

Another issue, found by Liu (2008), which negatively affects the classroom environment, is when the teacher does most of the talking: "Chinese classroom is often portrayed as teacher-centered with passive students, and Chinese teachers are criticized for their excessive teacher talk" (p. 87). He considers the role of the teacher to be to intervene and control the turn-taking of students and to provide necessary direction in the discourse flow.

To achieve the MDGs, Ministry of Education (2010) has selected three priority areas, which require special attention:

> The first is to provide an adequate learning environment for children, especially girls, to improve access and retention. The second priority is to upgrade teachers' skills and qualifications to improve the quality of their teaching and the learning that takes place in the classroom. The third priority is to strengthen the institutional ability to develop and implement sound policies, as well as to effectively manage the human, financial and physical resources required to achieve results (p. 3).

Ministry of Education has set the overall goal for education: All school-age children will have equitable access without discrimination to quality education to acquire competencies needed for a healthy individual, family and social life, and to further their higher education" (ibid., p. 5).

In addition, the Ministry states that textbooks will incorporate "issues such as peace education, human rights, elimination of violence against children and women, environmental protection, counter-narcotics, and HIV" (p. 5).

Corporal punishment

School violence includes several kinds of physical and psychological violence. According to UNICEF (2010), the most prevalent types worldwide are sexual and gender-based violence, bullying, fighting, and even the use of weapons. As regards corporal punishment in school, Humphreys (2008) has provided a definition:

> A teacher or head teacher caning a student (in accordance with, or in contravention of, the regulations) for an 'offence' such as coming late to school in the morning, just as it would include a teacher slapping or punching a student in anger in the classroom (p. 529).

Similarly, the definition set by the Committee on the Rights of the Child is "any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light" (UNICEF, 2010, p. 3). Other forms of physical punishments are for example forcing a student to sit for a long time exposed to sunshine or to kneel on the classroom floor. Another type is physical labour, such as cleaning latrines. According to Brown (2008), "The use of corporal punishment in schools [is] widely practised around the world," (p. 19) For instance, 62 per cent of the students in Korean schools had experienced corporal punishment (Kim, et al., 2000; cited in Brown, 2008). Humphreys (2008) points out that "corporal punishment is still an integral, albeit contested, feature of school life in many countries" (p. 527). However, there are countries that have banned corporal punishment, for instance, Malaysia (http://www.unicef.org/malaysia/protection_9199.html). In Sweden the corporal punishment was banned in 1979 and is claimed to have been effective (http://www.barnombudsmannen.se/Adfinity.aspx?pageid=90). Furthermore, Kapoor & Owen (2008) write "every year the list of countries achieving full prohibition in law is growing (p. 4)

In spite of these achievements, corporal punishment is still practiced for different purposes in classrooms, usually said to bring children under discipline. For instance, Vittrup & Holden (2010) found four disciplinary methods for African-American and Anglo-American

children, one of which was spanking. In Korea, "with respect to discipline in schools, corporal punishment has historically been and continues to be common" (Brown, 2008, p. 6). Vittrup & Holden (2010) explain that the aim with discipline is "to shape the child into being an appropriately self-regulated individual. Self-regulation occurs when the child has internalized a moral norm and thus believes that compliance with the norm is self-generated rather than imposed" (p. 211). Amankwa (2009) found that there are teachers who believe that without the cane children would become lazy and fail to learn.

On the contrary, corporal punishment has negative consequences according to United Nations World Report on Violence against Children. The report states that corporal punishment in schools harms children and damages their education: "lessons in violence have little positive disciplinary value, teaching students that violence is an acceptable solution when dealing with problems" (http://www.unicef.org/malaysia/protection_9199. html). The report further suggests that children who are physically punished at school may become less likely than other children to internalize moral values, and may become depressed or aggressive. Moreover, corporal punishment erodes students' trust in teachers and schools. UNICEF declares that corporal punishment should be abolished because it is both abusive and ineffective (ibid). Kapoor & Owen (2008) state that "corporal punishment is one of the most pervasive forms of violence against children the world over" (p. 4).

Despite the negative consequences, practising corporal punishment continues. Who are the teachers who practice and who are the students who are exposed? Some studies have found a gender-differentiated use or masculine dominance as regards the use of corporal punishment. For instance, in schools in Botswana students resisted corporal punishment from a female teacher but accepted male teacher beating (Morrell 2001, cited in Humphreys (2008). A female teacher in this study explained that male resistance to female discipline relates to socialization in the home:

> … I think it's the way we were brought up. You know we believe that a man – a male is the one that holds the power – he's able to control. … we are told a male is the head of the house. … fathers are the ones who are supposed to make those decisions [about discipline]. They are the ones that control. So that's why they [male students] behave this way. They feel that a woman [is not serious]. She can't be able to control us. [They] respect a male not a female (ibid., p. 533).

A child who is beaten at home tends to be beaten also at school, according to several studies quoted by Vittrup & Holden (2010):

> It is becoming increasingly clear that an important determinant of children's perceptions of discipline is the child's history of exposure to the particular discipline method. More specifically, children who experienced corporal punishment or other coercive forms of discipline in the home were more likely to approve of its use (p. 212).

Socio-economic Status (SES), age and race are three other determinants that expose children to corporal punishment (ibid.). For instance, children from families of low SES were spanked more often than children with higher SES. As regards age children of six-seven years were spanked more frequently than older children. Regarding the factor race, African-American parents are more in favour of spanking than Anglo-American parents are (ibid.).

According to Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2008), Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) conducted a qualitative study in 2008. The study concludes:

> Physical violence existed to varying degrees within all 61 case study families, most commonly slapping, verbal abuse, punching, kicking, and hitting with thin sticks, electrical cables and shoes. More unusual types of violence included shooting at children, tying them up, washing them in cold water outside during winter and public humiliation. Corporal punishment was used on children as

> young as 2 or 3 years. No clear difference between punishment of boys and of girls was found, but men were perceived as having more "rights" to be violent towards children than women in the family (p. 1).

AREU also refers to a survey by Save the Children in 2003, in which 82 per cent of the interviewed children reported that slapping; kicking and hitting with a stick were common forms of punishment in school. The reasons for being hit were noisiness or naughtiness, not learning the school lessons and disobeying adults. Obviously, although punishment is banned in Afghan schools, it is still practiced.

METHODS

A qualitative approach was found appropriate for this study since the purpose was to explore how teachers communicate with students. Qualitative methods, such as observations and interviews are used when the aim is to understand and interpret (Bryman, 2008). Data was collected from a fairly small sample. Ritchie and Lewis (1983 explain the advantages:

> Qualitative samples are usually small in size. There are three main reasons for this. First, if the data are properly analyzed, there will come a point where very little new evidence is obtained from each additional fieldwork unit. Second, statements about incidence or prevalence are not the concern of qualitative research. Third, the type of information that qualitative studies yield is rich in detail (p. 83).

A case study was implemented in eight government primary schools in Kabul and Nangarhar provinces (four boy schools and four girl schools). Qualitative data was obtained through 16 classroom observations and interviews with 16 teachers in primary schools, three of which were female teachers. The classes, eight in grade one and eight in grade six, were selected randomly.

The interview form consisted of five open ended questions, mainly related to teachers' views on discipline and corporal punishment. In addition, background data, such as age, sex, education, years of teaching experiences, was collected. The observation form consisted of a checklist that mainly covered items referring to the teacher's way of questioning and responding students, calling the students (naming and pointing) and correcting students (including physical and psychological punishment).

The data collection was undertaken in a period of approximately two weeks in August 2010. Permissions from the Provincial Education Directorates had been made available.

Prior to the observation, the objectives of the study were explained to the teachers. Their anonymity was ensured. The teachers were requested to teach as they normally did.

Limitations

Originally, the study was designed to compare the views of teachers and students on teachers' behaviour and communication; however, since students, at least in grade one have difficulty in expressing their opinions the study was limited to interviews with teachers only.

Doubts must be raised concerning the genuineness of the teachers' communication with the students. Almost in all the observed classes teachers seemed to change their way of communication. Many seemed to get nervous by the presence of an outsider in the classroom although they were told that the observer was a student and not a government official

Only two mixed classes are included in the sample, both taught by female teachers. It remains to be studied in future research how male teachers communicate with boys and girls in a mixed class.

FINDINGS

The schools, the teachers and the students

All schools in Kabul province had all an urban location while the schools in Nangarhar were located in rural areas. The classes in the urban schools were well equipped with chairs and tables for all students but in the rural schools some classes had to sit under trees in the open air. A few of the rural classes had a school building equipped with chairs but often without doors and windows. Students who were sitting outside were not arranged in rows but sat scattered here and there. Some classes even had chairs and tables for the teachers.

All the observed teachers had graduated from secondary education and a majority had studied at university as well. A majority of the male teachers also had some Islamic education Almost all the teachers had attended a teacher training college for two years. The female teachers were on average younger than the male teachers. The teaching experience varied from four to 20 years.

The students' age ranged from five to seven years in grade one and from 11 to 15 years in grade six. On average, there were more than 50 students per class.

In the rural schools no student wore a uniform while all students in Kabul schools did. In many classes the students seemed worried and looked at me frequently. In all classes some students were talking to each other, and in the boy classes some were fighting. In the last rows of the classrooms a lot of things happened. Some students pulled and pushed books and papers from each other and as a result small fights occurred. Some students put their heads on the table and took rest; others took out pieces of bread from their bags and started to eat. Others were playing with pens and with each other. For the teachers it was difficult to see all students since the classes were so crowded.

Communication

In all the visited classrooms one hour of teaching was observed. The teachers were most of the time standing in front of the classes as if they were assuming the position of a fountain of knowledge and pouring out information to the pupils. In grade one, teachers were most of the time talking to the students, and in grade six the students at least to some extent also participated and communicated with the teachers. Teachers' way of putting questions and responding to students were two issues particularly observed during the classroom observations. It was found that a majority of the observed teachers posed questions to the whole class but received replies only or mostly from students of the front rows. In general, grade six students were allowed more time to respond to the teachers' questions than grade one students. In both grades 'yes'- or 'no'-questions were more common than other types of questions; however, 'why' questions were the second most common. The questions asked were mainly related to the subject, for instance, on math homework. It happened though, that male teachers discussed other issues related to daily life; for instance, about poverty and told the students that a teacher's salary is not enough to live on. Female teachers in particular frequently corrected the boy students; for example, not to bully girls and smaller students and to respect the family, teachers and elders.

In a mixed class of grade six, taught by a female teacher, the boy students - were given more attention as regards replying to the teacher's questions. For instance, while the teacher put questions to the whole class and more than half of all students raised their hands only boys were given the opportunity to answer, especially those at the first row. In general, when teachers asked open questions, directed to the whole class several students responded simultaneously to shout each other down and different opinions were offered. The teachers tried to intervene and to control the turn taking and told students to raise their hands to get their

turns. Students in girl classes tended to be more articulate and interactive than students in boy classes. However, boys in mixed classes participated more actively than the girls did, for example by reading paragraphs of the books, repeating the lessons or going to board to write something. Very often male and female teachers alike preferred to ask the more able pupils, and when weak readers were called to read, the teachers rapidly passed to a more competent pupil. In general, poor students seemed to be more reluctant to respond to the teachers' questions.

In grade one particularly male teachers only rarely reacted when correct answers were provided regardless of the response was given by a girl or a boy, However, they reacted strongly when wrong answers were given either by using negative words for example: "you waste my time", "look at your big head" or by physical punishment (only to boys) such as pulling the student's ears or beating mildly with a ruler. In grade six, both female and male teachers reacted positively to correct answers given by the students; they praised and encouraged them by using phrases such as *Afarin* or *Shabas*– the most common ways of showing approval in Afghan classrooms – or by urging other students to clap their hands or calling the student *Agha, Jan, Bachim Gulam*[20].

Selective attention

The first rows

In the studied cases the teachers paid selective attention to students, i.e. they paid attention mainly to the first row of students. When the teachers asked questions during the lessons only the first row of students replied. Whenever they made a contribution, they received praise from the teachers. In some cases the favouring of some students was more serious; for instance a male teacher in grade one paid much attention to one particular boy who was sitting in the first row. From his appearance it was obvious he was from a rich family and when he got out of the class a private car was waiting for him. The teacher spent much time with him and was very patient when helping him to solve the math problems.

Only sometimes and usually randomly the teachers checked students' homework; however, girls' homework was checked more often than boys', especially by female teachers. A male teacher in grade one selected the girls at the first line several times but also some girls from the second and third rows as well but never from the last rows. When girls of the first row answered questions, their replies were followed up and the girls were praised but when occasionally a girl from the back answered, the teacher just commented: "ok, sit down".

Weak students were seldom called to participate in class activities. Neither male nor female teachers spent much time with them, especially when they failed to give instant and 'correct' answers. The teachers often made comments like "you just waste our time". Sometimes these children were spanked softly on the back or held by their ears before the teacher called on a more 'competent' pupil to read. Another clear incident of selective attention or favouritism occurred when a male teacher in grade six took by far much greater notice to a son of one of the famous commanders in the area.

Naming and pointing

Male and female teachers differed as regards nominating the students. Female teachers recognized their students by names both in grade one and grade six, boys and girls alike. Male teachers on the contrary did not address students by names; instead they used the word "you" or

[20] *Agha* is a Dari word for father and sometimes used as a positive or negative nickname – which one can be distinguished by the facial expression. *Jan* is also used as a praising word and for showing respect. *Bachim* means 'my son' in Dari and is used as a praising word.

pointed by hand to nominate them. They used nicknames such as “oh, brother, oh, sister with a negative tone, or more positive nicknames such as "Agha, Jan, Q*urban* and, *Bachim Gulam*".

In the interviews with the teachers, a majority stated that they have different feelings about the students. A representative statement from one teacher reads:

> Some students are worth respect, they are diligent and we love them, but there are other students who are disliked by most teachers. They ask ridiculous questions and occupy the teacher's time a lot. So we give them a nickname, we call them “big heads”.

Praising

Generally, male teachers did not praise students as much as female teachers did. Male teachers, especially in grade six, just told the students to sit down or called upon another student even if the answer was correct. Female teachers on the contrary, listened carefully and encouraged the students. *Afarin* and *Shabas* were terms frequently used. In grade one, neither male nor female teachers used praise to encourage the children; a simple nod for ‘ok’ was common. In the two mixed classes the female teachers corrected boys more often than they criticised the girls. As a means of correction, male teachers requested lazy boys to clean the blackboard.

Discipline

The interviewed teachers often stated that discipline was a serious problem in their schools. All observed teachers imposed some kind of sanction or punishment on students who offended somehow, for example, coming late to class, giving wrong answer, failing to bring homework, talking in the class, disrespecting the teacher, being inattentive in the class, fighting and bullying, etc. Punishment was applied differently and depended on students’ sex, age, and SES; also the class size seemed to influence the way teachers executed disciplinary measures.

Verbal punishment

Teachers who screamed and shouted things such as ’why do you not learn’, ‘you waste our time’ or ’you have a big head’ were found in the class observations. More boys compared to girls were faced with such kind of reproach, by male and female teachers alike. For instance, one of the female teachers changed the place of one of her boy students and told him: "Why do you not learn, you waste our time, you did not bring your white shirt” [part of the school uniform]. She warned him: "If you do not sit quiet, I will punish you". In one class that the students, when entering, were very naughty and noisy and when the teacher came, he screamed to control the class. One of the male teachers in grade six turned to one of the boy students and said: "Several times I have told you, but you are lazy, you cannot learn, so don't waste your and my time, and please do not come to this class because you do not want to learn". In another class, a male teacher in grade one seemed to be very short-tempered. He was always screaming and students appeared scared of him. Male teachers usually screamed a lot to get students' attention and to lower the noise level Boys were blamed more frequently than girls in both grades. Female teachers expressed their discontent by facial expressions when correcting students, boys as well as girls. Male teachers reacted to boy students by beating with rulers, pulling or twisting their ears and to girls they expressed their discontent as female teachers did, i.e. by showing dissatisfaction. In a grade one class, the female teacher pulled the ear of one boy student and twisted it gently. The boy had without permission went to sharpen his pencil at the corner of class. Another child went four times to the board without permission and talked to the teacher or repeated the lesson; at the fifth time, however, the teacher told him: "You come every time, give turn to others now". When half of the first hour had passed the door opened and a boy entered to the class. The teacher just said: "*Agha Jan* why do you come late?" The student did not answer. The teacher continued, "go and sit on your chair" but there was no chair left for him, so the teacher told him, "go to another classroom and bring a chair." Later, in the

interview, this teacher told that the late coming boy was one of the intelligent students of the class and she did not react because he lived far from school and often came late. The teacher added that if he had been another student, a lazy one, she would have punished him by twisting his ears because she believed that this would have positive influence on students and make them pay attention.

Physical punishment

More than half of the observed teachers clearly stated that corporal punishment has negative effects. For example, they said that beating discourages students and makes them unwilling to respect parents, elders and teachers in the future. The remaining teachers, including all three females, thought that there "should be something on the back of the students, as a stimulation". Many said that sometimes it is necessary to punish a pupil, when s/he does something wrong. They believed that if students are not punished, "they will rise on the shoulder of the teacher" as one of them expressed it,

The anti-punishment teachers indicated that regardless of age and sex children should not be beaten, neither in school nor at home. The pro-punishment teachers believed that boys were naughtier than girls and that the lack discipline was a serious problem, which forced them to take action against disobeying and naughty students. My observations confirmed that their ideas matched their practices. One female teacher stated that "girls have *Nazek Tabiat* [soft feature], they are calm and silent and do not make much noise; they are not naughty as boys are". She thought that girls should not be beaten but for a boy "it is good with a hand on his back", otherwise boys grow up naughty. "Hand on the back" was explained by her as stimulation but not really beating. When asked, she explained that pulling and twisting ears have positive effects and make students intelligent and attentive. Another type of punishment observed in the classes was a duster thrown at the students.

In the class with "the short-tempered teacher" the teacher's mobile phone rang once. He picked it up and replied loudly. It seemed to be someone from his family and he got out of the classroom and returned after six minutes. When he was out, the students got noisy, minor fights occurred and the noise got louder and louder. When the teacher came back he detected some boys that had been involved. He was very angry and spoke loudly. He twisted the students' ears and he spanked one of them slowly on the back of his neck. He shouted "Do you understand?" very often. When interviewing this teacher, it was found that classroom control/discipline was considered one of the main challenges for him. He supported corporal punishment as a means to make students learn. He added: "If there is no exam and no punishment, students will naturally not learn and not pay attention to the lesson". He believed that children's age or sex does not constitute any limitation for corporal punishment. He thought that anyone who does not obey and does not respect the rules and regulations regardless of age or sex or place should be punished - otherwise no one would obey discipline in the future.

The female teacher in grade six confessed that she beats her children at home because "they are naughty and make noise and when I get home from school, I have many things to do, so it is difficult to discipline my own children without becoming angry or without punishing them".

Caning was observed in other classes while I was walking around in the schools but in the observed classes the teachers tried to hide the canes.

Teachers mentioned various reasons for treating students differently. For instance, one female teacher in grade one stated that she did not like to beat students but considered the students themselves to pave the way for such treatment. Students' misbehaviour causes corporal punishment, she argued.

The number of students in the class was also mentioned as a factor that triggered the use of corporal punishment. For instance, a female teacher stated that a large class size also makes

the teacher to use the cane in order to control the class. She stated that "in my class there are sixty students - how to control them without getting angry or punishing them?". Another female teacher had the same idea:

> In my family I am responsible for controlling the behaviour of a small number of children, my own, which is a difficult task but in the school I am responsible for controlling the behaviour of 54 students of roughly the same age, which is a huge task, and this large number of students need to be controlled not by soft and sweet words but by becoming angry on them or punishing them.

One of the male teachers in grade six stated that children should neither be beaten at home nor at school, and the reason he gave was that children will remember such things for a long time and will be discouraged. However, and contrary to this statement, he also believed that there should be some kind of fear in children, “otherwise children will rise on your shoulder and will not respect and accept you". He told that he pulls and twists students’ ears; he makes students stand in front of the class and even tells them to get out of the classroom. He believed that these activities are not punishment, but stimulating means to make students learn and be disciplined.

In general, the pro-punishing teachers argued that punishment corrects students’ behaviour but on the one hand, they claimed that they never beat students.

On the question how to best correct or discipline children without corporal punishment one of the anti-punishment teachers thought that "a good teacher should be patient; s/he should not beat students because you cannot force a student to learn. If a student makes noise or has bad conduct, the teacher should at least try and not be impatient with the student. Teachers should discuss the problem of the students with his/her parents and the school administration". Another teacher said: "A teacher should have good strategies, such as lesson plans, arrive on time, leave on time, be patient, have contact with parents and the school administration. Such strategies will make it easier for the teacher to lead the class confidently and effectively”.

Table 11:1 Factors exposing students to punishment

Students’ age	More younger children than older were punished and corrected by both male and female teachers
Students' sex	Female teachers did not punish boy students in grade six. Male teachers did not punish girls physically in none of the grades but punished them verbally. However, it happened that male teachers pinched the ear of a girl.
Students' SES	Students of lower SES and slow learners were treated badly in the class compared to children of higher SES.
Class size	With many students in class, teachers were often bad tempered and tended to punish students to control the class.

DISCUSSION

Equity

Students are humans and humans have equal rights. A girl or a boy, a student in grade one or in grade six, from better off or poorer families - all need and have the right to be treated equally in all aspects of their studies, for instance, as regards interaction in the classroom, as regards ways to be called upon and as regards means of correction and support. .

Interaction

There was considerable variation in the teachers' approach to students when they asked questions and subsequently responded to students' provisions. The students of the first row were asked more frequently than other students; they also replied to the teacher's questions more often. Generally, it seemed as if the first row students were more clever or diligent than others; they were able to read fluently without the teacher's intervention, and they could repeat the lesson, they asked for clarifications and did not cause much problem for the teacher. Other students, especially those of the last two rows did hardly participate in the lessons and the teachers did not pay much attention to them. The reason might be that these students did not understand the lesson or felt too shy to ask or answer. Maybe they feared that the classmates would laugh at them if they answered incorrectly. These students will probably develop with a lack confidence, or they had already lost their self esteem. They would need more attention, positive reinforcement and equal treatment. Khalil & Saar (2009) referred to several researchers (e.g. Hansen and Childs, 1998) that a positive learning environment is a factor for successful programs and in positive learning environments students learn better. The reason why able students sit in the first rows could be that they want to sit in the front to better see and hear the lesson and to learn more. Students in the last rows rather hided from the teacher

In the studied grade one classes the teachers talked a lot, maybe because students are immature and cannot present their own ideas yet. The teacher controls the turn taking, a finding that corresponds to what Liu (2008) found in China. That students of grade six were allowed more time than students of grade one to respond to the teacher's questions could have the same reason. Why teachers paid more attention to students of politically or economically influential families could be that they did not want to disturb the wealthy and influential people, for example, the commanders with power over residents in the area. Sometimes it may be difficult to fail children of these families. Teachers can be forced to pass children or the parents may give money as corruption to the school staff to get a good result. It might also happen that a child of such influential father is given higher marks even if he is lazy and has not deserve them. If such conditions prevail the goal, which the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan (2010) has stated, i.e. access to quality education for all children as well as the Millennium Development Goals, i.e. completion of primary education for all Afghan children, will not be achieved. Some students will leave school because of unjust treatment by the teachers.

Encouragement

According to the findings of this study, in particular male teachers must learn that students need to be praised. When praised, students get interested in the lessons, which will also benefit the teacher because when students are interested they learn the lesson and thus bring good reputation to the teacher. Teachers seemed to care less for grade one students but students need to get equal care; rather, first graders need even more attention since they are at the beginning. If the foundation is strong the rest can also become strong. It is like a building: if there is a strong base for a building, one can build it higher and stronger but to build a strong and high building on a weak base will fail.

To praise only intelligent students and students of the first rows and neglect weaker students will get as result that the latter group will lose their courage and even get worse.

Naming

That some were unable to recognize the students' names might be due to general disinterest in teaching. A good way to attract students and make them confident is to call them by name. Students appreciate to be remembered by the teacher. However, when there are 50 or more

students in a class it might be difficult to remember all names, especially in the beginning of the educational year

Correction

Some of teachers' ideas and behaviour matched a common saying in Afghanistan: "Where there is no *Dab* (beating), there is no *Adab* (good manners)". Similarly, there is a biblical principle: "You spare the rod, you spoil the child", which was referred to by teachers in a study by Amankwa (2009) in Ghana.

Whether children were punished or not were related to various factors, one of those was sex. For instance, female teachers for various reasons could not punish boy students in grade six; the boys were 12 -15 years old and it is culturally impossible that a woman beats a boy who is almost adult. According to a finding by Morrell (2001, cited in Humphreys, 2008) boys simply reject corporal punishment by a female teacher. Other studies, for instance Vittrup & Holden (2010) have found that girls are not beaten simply because they are girls. In the Afghan context girls cannot be beaten by a male teacher.

Age was an important determinant as regards beating of children. For instance, most teachers viewed beating of older children as violation. Similar findings were found by Vittrup & Holden (2010). There was more acceptance for beating of smaller children maybe because it is generally believed that smaller children are not able to suffer as much from beating as bigger children do. Similarly, it is thought that boys suffer less than girls.

Another factor was related to socioeconomic status. It was found that lower SES children were not treated as well as the higher SES children. Similar findings were found by Vittrup & Holden (2010). Vittrup & Holden also found that race was an important factor, but such a factor cannot be found in Afghanistan. Not only the children who were noisy or inactive were disciplined but also children with poor appearance, children in isolated position at the end of the class, or slow learners were exposed to punishment. Vittrup & Holden (2010) found similar things.

In grade six the students were generally sitting still, listening quietly and concentrating on the teacher but in grade one students were noisier. This might be the reason why teachers in lower grades were bad tempered and punished the students. Thus, the grade could also be a factor that exposes to punishment.

It happened that girls in this study were pinched in the ear by a male teacher while in Botswana girls were pinched by male teachers in their breast (Humphreys, 2008) Studies in Tanzania (Kuleana 1999) and Zimbabwe (Leach & Machakanja 2000) have reported similar findings but such teacher behaviour can hardly occur in Afghanistan; it would have very bad consequences for the teacher.

When interviewed, the teachers declared that punishment is needed to maintain discipline and make students learn. Such opinions correspond to views of teachers in Ghana (Amankwa, 2009).

Teachers had different ideas on whether it was possible to correct and discipline students without corporal punishment. Caning was considered a good measure not only for the offending student but also for others, as a warning and thus as correction without corporal punishment. Teachers commonly stated that students are not beaten unless they make their teachers beat, i.e. students who are noisy or misbehave cause their own punishment. Similar views are reported by Vittrup & Holden (2010). It is noted that a majority of the interviewed teachers had fairly advanced level of education. It is also noted that a majority believed in punishment as a means of correction. Teachers do not seem to know that corporal punishment is prohibited in Afghan schools. Teachers do not seem to understand that violence prevents children from learning effectively (UNICEF, 2010).

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to explore how male and female teachers communicate with students in grade one and grade six. The study has found that all teachers paid selective attention, corrected students with negative and positive expressions as well as physical and psychological punishment. There was only a small difference between female and male teachers in approaching students.

The study has found that teachers' communication in class was influenced by socio-economic factors, students' age and sex and class size. In classrooms where punishment was observed boys were at a disadvantage compared to girls.

Although corporal punishment is not permitted, it was still practiced. Teacher's selective attention and the use of the cane might contribute to students' drop out

The findings cannot be generalized and it is suggested to conduct further and deeper studies in this area, for example, why teachers react differently, why boys are punished more than girls and what the effect may be of teacher's communication on learning achievement and to what extent the general public and the students themselves support corporal punishment.

Finally, it is recommended that teacher training and professional development include innovative ways to improve the communication in classrooms. Amankwa (2009) explains: "Teachers are core to the success of any educational endeavor. There is therefore an urgent need to actively invest in their professional development and to make teaching more attractive in order to draw a high calibre of candidates into the profession." (p. 260)

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12. COMMUNITY BASED SCHOOLS IN AFGHANISTAN

Abdul Mobin Quraishi

INTRODUCTION

The new Constitution of Afghanistan through Article 43 guarantees the rights of every child to free education regardless of gender, ethnicity, and social status from grade one to B.A. level. Afghanistan is also committed to the Education for All and Millennium Development Goals, which state that, by 2015, children everywhere will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. The agreed-upon target year for Afghanistan is exceptionally set at 2020.

Based on this, Afghanistan witnessed a huge growth of enrolment in primary and secondary schools, from approximately one million in 2001 to more than 8 million in 2010. But still half of all school-age children are not enrolled in schools, which is one of the major problems for the government of Afghanistan (Ministry of Education 2010-2014). Sometimes even when the schools are located nearby, lots of children, especially girls do not enrol in the school for various reasons; e.g. cultural factors, security concern, unsafe environment, and lack of boundary walls of schools. To tackle these constraints, MoE encourages communities, parents, religious scholars and community elders to cooperate with MoE, and also works to boost cooperation with NGOs. For this purpose, MoE in partnership with international and local NGOs initiated a joint program to promote and increase the number of community based schools (CBS) in the areas in which girls and boys lack access to the government schools.

The present study focuses on the role of community based schools in the light of MoE New Policy Guidelines for CBS. The role of CBS has been in focus for quite a number of studies around the world. On the basis of needs analysis, strategies to overcome the problem have been suggested and sometimes also tried out. Interventions suggested include flexible school hours, free school material, employment of female teachers and encouragement of community involvement (BRAC 2008; Mansory, 2007; Simons, 2007; Sujatha, 2005). Even though many studies and surveys have been conducted in many countries about the role of CBS, very few studies have been carried out about the situation of CBS in Afghanistan.

Objectives

The main aim of the study is to explore the views of teachers of community based schools about the registration, functions and contributions of CBS in Afghanistan. In order to reach to this aim the following objectives have been set for the study:

1. To put light on the registration of CBS and support from NGOs.
2. To discuss the provision of physical space for CBS by local communities.
3. To discuss the functions of CBS and the NGO contributions to the education system.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the conduct of this study:

1. How are CBS working in response to the guidelines of MoE?
2. What is the contribution of NGOs to CBS?
3. What is the contribution of local community to CBS?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Community-Based Schools (CBS)

In international perspective, community based schools are often regarded as a kind of private education that may be supported by international NGOs as a complement to or competitor with government schools. In such conditions CBS constitute a parallel education system over which the Government does not have much control. (Karlsson & Mansory, 2007).

In the current situation in Afghanistan, "Community-based Schools are recognized as MoE outreach schools/classes which are jointly established by Ministry of Education (MoE), communities and facilitating partners in remote, rural and sparsely populated areas (villages) where a) MoE schools for children do not exist or b) are too far for children to walk. They are hereby called "Ministry of Education Outreach Schools/Classes" (Ministry of Education 2008, p. 5).

Community Based Schools in Some South-Asian Countries

Pakistan

According to the Society for the Advancement of Education (SAHE, 2009) there are many issues causing high drop-out rates and low retention rates in the rural areas of Pakistan, particularly for girls. The reasons behind it are lack of access to education, poor quality of education, low literacy rates among parents and communities to value and support education, authoritarian teaching methods, etc. .

To tackle these problems, international NGOs together with Community Based Organizations are working for non-formal basic and primary education to empower poor rural and low–income urban communities to value education and take ownership of their schools. They support educational efforts through providing training, learning and advocacy materials.

A successful program of NGOs is to engage communities in supporting girls' education. In this, they persuade parents to form communities at the village level. In 1992, a pilot scheme of three years was started. The program established 200 community girls' schools in remote rural villages where there were no government schools and no tradition of parental involvement in schools (Hartwell, 2010).

USAID and some NGOs such as Ibn Sina and Development in Literacy (DIL) are funding CBS in the rural Sind Province of Pakistan, particularly for girl's education (Ibn Sina Foundation International Mission Concept & Implementation 2008). Today these schools are owned by the Community-Based Education Societies and are registered with the government of Pakistan. These CBS serve as "pilot schools". The parents of school-aged children as part of the education societies pay a small annual fee for their children to attend school. Teachers´ salaries are paid from the income generated by annual fees. CBS with the help of some NGOs like Ibn Sina, also initiated provision of meals for students who study in CBS in Pakistan. The purpose of this program is to increase school attendance and access to education, control child labor, improve the quality of education, train quality teachers, enhance the curriculum, and sustain a school operation for very deprived children. Young females are encouraged to adopt teaching as a career, and. CBS are also provided with teacher training

DIL is currently operating with its partner NGOs in 150 community-based schools and educating over 13,000 students. Many DIL schools are the first ones in their villages to provide an opportunity for girls and boys to obtain education. In addition, DIL hires only women as teachers to persuade parents who would otherwise feel uncomfortable sending their daughters to male teachers, as is common in many rural parts of Pakistan. Furthermore, it is evident that hiring women as teachers not only generates employment for women, but also

influences the role that women have in their communities as leaders in educating the next generation (Simons 2007).

India

India cannot tackle its educational problems by only increasing the number of government schools. Therefore for the enhancement of the quality of education, involvement of the NGOs and local communities is required to support the efforts of the Government. In India, international and national NGOs have a fundamental role in the promotion of community based schools. Some, such as Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), Action on Disability and Development (ADD), and Save the Children UK (SCUK) operate in several States in Northern Provinces of India through local NGOs. They fund the local educational NGOs, which have successfully supported the establishment of innovative community schools in remote mountainous areas with scattered tribal populations, who lack physical access to government schools.

Another factor is that some parents prefer their children to attend an alternative educational institution, in order to gain vocational skills or medical rehabilitation, or simply to avoid bullying. Therefore, different types of schooling are deemed appropriate for different strata of Indian society. There are 573 individual tribal groups with diverse socio-cultural life who are at various levels of social and economic development, with different degrees of experience of modernity and social change. The literacy rate among the tribal groups is low and a considerable portion of tribal children continues to be outside of the school system. Already during the colonial period and then after independence initiatives were taken for the development of CBS for the tribes (Lindsay, 2007).

To overcome some of the perennial problems found in the formal schools, community-based schools are maintained as an alternative system of education, to provide access and to improve school effectiveness by bringing innovative changes to the public school system in India. Public schools in India have many points that made the people prefer CBS rather than the public ones. For example, the school schedule and vacations are not tied to local needs; there is discontinuity between socialization at home and in school and also fear of the school and teachers, low enrolment, high absenteeism, an alarming drop-out rate, and poor achievement levels. Therefore, alternatives have been incorporated in community schools; e.g. school beautification with the cooperation of the community, introduction of school readiness activities, use of the mother tongue, adoption of a child-centred alternative pedagogy, changing the holidays according to local festivals and needs, formation of cluster resource centres and appointing of cluster-level resource persons for regular academic monitoring and school based guidance.

The first stage of the growth of community schools is significant for two reasons; (i) the effective functioning of a small number of community schools was able to convince and influence the neighbouring villages and (ii) the request for assistance in establishing such schools had come from the villagers. As the number of community schools rapidly increased, some of them were converted into formal schools. During 1999, a very large number of community schools were replaced by formal schools under the District Primary Education Project.

Bangladesh

The education system in Bangladesh is comprised of four separate systems: government run schools, private schools, Madrasas (Islamic religious schools), and schools run by NGOs. There are currently 37,000 government schools in Bangladesh being attended by 12 million students. Primary education is the first priority for the government, but there are still areas of the country with little or no access to public schooling, many of the government schools are too

far away or too crowded which discourages parents from sending their children to school. Parents are especially protective of girls and tend to keep them at home rather than making them walk long distances to school. There are also no schools in the undeveloped periphery of urban centres (Ardt, 2005).

Bangladesh offers an interesting example, where approximately one-quarter of children are enrolled in Registered Non-Government Primary Schools. These schools primarily serve the relatively poor areas of the country and a larger proportion of the students enrolled in these schools are from households below the national poverty line, compared with those in government schools (Rose, 2007). More than 400 NGOs, such as Gano Shahajyo Sangstha, (GSS), Assistance for Slum Dwellers (ASD), Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) are working for the provision of quality education. The BRAC Non-Formal Primary Education Program started in 1984 with just 22 pilot schools. Today there are more than 40,000 BRAC-supported community schools attended by 1 million children, 70 percent of whom are girls (Ardt et al, 2005).

There are many reasons why communities prefer to send their children to the CBS rather than the government ones. E.g. most of the community based schools are built in isolated communities, they are close to girls' homes, the schedules of the CBS are flexible, they provide basic shelter and sanitation facilities, trained teachers, updated books, and a curriculum that equips girls to cope in the modern world and that parents and girls themselves believe will be useful, a scholarship program for girls, community influence over teacher selection and school operation, and genuine partnerships between communities and the federal government. As a result of these factors, the enrolment and achievement of girls has been boosted in just a few years (Herz and Sperling 2004).

Table 12.1 Main Characteristics of CBS in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh.

Country	Main characteristics of CBS
Pakistan	• Working for the promotion of non-formal basic education. • Provide equal opportunity for girls and boys to obtain education • Empower poor rural and low–income urban communities to value education and take ownership of their schools. • Providing training, learning and advocacy materials. • Engage communities in supporting girls' education. • CBS are registered with the government. • Serve as "pilot schools". • The parents of school-aged children pay a small fee. • Teachers are paid from the income generated by annual fees. • With the help of some NGOs, CBS are providing meals for students to increase school attendance.
India	• NGOs support CBS in remote mountainous areas. • Schools are built as per request of the villagers. • CBS only have grades I and II, students are expected to join grade III elsewhere • CBS are more beautiful and cleaner than the government schools. • Using mother tongue and adoption of a child-centered alternative pedagogy. • Changing the holidays and vacation according to local festivals and needs. • Appointing of cluster-level resource persons for regular academic monitoring and school based guidance.

	•
Bangladesh	• CBS primarily serve relatively poor areas of the country, including urban areas. • More than 400 NGOs working for the provision of quality education • 70 percent of children attending CBS are females. • The schedules of the CBS are flexible. • CBS are close to girls' homes. • CBS are more girl-friendly; provide basic shelter and sanitation facilities, trained teachers, updated books and a relevant curriculum.

Community Based Schools in Afghanistan

The Historical Development of Community-Based Schools in Afghanistan

CBS have a long history in Afghanistan. The government of Afghanistan supported CBS, which were called *Dehati* (village) schools in the 1970s. During that time in the country, villages were very scattered and the population was often too small to establish primary schools. After 1970s similar concepts were also practiced by international and national NGOs (MoE, 2007). A number of NGOs, e.g. CARE and IRC used a CBS model which built on the traditional Qur'anic school structure and also introduced secular subjects in this system. NGOs emphasized building the capacity of communities to organize and manage schools within their villages. Even during the Taliban government, communities were enthusiastic to register their children in the CBS. They themselves were managing their schools and taking decision on how and what to teach in remote areas, away from the Taliban attention. Communities with cooperation of NGOs organized schools in the traditional way in the Mosques, a public building or in the *Hujira* (living room of a house), or under the trees in the open spaces (USAID, 2002).

MoE Vision Towards CBS

MoE is committed to providing equal access to education for all children of the country. Alongside the formal public schools, MoE aims to increase access to education by expansion of alternative schools such as community based-schools, accelerated learning programs for out-of-school youth, and mobile schools for nomads (MoE, 2007).

Most of the children who are in the school age and do not have access to education live in the remote areas where conditions for establishing new schools cannot be met, so establishing CBS in these areas is the main strategy of MoE. MoE also wants to provide education for all those children who are prevented from participating in education because of security reasons all over Afghanistan. For this purpose with the involvement of international and national NGOs, MoE will continue the establishment of CBS and also Islamic Madrasas. At the end MoE will integrate CBS into the formal education system (MoE, 2008).

On the basis of a school mapping survey, completed in 2010, the locations that need the establishment of schools have been identified. By 2014, MoE will establish and support 4,800 outreach classes with the cooperation of communities and NGOs (MoE, 2010).

It is important to mention that all CBS run by NGOs are registered schools with the provincial education directorate and functioning as outreach classes of the government schools. Therefore, upon completion of the courses all these students will be integrated to the nearby government official schools.

It is necessary for the government and people together to build a unified national system to raise the standard of education in community-based and public schools. Therefore, all schools in the country should become government and community supported schools. Community contribution to both schools is necessary. For this purpose MoE and locally established School Management Committees (SMC), which provide security, maintenance for the learning space and materials, work in partnership. By the joint support of MoE and SMC the quality of education will improve (MoE, 2007).

How Can a CBS be Established, Upgraded and Handed Over to MoE?

The educational system in Afghanistan is centralized and all schools, whether governmental or nongovernmental, are to be registered with the Ministry of Education. Up to 2006 the establishment of a CBS was on the basis of an agreement and understanding between MoE and the partner national or international NGOs. After the drafting of MoE Policy Guidelines for Community-Based Education in 2007, all partner national and international NGOs must fulfil the criteria set forth for the establishment of CBS by Ministry of Education Outreach Schools. Generally a CBS will be established to serve as outreach classes of the nearest formal MoE School. These will be considered where no MoE basic education school exists or if it is located more than three km away from the village or community. According to this policy community schools will not be established unless communities have at least 20 households or 100 persons and willing to support the CBS.

Submission of a formal application from the Community to MoE stating and proving that there is no MoE primary school nearby their homes where their children can enrol is the first criterion for the establishment of CBS. Furthermore, if distance prevents students from walking to the nearest MoE primary school, agreement of the community for the provision of physical space and taking responsibility for school maintenance and security, and carrying out the school mapping at the district level jointly with facilitating partners and district education departments, are considered as criteria for the establishment of CBS. In addition, all CBS have to be clustered to a nearby hub school when the number of the villagers is more than 500 persons; when the CBS are too far from formal schools or where MoE budget allocation allows for up-grading; in this case, by the request of the community member to the provincial directorate of education, CBS is eligible to be upgraded to a MoE basic education school.

From the beginning of the establishment of a CBS it is a joint responsibility of the MoE and the partner NGO to run, maintain and provide educational services to the children who study in the CBS. But after the completion of grade four in CBS, the partner NGO is obligated to hand over the CBS to MoE when the following criteria are fulfilled: MoE ensures the payment of teachers, prepares the space for classrooms, supports the CBS with educational materials, gives training to the teachers, monitors the cluster management and administration, ensures the establishment of SMCs, guarantees the linkages between hub and cluster, and guarantees the community engagement for the integration of CBS with the provincial education directorate (MoE 2007).

METHODS

The data used for this study was collected through questionnaires distributed to 35 teachers in 13 community based schools run by educational NGOs in four districts of Kabul province.

The data consists of responses to 18 questions in the questionnaire about the registration of the CBS schools, their functioning, implementation of the government curriculum, and other related questions. The data was collected during May 2010 in both national languages - Pashto

and Dari, then translated into English, entered into an Excel worksheet and coded and sorted for analysis.

Limitations

Even though there is enough data about the function, location, students, and teachers of CBS in the Ministry of Education, most of these data was in local languages and could not be collected from a single source. Therefore I had to travel to different rural districts to conduct the research and collect the data from many community based schools. I planned to visit four provinces in which the community based schools are located, but due to security concerns I could not do that. Therefore I preferred to collect the data from four different zones of Kabul province.

Sometimes it was difficult for some teachers to answer openly. Perhaps the teachers could not reveal their true feelings about the CBS due to fear from the insurgents or lack of trust on people in the community. Therefore, they preferred to respond somewhat vaguely or act ignorant. However, this did not have an adverse impact on my findings since I could read from the expression of their faces that they were afraid and did not want to be harassed by the community or insurgents. Furthermore, as I have a vast knowledge of the culture, understanding the fear that people feel due to the current condition of the country it was not difficult for me to assess the facts from the "vague" expressions of the interviewees within the context of the community culture.

FINDINGS

Registration of CBS and Support of NGOs

The participants' responses to the questionnaire indicated that the CBS are registered with the nearest government hub schools of the Ministry of Education. The study further revealed that all established CBS are supported financially by related NGOs. Furthermore, NGOs support the CBS technically and give training to the teachers, but MoE gives the educational NGOs authorization to establish the CBS. In the recent development MoE also has agreed to pay the teachers´ salaries if an NGO cannot pay the teachers.

According to the questionnaire responses, in most of the CBS (83 per cent) teachers' salaries are paid by the relevant educational NGOs, 17 percent of the respondents answered that their monthly salaries are paid by the Ministry of Education and none answered that the community pays their salaries.

Provision of Physical Space for CBS by Community and Its Location

As mentioned earlier, according to the definition of the MoE policy guidelines, community based schools should be established jointly by MoE and the facilitating partners in remote, rural and sparsely populated areas where MoE schools do not exist or are too far located for children to walk.

The study shows that 17 percent of the teachers answered that the CBS where they teach are one kilometre from the government primary school; 45 percent answered that CBS are two kilometres away and 37 per cent answered that the distance is three kilometres. Furthermore, 86 percent of the teachers indicated that communities agree to provide physical space for the establishment and construction of CBS and take the responsibility of the school maintenance and security. However, 14 percent of them answered that they are not aware of the provision of space for schools by the community, which is strange, but the reason behind it could be that these respondents have been newly recruited to the teaching positions.

Functioning of CBS in Relation to MoE Guidelines and the MoE Curriculum

In 2007, the Ministry of Education adapted a policy and established guidelines to regulate the functions of the NGOs that run schools in Afghanistan. According to the guidelines, CBS are required to implement the MoE curriculum.

Table 12:2 CBS utilization of MoE's Curriculum

Questions	Are you implementing the government official curriculum or do you have your own curriculum to teach?		
Answers	We implement the government official curriculum	We implement the NGO curriculum	We teach both
Percentage	74	0	26

The study found that 74 percent of the teachers confirmed that the government's official curriculum is implemented and taught in CBS, but 26 percent of them answered that they teach both the government as well as the NGO's own curriculum.

When the same group was asked the question that "*Does their community school follow the timetable set by the provincial education directorate or not?"* 71 per cent of them answered affirmatively. The rest of the respondents (29 per cent) answered that they follow the provincial directorate timetable set for their schools to some extent. It could mean that they both follow the government timetable and also teach some extra subjects or periods as supplementary subjects or extra activities. Exceptions could be areas where due to the armed opposition and insurgency teaching is carried out in the local houses and for fewer hours than in the government controlled areas. One example is my own home village that is located in Mosahi district of Kabul province.

Teachers' Opinions Regarding NGOs´ Contributions to the Educational System

The study revealed that CBS, working under the umbrella of NGOs, are generally, but not unanimously, thought to contribute significantly to education by providing access to education for those children living in remote areas of the country where MoE is not able to provide educational opportunities. However, some people have doubts as regards NGOs' motives and think that NGOs have their own intentions or interests.

Tables 12:3, 12:4. and 12:5 show the distribution of the answers to the respective questions.

Table 12:3 Contribution of CBS to the education process.

Questions	Do you believe that CBS is a good contribution in terms of access to education for your children?		
Answers	Yes a lot	Yes to some extent	I don't know

Percentage	71	17	11

Table 12:4 Role of NGOs regarding promotion of CBS

Questions	Are you in agreement with the role of NGOs for the promotion of CBS in Afghanistan?		
Answers	Yes	No	I don't know
Percentage	69	20	11

Table 12:5 Role of NGOs in education

Questions	What role can NGO play to promote CBS in Afghanistan?		
Answers	It helps the children to enrol in the school or have access to education.	It provides facilities to the poor villagers to send their children to school.	It helps the female students to retain in the school.
Percentage	60	26	14

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Registration of Community-Based Schools (CBS) With MoE and Support of NGOs

All participants in this study stated that the schools where they are currently teaching in are registered with the Ministry of Education. The Basic Education Directorate of MoE conducts regular inspections of CBS and monitors their educational programs to ensure that their functions are in accordance with the MoE's rules, guidelines and procedures.

All CBS are supported and equipped by NGOs such as the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, the International Rescue Committee and Care International—they provide all teaching and learning materials for the CBS. The Ministry of Education does not provide facilities to CBS. The reason behind this is that in the agreement with MoE, NGOs are committed to support and equip the CBS. Furthermore, the local people provide the land for these schools and NGOs provide educational facilities. The role of the Ministry of Education is to recognize the CBS as official schools and integrate and register the students into the formal system after Grade 3 and in some areas after Grade 4, 5 or Grade 6.

Provision of Physical Space for CBS by Community and Effects of Location on the Students

CBS primarily serve poor and remote areas in Afghanistan where there is no access to government schools or their children are at the age at which they cannot walk long distances by foot to attend government primary schools. A child, regardless of gender, six or seven years of age can not attend school in the rural area due to the threat of the insurgency, personal attacks and land-mines. Another reason for that CBS are built near to children's homes is that people in Afghanistan, especially in the villages are very protective of their daughters compared to their sons. They prefer to send their daughters to the schools that have boundary walls, with an environment that is child friendly and in close proximity of their homes.

Providing space for the schools by the local communities, having the courage to send their daughters to school and taking responsibility for the schools' security is a huge success for both the government and the communities, particularly, in a time that schools are under the insurgent's attacks, sometimes burned down to the ground.

CBS Functioning in Relation to MoE Guidelines and Implementation of the Ministry of Education Curriculum

Upon registration with MoE, the Community-based Schools are obligated to implement the policy guidelines and the MoE official curriculum, but they can add extra elements as long as the Ministry has approved the extra curriculum and is aware of the contents. According to the findings, all the teachers said that they function on the basis of the MoE's policy and regulations. This means an important success for MoE as well as NGOs as implementers. A reason contributing to CBS success can be that the education system in Afghanistan is centralized and the directorates of education in the provinces are not authorized to sign agreements with NGOs nor to give them permission to operate their own system of education.

Regarding the implementation of the official curriculum, there are two kinds of responses: 74 percent of the teachers said that they implement the official curriculum and 26 percent of them said that they implement both the MoE and an NGO curriculum. According to the rules and regulations of the MoE, non-governmental registered schools must implement the national curriculum of Afghanistan, but they are allowed to teach more subjects and more hours.

Teachers' Views about the Role of NGOs for the Promotion of CBS

There are many national and international NGOs working for the promotion of CBS in Afghanistan. They also help the Ministry of Education by providing and recruiting national and international advisors and technical assistants to work with the different Directorates to develop training for the teachers, teaching methodology, textbook writing skills, annual work plans for the CBS and also tools for making the schools child-friendly.

The views of the majority of CBS teachers are positive to the role of NGOs in the promotion and development of CBS. However, 20 per cent answered negatively about the role of NGOs and their contribution to CBS. This could mean that they think that some of the NGOs have political or religious intentions and therefore are not agreeing with their role in the promotion of CBS in Afghanistan.

The NGOs typically also provide the salaries of those teachers, who teach in the CBS. If NGOs do not pay the teachers' salaries, MoE is responsible for the teachers' salaries according to the new rule of the Ministry., because these schools indeed belong to the MoE and will become part of the government primary school system. This is another good step towards promotion of education in Afghanistan.

Comparison of CBS Situation in Afghanistan Pakistan, India and Bangladesh

Community-Based Schools primarily serve poor and remote areas where there is no access to public schools. In a comparison between Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, it was revealed that in Afghanistan, all CBS are registered with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and supported and equipped by NGOs, whereas the local communities provide the physical space for the establishment of the CBS in Afghanistan are allowed to implement their own curriculum to a limited extent,. In terms of teachers' salary payments, in Afghanistan the NGOs mostly pay the teachers' salaries and some times the government, but the local communities do not. In Afghanistan, the CBS do not change the holidays according to the local festivals and needs as is usual in India. One other observation is that in Afghanistan the CBS do not have high rates of enrolment compared to the government school system.

In Pakistan, the situation is different in that the parents of school-age children pay a small fee for their children's enrolment to the CBS and the teachers´ salaries are paid from the income generated through the fees. CBS provide meals for students as an incentive for their parents to allow children to attend school. The CBS also work for the promotion of non-formal basic education.

In India, the NGOs support community schools in remote and mountainous areas adopting a child-centred alternative pedagogy. They change the holidays according to the local festivals and needs. Communities pay a small amount of money as teachers' monthly salaries. The CBS only have grades 1 and 2 after which students are expected to join grade 3 elsewhere in government or non-governmental schools. CBS have high rates of enrolment and growth compared to the government sectors.

In Bangladesh, community-based schools primarily serve relatively poor areas of the country. 70 percent of the children attending CBS are females because the schools are close to the girls' homes and are more girl-friendly. The CBS provide basic shelter and sanitation facilities, trained teachers, updated books, and a curriculum acceptable to the community. They also run scholarship programs for girls. One difference apparent from the comparison is that in Bangladesh the communities have influence over the selection of teachers.

CONCLUSION

The overall objective of this study was to explore the role of CBS in promoting the education of rural children in Afghanistan and to find out about the functions and methods of community based schools in the light of MoE policy guidelines. The study also aimed to discuss the involvement of international and national NGOs in the establishment and operation of CBS.

Research was carried out in four districts of Kabul province where CBS run by NGOs are actively working to improve access to education for the rural children where they cannot go to the government primary school. The study further discussed the types and functions of community schools and the role of NGOs in the establishment and running of CBS in some other South-Asian countries. .

In Afghanistan, all the physical space for the establishment of CBS has been provided by local communities, which is a good contribution for the access and provision of education for the vulnerable children who cannot walk to a government primary school far away from their homes, because most of them have fear of kidnapping or of insurgents. Through the study, the opinion of the majority of the teachers regarding the NGOs´ contribution to the educational system were positive, as most of the teachers salaries are paid by the NGOs. In the future, additional measures have to be planned and implemented to attract more children to CBS and

to encourage local communities to support and campaign for girls' education and protect girls' school in their areas.

In the establishment, development and support of CBS, all three pillars—MoE, local communities and NGOs - are involved. Consequently, local communities feel the ownership and consider the schools as their own property, which gives them the incentive to protect the schools from the insurgents' attacks.

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13. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN KUNDUZ PROVINCE

Nooruddin Khwaja

INTRODUCTION

According to the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2004) Article 43:

> Education is the right of all citizens of Afghanistan, which shall be offered up to the B.A. level in the state educational institutes free of charge by the state. To expand balanced education as well as to provide mandatory intermediate education throughout Afghanistan, the state shall design and implement effective programs and prepare the ground for teaching mother tongues in areas where they are spoken.
> (Government of Afghanistan. 2004).

Free education and health services in Afghanistan have a long history. There were no private institutions for education in the past. The new constitution of 2004 allowed for opening private institutions in the basic secondary and high level of education., Article 46 of the Constitution further said:

> Establishing and administering higher, general and specialized educational institutions shall be the duty of the state. The citizens of Afghanistan shall establish higher, general and specialized educational as well as literacy institutions with permission of the state. The state shall permit foreign individuals to establish higher, general and specialized institutions in accordance with the provisions of the law. Admission terms to higher educational institutes of the state and other related matters shall be regulated by law
> (Government of Afghanistan. 2004).

Nowadays the Government of Afghanistan has faced economic and social problems, due to which it is not able to bear the high expense of the school buildings, teacher salaries, their capacity building and to provide good quality education. Adding to these problems is the huge quantity of refugees returning from the neighbouring countries, especially Pakistan and Iran, and the resulting demand for school places. Hence, the Government decided to encourage the private sector to come and contribute to the provision of education.

The term private education means the participation of individuals or NGOs in opening educational institutions, that may include basic, middle, secondary, vocational and higher schools This thesis explains how private schools came into being, and what are the reasons for this initiative, and describes the main difference between both private and Government schools at grade levels 1-12.

This study is primarily a description of the private educational sector in Afghanistan and analysis of the main differences between Government and private schools system. Primary data has been collected from some schools in Kunduz, the northeastern province in Afghanistan.

Problem Area

Government-regulated private schools are a new phenomenon in Afghanistan, and with the exception of community-based institutes of Islamic education, all schools have previously been state run and no private schools were even allowed to exist. In recent years the situation has changed and many private schools, both profit driven as well as run by charity organizations and other NGOs, have appeared in the country and their number is increasing by high speed. Very few studies in the area of private schools are available in the country and very little is known about the features of private schools.

The poor economy of the country due to 30 years of war, lack of proper educational facilities, shortage of professional teachers and the low salary level of teachers, combined with the high

level of corruption inside the Government have made the Government unable to provide quality education for the people. The private, state-regulated education system is a new initiative of the current Government of Afghanistan, formally approved in the constitution. Questions that arise here are: what will be the consequences of this dual education system especially for poor people who cannot pay for their children to be enrolled in private schools? There is a common perception among the people that the quality in Government schools is lower than in private schools. Consequently the poor children will seldom get good quality education and hence the proliferation of private schools may widen the already existing gap between the poor and the rich. What other consequences may private schools have for the future of the education system of Afghanistan? The private schools' policies, objectives, curriculum, teachers' qualifications, and standards for students' fees are still a concern of the Government and of the private sector.

Objectives of the study

The main objectives of this study are to describe and analyse the private schools in Afghanistan which have recently become popular and expanded and their relationship with the Government schools and also with private schools in some other countries . The main objectives are:

- To explore the factors that caused the establishment of this new private schools in Afghanistan.
- To describe the specific differences of private and Government schools

Research Questions

This study investigates the following questions:

- What are the major differences between private and Government schools in Afghanistan?
- Who are the beneficiaries of both schools?, and
- How do teachers see the value of the two types of schools?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reasons behind the establishment of Private Schools - A Global Perspective

Most countries provide free basic education for the people. This means that families are not required to pay for such things as textbooks of their children, school infrastructures, learning materials, teachers' salaries, while in private schools the families must pay to cover such costs. Governments usually exert some form of control over these schools and, in return, recognize their programs and certificates.

According to Karlsson & Mansory (2004), there are three main reasons behind private schools in different countries:

- The principle of need and demand: the need for more schools is not meet by state, so private schools are introduced in order to facilitate schooling for children.
- Principles of democracy: in private schools parents have more influence on the content and the process of educating their own children.
- Quality issues in schools: parents are not satisfied from the quality of education provided in the Government-run schools, hence prefer to send their children to private schools

Moreover the global trends of decentralization and localization of education are said to be additional reasons for expansion of private schools in the world.

In most of the less developed countries the main reason for the opening of private schools is that for economic reasons the Government is not able to meet the demand of the people for school places or the quality of education is not according to the wishes of the people,. In the developed countries the reasons for opening private schools are due to a different demand of the people that is not purely due to the low quality of education in Government schools. The demand for community participation can also be the reason for the establishment of private schools (ibid.).

According to a study done in the USA in 1989 the educational activities in private schools are better equipped and more effective than in Government schools. High status families send their children to private schools, which are offering a better quality education. These types of schools are run by highly qualified professionals who have high status in the society (Karima, 2010). Some schools are opened on the basis of moral values basis and pedagogical principles and some of them are based on religious, ethnic or liguistic criteria of enrolment, but the Government mostly has some degree of influence upon these schools and it may provide financial support to them. One can also distinguish between private schools run by NGOs and for-profit schools that operate as business (ibid).

In Pakistan, private schools may in fact be providing a reasonable or at least not very poor quality of education. Private schools in Pakistan are an important contributor to the explosive growth of enrolments in primary and secondary schools during recent decades. Moreover, contrary to popular wisdom, these schools do not seem to be catering only to the rich – in fact, most private schools have very low fees. These observations do not, however, address an important concern regarding the use of private schools. It has been argued at the popular level that there are actually two kinds of private schools in Pakistan: there are private high quality schools that are accessible only to the `elite' and there are low cost schools used by a wider section of the population, whereby the quality of education offered in the latter type of schools leaves much to be desired (Andarabi et al., 2002).

Studies conducted in Iran have shown that the rapid growth of private schools in the countries of the region has not had a uniform role in these societies. The professionals interviewed in Iran believe that private schools are in Iran absolutely different from those in any other country. Since the beginning of private sector involvement in education criticism arose concerning the attitude of these schools' owners, based on business and other personal interests. Moreover, the dual educational system, one for the rich and high status families and the other one for the poor, caused a divergent trend in the society. Some of the experts supported the view that the growth of private schools in Iran is an expression of positive competition and that when the teachers and school owners get their salaries directly from parents of the students, the former feel more responsibility toward the students, in order to attract the parents' attention. (Karima, 2010).

Private Schools in Afghanistan

Institutions of Islamic education called *Madrasas,* which existed in the country since centuries have been mostly run by communities and by definition can be seen as a kind of private, i.e. non-Governmental institutes of education. In contrast, other types of private schools were not even allowed to function up to the1980s. For example in the 1950s private schools were allowed only for children of foreigners and Afghan students were not allowed to be admitted in such private schools (MoE, 1968). After the occupation of the country by Soviet Union, NGO-supported schools popped up in the areas not controlled by the central Government. Though such schools were not many in number neither all over the country, they still represented pure

non- governmental schools. Such schools even denied use of Government textbooks (Karlsson & Mansory, 2007).

Fee-charging schools are a very recent phenomenon in Afghanistan and are getting more and more space. MOE has also recently shown interest to encourage this trend (MOE, 2010). Originally private schools became common in refugee camps of Afghans in Pakistan and as such many of the currently functioning private schools have some similarities with the private schools in Pakistan. During the last 8 years, about 20 private educational institutions for higher education and around 280 private schools (owned by individuals who admit students against fee) have been established, most of them in Kabul city and few in the other major cities (www.mohe.Govt.af/). These schools successfully completed the procedure of documentation and they are formally registered with the Minister of Education and following the rules and regulation approved by the cabinet of the Government. About 40,000 students are enrolled in these schools. Private schools are mainly coeducational, and have a high percentage of boys' enrolment in Kunduz but the majority of the teachers are females. Mostly private schools consist of the primary level grades. It is difficult for private schools to accept students from Government schools at the same grade level, because the standard of private schools differs from the public school. Mostly private schools require a competence test for admission

Currently MOE policy is to encourage the private sector to establish schools, and non-governmental organizations to contribute in the implementation of general education programs. The Ministry facilitates registration of private schools, and provides them with services and materials like teacher training and textbooks. The Provincial Education Departments are responsible for monitoring the activities of private education institutes in accordance with the approved rules and regulations for operation of private schools (MOE, 2010). The policy rules and regulations prepared by MOE for private schools emphasize full control of them. In the procedure of registration the owner of the private school or any private institutions must pay a particular amount of money and during the school's functioning 10 percent of income every year.

At the policy level, according to article number 10 of the Regulation on Private Educational Institutions, the owner and principal of private schools/institutions can prepare additional educational programs and implement them in his schools/institutions after the approval of MOE (MOE, 2007). According to Mr. Dastageer Muneer, Director of secondary education at MOE, the private schools are implementing the Government educational curriculum and they can add some subjects with consultation of the Ministry of Education, and MOE monitors the private schools (www.mohe.Govt.af/)

On the basis of above regulation for private schools there is no uniform curriculum for private schools or any coordination amongst the private schools. Each school prepares their own weekly teaching plan. Within the Government syllabi, they have added some books from the U.K, which are taught in English. There are some more facilities in private schools such as transportation for students and school staff, libraries, school laboratories and other teaching aids.

In Afghanistan there is a common assumption that private schools provide better quality education than Government schools. The people mostly prefer private schools to Government schools, but this hypothesis cannot be proved without a study in this field. Better achievement of the students in private schools could also be the result of their parents' and families' cultural and educational background, as educated and rich families are usually more concerned regarding their children's education. Other reasons also could play a role, such as the higher scale of teachers' salary in private schools.

Other salient differences between the two types of schools are that most of the private schools´ buildings are not constructed according to the standards of MOE, but all the Government school buildings conform to this standard. Moreover students and teachers of

private schools wear uniforms, while Government schools students and teachers seldom wear these in the rural areas. Hiring and firing in private schools is relatively easy, but in Government school it requires long procedures.

METHODS

Quantitative methods have been applied in this study. Government and private schools´ curricula have been compared by looking at the total amount of periods allotted to the different subjects, and at the use of English in teaching. The fieldwork has been conducted in both types of schools. Questionnaires have been used for data collection and 48 people have responded to the questionnaires. Totally 32 teachers, four in each school from four Government schools and the same number from private schools were selected as respondents. All these schools are located in an urban area, because there are no private schools in the rural areas. Eight private school owners and principals, and eight MOE local staff (School Supervisors) have also responded to the questionnaire.

FINDINGS

Differences in the curricula

Comparison of the curricula of private and Government schools shows, first, that the two types of schools are largely similar in the number and designation of subjects. But there are some differences also. First, the Government schools do not have pre-school grades, while most of the private schools have this grade with specific subjects taught. The total amount of teaching hours according to their weekly plan in Government schools is 24 periods in basic primary, 30 periods in primary, and 36 in middle and secondary level schools, while in private schools the numbers are higher: 36 periods in basic primary and primary and 42 period in middle and secondary levels weekly. The teaching days in the annual plan for private schools are 228 for all grades, while in public schools the duration of the school year is considerably less: 136 days in basic primary, 173 days in primary, 183 days in middle and 193 days in the secondary level schools. The most significant feature of the curriculum that distinguishes private schools is their teaching of several subjects in the English language (such as math, algebra, science, and computer skills). Detailed information on the curricula is found in Annex III of the thesis, which is not reproduced in this book but can be accessed on the MAP website.

The findings reported in the following tables show the distribution of responses to items in the questionnaire, first for the teachers and then for the school owners/principals and supervisors. .

Views of the Private and Public School Teachers

Table 13:1 Opinions on the establishment of private schools

Question	Options	Percentage
In your opinion the private schools are established and developed because	A: cooperation with the Government (MOE)	18
	B: competition with Government schools	53
	C: the Government could not provide quality education to the people,	47

The question in Table 13:1 contains three options. As seen in the third column, the majority of teachers (53 percent) think that the main reason for the establishment and development of private schools is competition of private schools with Government schools. Weakness of provision by Government is a reason according to 47 percent of the responses Only a small number of teachers - 18 percent - believe that private schools are established for cooperative reasons.

Table 13:2 Opinions on the comparative advantages of private and public schools

Question	Options	Percentage	
		Govt.Schools	Priv.Schools
Which type of schools (Govt/ Priv.) are better in the following fields	A: administration		100
	B: teachers attendance		94
	C: completion of syllabi (lesson plan) in the study year		97

As seen in the table 13:2, all or nearly all of both groups of teachers believed that private schools are better than public ones in the three aspects mentioned in the questionnaire.

Table 13:3 Opinions on the teaching of English and computer subjects

Question	**Options**	**Percentage**	
		Govt.Schools	Priv.Schools
In the following aspects which type of school is better?	A: there are more English subjects.		100
	B: there are computer teaching facilities.		87
	C: the study time is longer		94

The overwhelming majority of teachers of both types of schools opined that private schools are better due to the reasons that are already apparent from the comparison of the curricula: teaching more subjects in English, teaching computer skills and engagement of students for a longer time than Government schools.

Table 13:4 For whom are private schools established?

Question	**Options**	**Percentage**
Do you think that the private schools are established for:	A: Business reasons	9
	B: Middle class people	28
	C: Rich people	72

In Table 13:4 a small number of teachers (9 per cent) believed that private schools are established for business reasons and 28 percent think that both categories rich and middle class people can take advantage from private schools, while the majority (72 percent) believed that only wealthy families can be the beneficiaries of private schools.

Table 13:5 Why are private schools preferred?

Question	Options	Percentage
How do you compare both schools, do you prefer private school for:	A: usage of more teaching aid materials	87
	B: usage of new methods focused on students activities	62
	C: the teachers of private Schools are more qualified/professional than those of Government schools?	53

To question number 5 Government schoolteachers and private school teachers responded less uniformly than to the preceding questions. 87 percent of teachers preferred privates schools due to their better teaching aid materials, while 62 percent believed that private schools are better than Government schools for usage of new teaching methods and 53 percent of accepted that private schools have more qualified teachers.

The sixth question concerning homework given to the students and here all respondents said that they give homework.

Difference between Private and Public Schools in Students´ Learning Achievement at Grade 6

Table 13:6 shows the results of comparing both types of schools with regard to the achievement of students (on the basis of marks obtained in the annual examination at grade 6).

Table 13:6 Total marks obtained in Government and private schools in four subjects

School type	No. of students in final exam	Average Per student	Average Per student	Average Per student	Average Per student
Govt school	36	63	57	70	45
Private School	23	84	80	72	74

Table 13.6 shows clearly that in general the scores obtained by the students of private schools were higher than those in public schools.

Table 13:7 Comparison of final exam results (2009)

Categories of students	Govt. Schools	Private Schools
Total enrolled	37	26
Total participated in annual exam	36	26
Total Passed	22	23
Total Failed	9	0
Passed with condition	5	0
Dropped out	1	3

In Table 13:7 the main difference is in the failure rate which in Government schools is at 25 percent and in the number of students who "passed with condition" - 13 percent in Government schools, while the respective figures for private schools are zero.

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Views of The MoE Provincial Supervisors and Owners/Principals of Private Schools

Table 13:8 Beneficiaries of private schools

Question	Options	Percentage
Which categories of the society enroll their children in private schools?	A: Wealthy people	56
	B: Middle class people	44
	C: Poor people	0

As shown in table 13:8, 56 and 44 percent of the these respondents believed that children of wealthy/ middle class people are in the private schools, while none responded that children of poor people are enrolled.

Table 13:9 Factors, which cause the existence of private schools in the country

Question	Options	Percentage
What was the need for private schools in the country?	A: due to the poor economy of the Government	44
	B: community interest to establish private schools	31
	C-business interests	25

In this question, three alternative reasons for the existence of private schools were given to the private schools owners/principals and MoE school supervisors: the poor economy of Government, community interest towards this type of education and business interests. While opinions are divided among these options, the poor economy of the Government is mentioned as the main reason for the establishment of private schools.

Table 13:10 Main purpose of private schools.

Question	Options	Percentage
What are the aims and objectives of private schools?	A-Educational services	75
	B-Business	25
	C-Cooperation with MOE	0

In table 13:10, three main objectives of private schools are listed as alternatives: better educational services, cooperation with the Ministry of Education and operating a business. In the responses, there is little difference between MoE supervisors and private school owner/ principals. However, the private school owners typically expressed that their objectives are

good educational services to the people within a kind of business, while MOE staff suspect that there are some private school just for business and they do not provide quality education.

Table 13:11 Evaluation of private schools' students.

Question	Options	Percentage
How do you evaluate students of private schools compared to the Government schools,?	Better	81
	Not better	19

In response to this question, the private schools´ representatives claimed that their students' achievement level is superior to that of Government schools in the same region and the majority of the MoE staff also accepted this view. .

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that private schools are regarded as being better than Government schools in several respects. On the basis of examination results we also found that the failure rate in Government schools is considerably higher. Several factors could be behind these findings. The private schools keep the students engaged for a longer time than Government schools. Moreover private schools focus on the teaching of English language, and also several other subjects such as math, science and IT are taught in English. This study refers to the private and public schools in Kunduz province only. As there is no coordination among the private schools, the syllabi discussed earlier may not be the same as those used in Kabul or any other province.

The importance of English language has increased during the past nine years when foreign assistance came to Afghanistan and a lot of NGOs started their work, paying an extremely high salary compared to the Government salary scale. The first requirement in their recruitments, even for lower level staff, is English language skills. Government policy is also the same, especially for high Government positions. Private schools try to prepare their students for higher education abroad and at the same time to work in high-level offices.

Generally the study shows a higher valuation among teachers both in private and public sectors toward the private schools. It can be said that mostly wealthy and middle class people get benefits from the private schools. Poor level people send their children to Government schools. In contrast, the cost of student fees in Pakistan is very low compared to Afghanistan. Poor people in Afghanistan cannot get advantages from private schools because there are no low cost private schools. .

The Ministry of Education expresses a lot of commitment in their documents to support private schools, including provision of textbooks, teacher training and facilitation in the procedures of registration and getting license. In reality, very little influence is seen in this regard, and the Government is even facing problems in supplying the textbooks to all the students in public schools.

CONCLUSION

This assignment started off by presenting evidence that private schooling is indeed a large and increasingly important sector in education in Afghanistan The growth of private schools was found to be relatively more common at the primary level and the growth trend is marked in urban areas. Due to the weak economy of the people of rural areas and insecurity situation there are no private schools in rural areas of Afghanistan. The core issue in this study was to discuss school quality, both in private and public schools. Private schools came into being mainly due the poor economy of the Government and interest of the people to activate a private sector of education. From the data examined we found that private schools provide a higher quality of education. The data also showed that private schools are better equipped and provide more facilities for the students. There are more aspects worth to be discussed, but in this study all could not be covered .For the improvement of private education in Afghanistan it is recommended that the Government should concentrate on encouraging private investment in education and strengthening the monitoring and evaluation of private education institutions.

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www.mohe.Govt.af

14. MAP COURSES

14:1 SOCIAL RESEARCH METHODS (15 ECTS).

The course was implemented in Jalalabad in two parts, in May and August 2008. Prof. Holger Daun, Dr. Amir Mansory and Dr. Pia Karlsson were course leaders and lecturers.

Course Aims

Upon completion of the course the participant should be able to:

- demonstrate in-depth knowledge and understanding of scientific knowledge formation, including underlying challenges;
- demonstrate the skills and abilities required to examine and evaluate studies and projects in educational work

Main content

- Theories of science
- Research designs
- Quantitative and qualitative research methods
- Data collection and analysis; surveys, questionnaires, interviews, observations and documentary analyses.
- Research Paradigms
- Values and ethics in social research

Literature

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Examination assignment

- Write a comprehensive reflection on the scientific methods that have been brought up in the lectures, the course literature, the assignments and group works.

14.2 THE TEACHER'S PROFESSIONAL ROLE IN THE SOCIETY (15 ECTS)

The course was implemented in Jalalabad in January 2009 with Prof. Tuomas Takala and Prof. Mahesh Parajuli as course leaders and lecturers.

Course Aims

Upon completion of the course students should be able to:

- understand the basic concepts and theories of the sociology education

- analyze the role of teachers in the broader context of Afghan society
- compare the situation of teachers in Afghanistan with the situation in other countries of the region

Main content

- Functional, conflict and interactionist perspectives on schooling and society
- The sociology of curriculum and teachers' role in curriculum delivery
- Sociology of teachers – status in society; teaching as a profession; role expectation and role conflict; autonomy and control
- School governance and management and school curriculum and teachers' role in these processes
- Teachers as change agents
- Gender and ethnic dimensions
- Teachers' role and participation in the governance and management of school

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Examination assignment

- According to the Five-Year National Education Strategic Plan (NESP, 2006-2010) the new teacher education curriculum for the primary level "will also incorporate elements of modern pedagogical methods" (p. 59)

1. How do you understand the meaning of this kind of an objective?
2. What are the preconditions in Afghan society and education system that constrain or facilitate changes in teaching practice?
3. In order to facilitate such pedagogical change that you deem desirable:
   3a. How should the situation of teachers be improved?
   3b. How could the role of teachers in the governance and management of schools be changed?
   3c. How should teacher education (both pre-service and in-service) be developed?

14.3 EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE (15 ECTS)

The course was implemented in Jalalabad in two parts. In February 2009 Prof. Holger Daun and Prof. Christel Adick were course leaders and lectures and in May 2009 Prof. Tuomas Takala and Prof. Mahesh Parajuli were responsible.

Course Aims

Upon completion of the course students should be able to:

- understand the basic approaches and results of comparative research concerning linkages between education and socio-economic development and discuss critically the concept of development from different perspectives and theoretical approaches (e.g. modernisation, dependency, indigenous development, world system, world culture, globalisation, transnationalism) (part 1);
- acquire knowledge about theories, requirements, approaches, types and criteria of comparative educational research (how, why, and under what circumstances comparisons can be made, ranging from illustrations to case studies, to country comparisons and to large scale quantitative approaches) (part 1 and part 2);
- understand the potential use and limitations of research-based knowledge as guidelines for policies, and develop critical thinking on key concepts in educational policies related to education (e.g. cooperation/assistance, partnership, democracy, gender equity, participatory approaches) and appply this to examples of how development relates to education in global programmes (EFA, MDG, ESD) (part 1 and part 2);
- understand and apply different theories and concepts of comparative education (part 1);
- understand the role of international development organizations in promoting educational change (part 1 and part 2);
- analyze the potential of education in the development of Afghan society (part 1 and part 2).

Main content

- Conceptualization of "development", conception of education as a human right/ education as a means to promote socio-economic development
- Different approaches and research designs to the study of education-development linkages
- Research results concerning the linkages between education, economic growth and different dimensions of social development, and their use as guidelines in policy-making
- Social change and cultural traditions (gender roles, ethnic identities), role of indigenous knowledge and practices in development
- Special conditions of countries in conflict and post-conflict reconstruction
- Policies and practices of international development organizations in influencing educational change in developing countries

Literature

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  2003/04: Gender and Education for All – The Leap to Equality
  2005: Education for All – The Quality Imperative
  2006: Literacy for Life
  2007: Strong Foundations – Early Childhood Care and Education
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Examination assignment:

Part 1:

- Define and discuss Education
- Define and Discuss Development
- Analyze the educational development in Afghanistan in the light of one of the theories.
- Compare some statistical data (enrolment data, GPI, EDI) from the EFA Reports on (a) Afghanistan and (b) one other developing country.

Part 2:

- Describe the international agenda on gender and education, which is elaborated in the EFA Global Monitoring Reports and other international documents. Then analyze critically the role of different development actors in promoting this international agenda in Afghanistan. What has the Government of Afghanistan committed itself to, what plans have been prepared to achieve these goals, and what actions have been taken to implement the plans. Discuss also gaps between the commitments/plans and the actions, and reasons for such gaps.

Example

An example of a course paper from the course Education and Development II is found on page 21

14.4 TEACHING AND LEARNING IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY (15 ECTS)

The course was implemented in Kabul in August 2009 through video recorded lectures by Dr. Björn Eliasson, Karlstad University facilitated by Dr. Amir Mansory.

Course Aims

Upon completion of the course students should be able to:

- demonstrate in-depth knowledge and understanding of the circumstances and conditions of educational work in modern society,
- demonstrate the skills and abilities required to analyse and examine educational work from different knowledge perspectives,
- demonstrate knowledge and potential for dealing with ethical issues in preschool and school.

Main Content

- the concept of knowledge from philosophical and historical perspectives
- constructivist, psychological and cultural-historical perspectives of learning.
- modern society and its importance for learning and teaching
- learning and teaching from a gender and diversity perspective.

Literature:

- Apple, M. (2004). *Ideology and Curriculum.* London: Taylor & Francis Ltd.
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- Ramsden, P. (2003). *Learning to teach in higher education.* London: Routledge.
- Wood, D. (1997). *How Children Think and Learn. The Social Context of Cognitive Development.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Examination assignment

- Recall a particular education experience and from the perspectives of two different theories of learning of your own choice that were brought up the course and discuss the following: How can the experience be explained from the perspective of the two theories?
- Reflect on Apple's statement that knowledge is not neutral.

Examples

Three examples of course papers from the course Teaching and Learning are found on page 29, 36 and 43

14.5 SCIENTIFIC WRITING (7.5 ECTS)

The course was implemented in Kabul in November 2009. Course leaders and lecturers were Dr. Amir Mansory and Dr. Pia Karlsson.

Course Aims

Upon completion of the course students should be able to:

- demonstrate the knowledge of ways of writing up social research reports
- demonstrate the ability to write scientifically
- demonstrate the ability to present credible, well structured and persuasive writing
- demonstrate skills on editorial styles

Course Content

- Analysing scientific articles, papers and theses.
- Organising scientific texts (title, abstract, aims and objectives, methods, findings, conclusions).
- Producing tables, figures, charts and other illustrations.

.

Literature:

- Bell, J. (2005) *Doing Your Research Project. A Guide for First-Time Researchers in Education and Social Science*. Buckingham: Open University press
- Blaxter, L, Hughes, C, & Tight, M (2006) *How to Research* London: Open University Press
- Bryman, A. (2008): *Social Research Methods.* New York: Oxford University press
- Denscombe, M. (2007) *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects*. Buckingham: Open University Press
- Murray, R. (2006) *How to write a thesis* Buckingham: Open University Press
- Ritchie, J. & Lewis, J. (2003) *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: SAGE Publications
- Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)

Examination:
A written test

14.6 FIELD STUDIES (15 ECTS)

The field studies have constituted a particular course of MAP. The students have implemented four periods of fieldwork, each of 3.75 ECTS, in July 2008, in November 2008, July 2009 and May 2010. The fieldwork aimed at promoting analytical skills and reflective thought and to prepare students for thesis writing. In addition, a considerable amount of information as regards the state of education in Afghan schools has been collected. Dr. Amir Mansory and Dr. Pia Karlsson have been responsible for assigning and examining the field studies. Each field study was introduced during 1-2 days and methodological issues were then discussed.

Course Aims
Upon completion of the students should be able to:

- demonstrate the ability to practice social research methods in the field
- demonstrate the skills required to critically examine and analyse collected data
- demonstrate knowledge and potential to elaborate research projects.

Main Content

1. The first study examined grade 4 students' math scores in relation to teacher's educational background and sex. The students worked in groups of four and each group studied 24 classes in different schools, boy and girl schools in both rural and urban areas. They used a fairly simple ready-made form for the collection of data. A general finding from this study was that students of teachers with higher education (above grade 12) had lower marks than other students. Male teachers tended to score lower than female teachers in this study.
2. The second fieldwork explored teachers' attitudes towards girls' education. The students worked in pairs. They were provided with a questionnaire for the teachers but were given less instruction compared to the first study. The study collected data on teachers, their views and attitudes, which were related to some personal characteristics, educational background and teaching experience. Totally 975 teachers, male and female from primary boy and girl schools filled in the questionnaire. One of many interesting findings can be mentioned here. A clear majority of all teachers, female as well as male in both rural and urban schools, considered education up to grade 12 a necessity for both boys and girls. However, when asked about appropriate marriage age there was a clear difference between male teachers in rural and urban schools. In rural areas more than 40 % of the male teachers believed that girls should marry before the

age of 19, which probably would jeopardise a completion of secondary education for girls.

3. The third fieldwork studied teachers' views on the new language textbooks and how they used the lesson guidelines that are included in the textbooks. Students worked individually with classroom observations and teacher interviews, totally ten per student. The task was to compare and categorise the findings with the goal of teacher education as expressed in National Education Strategic Plan (NESP). A common finding was that only rarely did the teachers follow the lesson guidelines since they considered them inappropriate for the teaching situation (very big classes).
4. Finally, the last field study was similar to the second. It collected similar data on teachers' attitudes towards girls' education but this time only teachers from Islamic schools (*madrasa*) and secondary schools (*maktab*) responded to the questionnaire. Each student collected data from some 30 teachers, male and female, in rural and urban schools and coded the data into an excel sheet. Thereafter, all data was compiled by Dr. Mansory and sent back to the students for analysis. Thus, each student analysed the attitudes of some 600 teachers. The number of female madrasa teachers is fairly low in this study so a male-female comparison is not feasible. When comparing maktab-madrasa teachers some findings are for example that madrasa teachers disfavoured women's work outside home to a higher extent than maktab teachers. Madrasa teachers were also against male teachers for girls more often than maktab teachers were. However, both maktab and madrasa teachers had the opinion that girls and boys should be taught in separate schools.

Examination assignment:
For each field study the students submitted a report. The were advised to include:

- Objective – what is the objective of the study?
- Methods – how and where did you do to collect information for the study?
- Results – what are the main results? Compilation and presentation. Discussion and reflection on the findings. Note in particular gender differences!
- Conclusion – summary and concluding remarks.

Example
An example of a report from Field Work 3 is found on page 55

14.7 DEGREE COURSES I AND II (2 x 15 ECTS)
The Degree Courses aimed at introducing the students to and supervising them in thesis writing. The first Degree Course took place in Kabul in November 2009 but the general topic, same for all – Female Education in Afghanistan – was introduced already in April 2009. From April – November each student discussed with his/her respective supervisor what to write about and how to collect necessary data. The course discussed thesis structure and format, repeated how to review and refer to literature, presentation of findings, analyses, etc. Opposition was also practised. Dr. Amir Mansory and Dr. Pia Karlsson were responsible for Degree Course I.

The Degree Course II took place in Istanbul in June 2010. Prof. Tuomas Takala, Prof. Mahesh Parajuli, Prof. Christel Adick, Prof. Holger Daun, Dr. Pia Kalrsson & Dr. Amir Mansory contributed with lectures and discussions together with all the students. Moreover, each student had individual meetings with their respective supervisor regarding the second thesis.

Degree Course I
Aims
Upon completion of the students should be able to:

- demonstrate in-depth knowledge and understanding of a selected research area of educational work,
  demonstrate ability to critically, independently and creatively identify and formulate issues and to plan and carry out a study using adequate methods,
- demonstrate ability to clearly present and discuss their conclusions and the knowledge and argument behind them in dialogue with different groups, orally and in writing,
- demonstrate ability to assess the result of the research study in relation to a professional context and to identify further research questions.

Main Content

- Planning, carrying out and writing up of a research study.
- Reviewing a research study.

Examination
In April 2010 the Degree Course I was completed by an examination seminar in Kabul. Each student defended his/her own thesis and acted as opponent on a colleague's thesis. The Examination Committee (Prof. Holger Daun, Dr. Amir Mansory & Dr. Pia Karlsson) assessed the students' theses based on their scientific report and performance as seminar opponent. Passing Degree Course I lead to a Master Degree of 60 ECTS.

Degree Course II
Aims
Upon completion of the students should be able to:

- critical and creative ability to define research issues and designs in order to contribute to knowledge development;
- ability to integrate and analyse knowledge critically and systematically;
- ability to discuss the importance of their own research results to practitioners in the field;
- ability to give a clear presentation of conclusions drawn and discuss the arguments on which they are based orally and in writing in dialogue with different groups at home and abroad.

Main Content

- Planning, conducting and reporting an investigatory research project.
- Reviewing an academic work.

Examination
In October 2010 the students defended their second theses at seminars at Karlstad University. Opponents were now one of MAP's lecturer. The Examination Committee, which also included Prof. Ulf Blossing, who throughout the Programme had been the formal (final) examiner of course papers and theses, assessed the students' theses. Passing Degree Course II implied a Master Degree of 120 ECTS.

14.8 **ISLAM AND EDUCATION IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION (7.5 ECTS)**

This course was the final ordinary course of MAP. It took place in Jalalabad in April 2010. Course leaders and lecturers were dr. Amir Mansory and Dr. Pia Karlsson.

Course Aims

Upon completion of the students should be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge of various types of Islamic education and the development of Islamic education in the Muslim world;
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of Islamic epistemology, the concept of knowledge in Islam and Islamization of knowledge;
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding about the Islamic principle of farz (obligation) in education and from a gender perspective;
- demonstrate the skills and abilities required to critically assess recent educational reforms and strategies in Afghanistan considering the tradition of Islamic education and challenges of the era of globalization.

Main Content

- Islamic education historically and contemporary in Muslim countries as well as in Muslim communities in Western countries.
- Islamic epistemology, the concept of knowledge in Islam from a philosophical and historical perspective
- Islamization of knowledge.
- Development, changes and reforms in Afghan educational systems: challenges to meet the demands of the era of globalization.
- Islamic education from a gender perspective.

Literature

- Anzar, U. (2003) *Islamic Education A Brief History of Madrassas With Comments on Curricula and Current Pedagogical Practices.* http://schools.nashua.edu/myclass/fenlonmblock1/Lists/DueDates/Attachments/10/madrassah-history.pdf
- Boyle, H. (2004) *Quranic Schools. Agents of Preservation and Change*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
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- Gunther, S. (2006) Be Masters in That You Teach and Continue to Learn: Medieval Muslim Thinkers on Education Theory. *Comparative Education Review,* Vol. 50, No. 3.
- Karlsson, P. & Mansory, A. (2007) *An Afghan Dilemma. Education, Gender and Globalisation in an Islamic Context*. Stockholm: Stockholm University.
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- Mehran, G. (2003) The Paradox of Tradition and Modernity in Female Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran. *Comparative Education Review.* Vol 47, No 3.
- Pohl, F. (2006) Islamic Education and Civil Society: Reflections on the Pesantren Tradition in Contemporary Indonesia. *Comparative Education Review,* Vol. 50, No. 3.

- Eickelman, D.F. (1978) The Art of Memory: Islamic Education and Its Social Reproduction. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 20, No 4,
- Wan Daud, W. M. N. (1989) *The Concept of Knowledge in Islam and its Implications for Education in a Developing Country.* London: Mansell Publishing.
- Okkenhaug, I. and Flaskerud, I. (2005) Introduction. In: I. Okkenhaug & I. Flaskerud (eds). *Gender, Religion and Change in the Middle East*. Oxford: Berg.
- Rauf, S.M.A. (1988) *Mawdudi on Education*. Karachi: Islamic Research Academy.
- Roald, A. S. (1994). *Tarbiya: education and politics in Islamic movements in Jordan and Malaysia*. Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International.

Examination assignment

- Discuss and analyse the Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 2003), NESP 1 (Ministry of Education, 2006) and NESP 2 (Ministry of Education, 2010) in the light of
  a) globalisation;
  b) current Islamic education in Indonesia, Southern Philippines and Morocco; and
  c) women's right to education

Example

An example of a course paper from the course Islam and Education is found on page 48

COURSE PAPERS

15. GENDER AND EDUCATION – A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE AND THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

By Ahmad Khalid Fahim

Introduction

In 2001, Afghanistan embarked upon a new beginning with the overthrow of the Taliban regime. After years of minimal involvement of women in public life, the Bonn Agreement called for specific attention to the role of women and also established a government structure for this purpose, the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

During the past few years, Afghan women have made important advancement as regards enjoyment of their human rights and political participation. At the normative level, the new Constitution enshrines gender equality as a principal building block of the new Afghan society.

Access to education for girls has improved. Gender equality is increasingly becoming a concrete goal, guiding Government policies, development programmes and the national budget. This paper presents and discusses the global perspective on gender and education, International treaties/declarations and provisions from international conferences on gender and education are discussed and then followed by the gender and education development (commitments, progress and major challenges) in Afghanistan since 2002.

The concept of gender

The terms sex and gender are sometimes misunderstood as interchangeable terms. However, the term sex refers to biological differences of individuals while the term gender refers to culturally and socially constructed differences between individuals. .

Sex refers to permanent and unchangeable biological differences between men and women while gender delineates assigned social roles and relations to individuals, which are influenced by cultural, religious and societal norms. For example, in Afghanistan like in some other countries men's role is generally perceived to be breadwinners of families while women are mainly housewives and should look after house chores and children. Women live in subordination to men. Labour division is from very beginning taught to boys and girls i.e. girls are to help their mothers in house chores while boys help their fathers on farm work or purchasing food items on the market (Karlsson & Mansory, 2007). All these roles are not due to biological/physiological structure of men and women but are rather inculcated in and inherited by boys and girls.

Gender issues have been at the core of international treaties and of plans and policies of government and development cooperation actors. Gender considerations are crucial not only for other development sectors but also in education planning and policies.

Gender and education – the global perspective

Since long, governments and development cooperation actors have given high priority to gender issues in planning and policies. Gender parity, equality and equity in education have been referred to in almost all international treaties and declarations

International Treaties and Declarations

Education is a human right, preserved in international treaties and conventions that are legally binding on signatory states. The UN Declaration of Human Rights 1948 in its article 26 refers to education as the right of every one and education should be compulsory and provided free of charge particularly at primary level. The article further refers to technical and professional education as well as higher education to be accessible for all, based on merit. The article also

highlights the aim of education as to contribute to full development of human personality and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Parents are authorized to choose whatever kind of education for their children (UN Declaration on Human Rights, 1948, Article 26).

That the declaration highlights education as a basic human right and at the same time proposes it to be compulsory seems according to some social researchers contradictory. A right is something that is demanded and not imposed. A question comes to one's mind; if a child rejects education should the state then force him/her to get education? According to my point of view, the answer is yes, because a child at the age of 7-12 cannot decide what is good or bad. Therefore, education should be free of charge to enable the poor to benefit and also compulsory so that all the population of a country attain basic literacy and numeracy skills.

The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) that was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1979 and entered into force in 1981 also refers to equal education for men and women in articles 10a and 10b. The Convention states that it is the obligation of the states to ensure elimination of discrimination against women and ensure equal access to education for both men and women. The Convention further stresses on gender equality in terms of access to studies and diplomas in educational institutions of all categories, in rural and urban areas; from preschool to higher education as well as all types of vocational training. Also, access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality must be ensured (CEDAW, 1981, articles 10a &10b).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is another and widely accepted human rights treaty that contains strong guarantees of the right to education. It reaffirms the right of every child, 'without discrimination of any kind' to free and compulsory primary education, and states that also higher levels shall be 'accessible to all'. Furthermore, it protects the child from exploitation, including work that would interfere with education (CRC, 1990, articles 32.1/32.2). The CRC has been ratified by all the nations of the world with the exception of the United States and Somalia (UNESCO, 2003-4).

The legacy of education as a human right reinforces the current efforts to achieve the EFA goals. But education includes development concerns as well and promotion of human rights and promotion of economic growth are not opposites, not even do they limit each other. Any tension between a rights-based approach and one that seeks economic growth disappears if one views rights and growth not in opposition but as necessary co-requisites. A strong case can be made that failure to ensure human rights hinders economic growth, and similarly, without a healthy economy poverty becomes a trouble.

Therefore, empowering girls is a win-win scheme. When girls are educated, not only are their rights as individuals fulfilled, but society also advances and enjoys numerous benefits. This understanding is implied in MDGs 2 and 3, which seek to achieve universal primary education and to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, respectively.

International Conferences

At the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in 1990 held at Jomtien, Thailand the benefits and challenges of education to "every citizen in every society" were highlighted and discussed. Partners comprised a broad combination of national governments, civil society groups, and development agencies such as UNESCO and the World Bank. After the world conference in Jomtien primary education has been a priority for governments, donors and NGOs, mainly due to its perceived role in reducing poverty. In particular, facilitating and providing girls' access to primary education has been a major policy goal. This is not only a reflection of the very severe gender disparities that existed in literacy rates and school enrolment and completion rates, but is also a recognition of the benefits of education for a woman, her family and the role she can play in society.

However, many countries, despite great efforts, made little progress. Population growth remained strong, and partly because of this, the number of the world's out-of-school children declined by only about 3 % over the decade. Girls continued to face sharp discrimination in access to schooling. Nations with the highest gender disparities tend to be the most disadvantaged, often with a per capita income of less than one dollar a day ((UNESCO, 2004).

In response to the slow progress, the commitment was reaffirmed by the World Education Forum held in Dakar, in 2000, which adopted six major goals for education, two of which also became Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) later in the same year. The Dakar goals covered the attainment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and gender equality, improving literacy and educational quality, and increasing life-skills and early childhood educations programmes, and were to be achieved within 15 years. However, the gender goal was judged to be particularly urgent; requiring the achievement of parity in enrolments for girls and boys at primary and secondary levels by 2005, and of full equality throughout education by 2015 (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2003-4).

The six EFA goals are as follows:

- Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- Ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, those in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
- Ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programs.
- Achieve a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
- Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
- Improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensure excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.
  (UNESCO, 2004)

The EFA goals and the MDGs include time-bound targets that make the process of goal achievement more tangible and facilitate monitoring of progress. The EFA goals are also potentially able to facilitate dialogue with all governments, irrespective of whether they are signatories to CRC or CEDAW.

Gender and education in Afghanistan – commitments by the state and other actors

After the fall of the Taliban in November 2001 and the installation of an interim government in accordance to the Bonn Agreement in 2002, Afghanistan has witnessed a huge influx of international actors, including donors such as USAID, WB, ADB, CIDA, SIDA, DANIDA, GTZ, JICA, and UN agencies (UNESCO, UNICEF, WFP etc), and international NGOs (SCA, CARE, IRC, OXFAM, IMC, Save the children etc). The international community, considering the poor conditions of women in Afghanistan, decided that women should become part of every activity in the country. The women should be given their right position in all aspects of life, and develop equally with men, and enjoy their Islamic and human rights. Therefore, equality, justice and development for women have been included in important documents of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, for example, the National Constitution, Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) and National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA).

The Constitution of Afghanistan, adopted in 2004, in its article 43 refers to education as the right of all citizens of Afghanistan, which shall be provided up to tertiary level, free of charge by the state. Constitutionally, Afghanistan is one of the few UNESCO member states with such strong commitment of free education up to tertiary level (MoE, 2009).

ANDS (2007) states the education target: "The net enrolment in primary school for girls and boys will be at least 60 percent and 75 percent respectively by 2010". Moreover, the provision of basic education and reduction of illiteracy rates will remain the top priority for the Government throughout the life of the ANDS. Further, ANDS refers to gender equity as

> an important precondition for the success of Afghanistan's development goals is the reversal of women's historical disadvantage in Afghan society. The Government's vision is a peaceful and progressive nation where women and men enjoy security, equal rights, and opportunities in all spheres of life (ANDS, 2007, p. 17).

In the subsequent chapters and details of ANDS it seems to me that the meaning of gender equity as referred to in EFA goals has been misinterpreted. The set targets are quantitative in nature and refer to the number of boys and girls to participate in school, which is about gender parity. In the set targets little is observed as regards gender equality.

The National Education Strategic Plan (2006-2010) is a document that materializes ANDS and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Plan serves as a policy framework and strategic guidance to education development (MoE, 2009). The Government is committed to implement the priority programs as reflected in the NESP, including: (i) general education (targeting a 60 percent and 75 percent enrolment rate for girls and boys, respectively); (ii) improved teacher education and working conditions; (iii) education infrastructure rehabilitation and development; (iv) curriculum development and learning materials; (v) Islamic education; (vi) technical and vocational education and training; (vii) literacy and non-formal education; and (viii) reform and development of education administration (NESP, 2006-2010).

Another important document that refers to gender and education development is the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA, 2007):

> to increase the enrolment and retention of girls and women at all levels of education, including vocational and non-formal education, and to create an enabling environment where girls and women have equal access to all levels of education, equal treatment in the classroom and equal opportunity to complete the highest possible level and quality of education within the appropriate time period" (p. 81).

Today education is generally understood as a powerful tool for rebuilding Afghanistan. Education is further understood as a vital element in combating poverty, empowering women and promoting human rights and democracy. The people of Afghanistan recognize its value. They know that education is their best chance to shake off their legacy of civil war, poverty and despair. They know it is their only chance to realize the hopes they have for their girls and boys. The Afghanistan Ministry of Education is particularly committed to tackling the barriers that prevent Afghan girls from getting into and staying on in school.

Progress so far

After the fall of the Taliban regime in November 2001 some positive changes came along for women in Afghanistan. They came back from isolation and got more freedom in their social lives, access to education and employment opportunities increased as well as their participation in peace-making, rehabilitation and decision making processes. National Development

Conferences always emphasise on improvement of women's conditions and progress towards gender equality is an important and vital agenda for Afghanistan.

Important organizational changes have been made. So far women have participated in developing the National Constitution in 2003, 64 out of 250 seats of the Parliament are assigned to women, and in the Cabinet the minister of the Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA) and some other key posts in other ministries are assigned to women. Women of Afghanistan, either literate or illiterate, have raised their voices. In the first *Loya Jirga*[21], women constituted 11 % of the representatives. 44 % of the voters in the Presidential elections of 2004 consisted of women (UN Economic and Social Council, 2005). Despite threats against women their participation has increased incredibly.

Specific achievements in the education sector between 2002 and 2008 are that about 6.2 million children have enrolled in schools, out of which 35.8 % are girls, the highest number of children attending school in Afghanistan ever. Despite the tremendous increase in net enrolment rates, close to 50 % of children aged 6 - 12 years are still out of school. Primary level enrolment of boys is nearly twice that of girls. The ratio becomes even more dramatic in rural areas. The number of teachers has increased from 20,700 in 2001 to 160,000, including 28 % female teachers, in 2008 (MoE, 2009).

Currently there are a total of 9,062 government schools in Afghanistan. Of these, 4,840 are male schools and only 1,353 are female schools. 2,869 are mixed schools. The number of schools that girls can access compared to boys keeps girls at a disadvantage (MoE, 2008).

The Ministry of Education has made significant progress in formulating its policy and strategy during the past seven years. At the beginning of the transitional government the MoE was more inclined to a centralized approach where the ministry would be the producer of all the educational inputs (e.g. school buildings, furniture, curriculum, textbooks, etc.). Today, the MoE is more focused on its role as strategic policymaker and facilitator, and aims at delegating more authority to province and district education departments and schools, and encourages the participation of communities, NGOs and the private sector.

As a result of global advocacy and donor pressure there are gains in the education sector: however, these gains are often fragile, vulnerable to changes in economic and social environments, and girls lag behind boys' rates of enrolment.. Although achievements are visible in the primary education sector the gaps are large in the secondary and tertiary sectors, especially in Southern and South Eastern provinces. Enrolments have gone up but a good quality education, accessible for all and gender balanced is still lacking.

Gaps: Commitments vs. Achievements

Since 2001, Afghan girls are theoretically free to attend school. There is a strong commitment by all actors to promote girls' education. For example, according to NESP (2006-2010), the MoE is committed to target 60 % and 75 % enrolment rate for girls and boys respectively by 2010, which is already at our doorstep.

Despite marked progress in primary education since 2002 in terms of increased enrolments, teachers' employment and education infrastructure improvement, there are still a number of challenges that negatively affect girls' participation in education, for example, equal access, insecurity, poverty, boy preferences, lack of adequate facilities and female teachers, and even the reluctance of girls' own parents to break the tradition that says "girls should be at home."

The ambitious target of 60 % and 75 % enrolment rate for girls and boys respectively by 2010, which is less than a year ahead, seems impossible to achieve due to a number of reasons.

[21] Traditional, ad hoc national grand council where representatives from all tribes consult on national issues and reach consensus.

First, the inadequate allocation of funding to the education sector;, second, the low coverage of MoE to remote areas; and third, the prevailing insecurity in the South and South East provinces.

The legal commitments are another marked progress. However, to materialize the commitments will take more time than anticipated due to lack of required national capacity, insecurity and lack of accountability and transparency in donor contributions to the education sector. To fully implement the Afghan Constitution, ANDS, NESP and NAPWA mainly depend on a secure environment and the existence of rule of law, which currently are fragile in most parts of the country. Another problem is the prevailing and ever increasing corruption as well as inadequate capacity of the government that hampers the full implementation of legal commitments.

Provinces in the South and South East continue to exhibit particularly low levels of enrolments for girls and boys. The provinces of Zabul (1 %), Uruzgan (1 %), Helmand (6 %) and Paktika (9 %) in the South and Southeast have the lowest levels of enrolment. Insecurity has become an increasing and formidable challenge to access of education. The number of attacks on schools, teachers, and students rose considerably already in 2006 (Afghanistan's Human Development Report, 2007).

Almost half of all school age children remain out of school. The national average for attendance of children (6 – 13 years) is estimated at 37 % (WB, 2008). Enrolment in urban areas is considerably higher than that in rural areas. Although the reasons for the greater level of attendance of girls in urban areas may be due to cultural factors, it is probably due to better availability as well. Distance is often referred to as the most common reason for keeping girls from not going to school. The disparity in the number of boys in school compared to girls continues. Girls still face significant obstacles that prevent them from accessing education, including restricted movement, a shortage of female teachers (who comprises only 28 % of teachers), poor facilities, competing demands on girls' time and the lack of value placed on female education. Such obstacles are more common in rural than urban areas (ibid).

Table 15:1. Some indicators of progress of Afghanistan's MDGs[22]

MDG	Indicator	Kuchi[23]	Rural	Urban	National Average
Achieve universal primary education	Net enrolment rate in primary education	9	36	53	37
	Literacy rate of 15-24 years old (%)	5	25	63	31
Promote gender equality and empower women	Ratio of girls to boys in primary education	0.5	0.6	0.9	0.7
	Ratio of literate women to men, 15-24 years old	0.9	0.3	0.8	0.5

Source: Afghanistan's Human Development Report, 2007, p.22

Although girls' access to education has increased, particularly in urban areas, additional energy and resources must be focused on improving access to education for girls in rural areas. Enrolment rates for women at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels are almost half of that of men – 41.8 % for females and 73.7 % for males. The adult literacy rate ranks among the lowest in the world. Only 23.5 % of the population 15 years and older can read and write. (ibid). Only an estimated 12.6 % of women are literate, compared to 32.4 % of men. The

[22] When the Millennium Summit was held in New York, Afghanistan was still in conflict and MDGs for Afghanistan were endorsed only in 2004 with benchmarks to be achieved in 15 years.
[23] Nomad

female to male literacy ratio is 0.4 for the entire population; far lower than in neighbouring countries such as Iran (0.8) and Pakistan (0.6) (ibid).

Whereas women's low literacy rate remains an urgent issue, the trend to empower women politically at the national level is encouraging. By allocating a minimum of 25 % of the seats in the *Wolesi Jirga* (lower house) of the National Assembly to women Afghanistan has taken a step to bring about gender parity in the formal representation of decision-making. In regard to the extent of women's participation in national politics, Afghanistan fares well among its neighbours as well as among the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) members. The number of women participating in governance bodies does not, however, reveal their decision-making power or to the extent which their voice is heard (NAPWA, 2007).

Afghanistan has made good progress in regards to gender parity, which mainly refers to achieving equal numbers. However, there is still a long way to go to achieve gender equality and equity in education. Due to cultural barriers poor rural families prefer sending boys to school. The physical environment in schools is not girl friendly. Most girl schools lack surrounding walls to protect girls from being seen by outsiders, which is considered a value in Afghan culture. Also, in case of mixed schools, there are no separate latrines for girls. In the recently (2008) revised textbooks there are examples of gender roles based on societal norms and practices. .

The dominance of conservative practices limits girls' and women's role in civil, cultural, economic, political and social activities in the society. Further, women are faced with gender based violence, as a result from previous and on-going conflicts as well as in their own families. There are many cases of forced marriages and child marriages, family violence, kidnapping and harassment of young girls and female teachers on their way to school. Reports from poor rural areas indicate that some families have sold their daughters in fear of hunger, or have given them away as brides, in case of *Bad*[24].

Poverty is another major factor. Although education is free the cost of school uniform and stationery along with loss of girls' domestic labour or income earning activities are disincentives to enrolment for poor families. Low marriage age in particular leads to low retention rates for girls. Finally, parents' negative attitude toward girls' education, particularly that of illiterate fathers' is another factor (World Bank, 2004).

Lack of qualified female teachers is another impeding factor for girls' education. There are a total of 142,000 teachers out of which 29 % are female (MoE Progress Report, 2007). In Afghanistan parents prefer to send girls' to schools where they are taught by female teachers or aged male teachers. For instance in a small research project conducted in district 12 of Kabul city it was revealed that the lack of female teachers negatively affected girls' participation in education (Fahim, 2009).

Conclusion

For several years now governments and development cooperation agencies have given top priority to gender equality in development planning and policies. Resource allocations as well as opportunities for social and economic advancement have been prominent items on the agendas of all recent international meetings. Since the fall of the Taliban Afghan women have made historic gains with the support of the international community. Women came to the fore of the political life in the country and contributed to the adoption of the new Constitution, which clearly affirms equality between women and

[4] Bad is a deal resulting from a conflict between two families, for example when someone has violated another person's reputation or committed a crime like murder. The solution might be a fine in the form of cash or marrying off a daughter of the offending family to the family of victim. In the last case the families thus become relatives.

men. Afghan women's achievements include growing participation in national reconstruction efforts, increased enrolment of girls in schools and advances in access to health care.

However, women's participation in peace building and reconstruction continues to be jeopardized by the security situation, which limits their participation in public life, access to education and health care and opportunities in the labour market. Significant differences exist between women's and men's enjoyment of rights.

Gender equality remains a crucial factor for achieving sustainable peace and democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law in Afghanistan. As the Millennium Development Goals report for Afghanistan notes: "The most important indicator of all will be the extent to which Afghanistan's development strategy centres on women."

16. LEARNING IN THE LIGHT OF THEORIES

By Aminulhaq Mayel

Introduction

Research in the area of knowledge and learning is engaged in questions such as the meaning of knowing something or learning something, how learning takes place, what happens to children when they learn and so on. Findings have been used in the development of new initiatives in teaching and learning methods. Sometimes new theories have been created too.

A simple definition of learning is the acquisition of new knowledge; however, learning of skills and attitudes has also been included in most educational systems. Skills can be of different types, including skills necessary for acquiring knowledge, such as reading and writing, but also skills of higher psychological functions, such as mnemonics or deduction. Skills are also practical, for example, playing an instrument or doing carpentry. Dissemination of cultural values and morals as well as religious beliefs is also included in the curricula of education systems. Therefore a definition of learning can include many aspects of learning, e.g. knowledge, skills and attitudes.

There are some other ideas about learning too, for instance, a) learning is equal to recollection in which the ability to recall becomes a prerequisite; b) learning is knowledge received from someone else in which the teacher/master/mentor is in the core of the process and c) learning is about making or constructing knowledge for which an active act is required. The last concept has been dominating the debate for many decades and it has expanded and deepened. The idea, known as the constructivist theory, has been divided and subgroups have been established, etc. Today, it may be universally agreed that activity on the part of the learner is a precondition for learning.

Two major perspectives exist regarding the debate on *how* the learning act occurs:
a) empiricism, which regards *experience* as the base of knowledge; and b) rationalism, where *reasoning* is the basis of learning. Although both positions principally accept learning as constructive in nature there is a great difference in the explanation on how the construction occurs.

There is no doubt that individuals learn differently; they have different learning styles and their learning outcomes differ. These variations come from genetic/biological features as well as environmental influences.

In the light of the above, this paper discusses very generally a few learning theories developed by some western researchers. The paper also discusses a case of the author's own experience in the light of two learning theories.

Some learning theories

Different theories of learning have emerged over centuries and authors have classified these theories in a number of ways. Here are some of the most common classifications provided.

One group claims that something is present in the learner already at birth, which allows learning to occur. Plato believed that everybody is born with innate ideas and it is only needed to recollect them over the lifetime. According to him, we cannot get any knowledge at all from outside since knowledge is innate and we already have all knowledge with us when we are born but cannot clearly see everything from the beginning. To learn is just to recollect something from somewhere inside (Phillips & Soltis, 2004).

Locke thought that everybody possesses an inborn ability and power for learning new things. He "

> claimed that the child is a *tabula rasa,* a blank slate and the adult the child

> eventually will become is completely the result of the learning it receives and the experience it encounters. He opposed the ideas from Plato and others who claimed that certain ideas exist innate, prior to experience. For Locke, there was no doubt that it is the environment that forms the mind. (Karlsson and Mansory, 2003).

The philosophers of this group claim that all individuals have innate abilities that are revived when exposed to conditioning. They regard learning as a passive act.

The second group of theories sees the learner as active, both mentally and physically when engaged in learning. The Gestalt theorists and Piaget belong to this party.

Vygotsky and some others are found in a third group of theorists who look at learning in the social and cultural setting.

Philosophical theories of learning (Plato, Locke)

Epistemology is about knowledge theories, about the nature and form of knowledge and how it can be acquired. Most of the debates in this field focus on analysing the nature of knowledge and discuss for example, truths, beliefs and justifications, what is the true knowledge and what we believe. Also, it discusses the tools we need to produce knowledge. Epistemology can be divided into two main parts: a) Rationalism or Anti-positivism and b) Empiricism or Positivism.

The principle logic behind rationalism is that knowledge is innate and you need to recapture it. This is Plato's philosophical (subjectivist) point of view according to which the human being is the subject. This theory suggests learning as a passive act and teaching as a means to help someone to recall what he already has in him. However, another philosopher, John Locke, did not fully agree with Plato's theory of innate knowledge. He believed that a human being is born with some biological abilities and potentials by which he can deal with surrounding information (Phillips and Soltis, 2004).

Phillips and Soltis (2004) explain this idea by using a calculator as example. They argue that a calculator needs an electric circuit and readymade programming inside in order to be able to operate the data and display the result. Locke also argued that the human being could not learn if there is nothing already existing in his head. It means he rejects the idea of the human brain as a white sheet as suggested by the objectivistic theory of learning that appeared later (Eliasson, Aug 2009).

Another philosophical idea, suggested by Locke, is the atomistic theory, which means that knowledge comes into the human being in small parts, assembles in the mind and then bigger piles of knowledge are constructed. According to him, a new born child starts experiencing things around him through his five senses and these small experiences turn into simple ideas in his mind and at later stages the ideas are built up into complex ideas and knowledge. He means that this is the product of the innate ability of a human being, which comes with him by birth. A practical example of the atomistic idea is that when we want to teach a child, we first start teaching him letters, then allowing him to assemble the letters into simple words, and then combining the words into meaningful sentences and ideas (Phillips and Soltis, 2004).

Empiricism, on the other hand, is the evidence of the sense i.e. everything you can experience with your five senses exists independently of your existence. It means that even if you do not exist, the world remains the same. While according to the theory of rationalism if we do not exist, the world would be in another shape or at least the knowledge about the world would be different (Eliasson, Aug 2009).

Psychological theories of learning

Behaviourism*:*

This theory sees learning from the biological rather than the philosophical perspective, as Plato and Locke did. Behaviourists argue that to learn you need to change your behaviour. One of the pioneer researchers in this group is Watson. Some of the main features of behaviourism can be summarized as:

- Biologically, both animals and human beings are similar; thus, most research is based on animals. The principle thought is that results from tests on animals are applicable on human beings too.
- Tests and experiments on animals are preferred since responses from, for example, interviewed people are subjective and not true.

The focus is not on how the knowledge is acquired, but how the behaviour is acquired, i.e. it does not matter how a person gets knowledge but how his behaviour has changed. The research method is mainly observation, i.e. behaviouralists rely on what it is observed.

The Classical Conditioning that Pavlov experienced on a dog and the Operant Conditioning that Thorndike experienced on a cat have been the two main directions of behaviourism, based on which the following general laws of learning were defined by Thorndike.

- The most basic form of learning is trial and error.
- Learning comes step by step, not through insights.
- Learning is not mediated by ideas.
- We learn by doing: The law of exercise

Thorndike explained that the more you practice the stronger the establishment of the nerve connections of the body and the stronger the nerve connections the faster and stronger a changed behaviour is established (Eliasson, Aug 2009).

In contrast to Locke's atomistic theory, the Gestalt theorists suggest a holistic theory of learning, which says that whenever we observe or perceive something we directly get a quite clear picture and meaning of it rather than building up the meaning step by step. In the light of the Gestalt theory, Phillips & Soltis (2004) write:

> The learner must be familiar with the elements that constitute the problem and its solution, and the overall situation must be survey-able. The learner seems to mentally manipulate these meaningful elements until suddenly a mental connection is made between all of them (p. 35).

Phillips & Soltis also suggest that you need to be a little bit familiar with the different parts of the situation to be able to create a meaningful understanding of the phenomena; however, you can get an understanding of the situation almost directly by just seeing totally new phenomena. An explanation can be that there is a selective process going on when observing situations and absorbing the meaning. Culture is a key factor in this selective process, i.e. it acts as a filter in mediating between the sense and the phenomena. It means that if you observe a bulk of information in a new situation, you will not get all immediately into your mind, but only the portion that matches the domain of the dominating culture in the society where you live. For instance, if an Afghan sees something and at the same time a European observes the same, their perceptions of the situation will be different. This is not because the Afghan and the European observer possess different biological senses, but rather that they live in different societies with different cultures (Eliasson, 2009).

The Gestalt theorists partly agree with Plato or Locke in that humans have some kind of abilities inside them from birth, which help us to handle all information. Also these innate abilities are supplemented through the cultural filter later, i.e. we gradually get the cultural filter, as discussed above – this cultural filter does not come from our biological structure, but from the society. (ibid).

Constructivism (Jean Piaget):
The term constructivism comes from Piaget's theory of the child's cognitive structures or mental maps that are constructed in the child's brain as a response to the physical experiences that it gets through different stages of growth. Piaget thinks that a child starts reacting to the world, first by some very simple acts already at birth, such as crying, sucking etc and then develops its cognitive structures gradually by age into more and more complex activities. The basic of Piaget's theory is the four developmental stages that a child passes through, starting from the sensory motor stage from birth up to the second year of age, then to the preoperational stage (2 – 7 years), to the concrete operations stage (7 – 11 years) and finally, to the formal operations stage (11 – 15 years of age) (Phillips and Soltis, 2004).

Karlsson and Mansory (2003) write:

> Piaget's developmental theory is labelled "genetic epistemology": the physical world (governed by natural science and social conventions) is explored by the child in an interactive process resulting in adaptation. The interactive process (beyond the sensory-motor phase) is called representation, which makes outcomes of more abstract cognitive comprehension possible. Representations are constructs and used for testing experiences of the world; they occur as schemas that eventually become revised, incorporated, or in Piaget's words, assimilated. Exploration and testing force the child to make adjustments or as Piaget expresses it: accommodation of the representations occurs. The outcome is termed equilibrium, and gradually more and more abstract and general constructs are generated.

By 'adoption' Piaget means the process, through which awareness of the outside world is internalized. Also, he describes 'assimilation' as something first perceived in the outside world and then incorporated into the internal world, without changing the structure of that internal world And finally, 'accommodation' is by Piaget defined as the process where internal structure has to accommodate to the evidence with which it is confronted and thus adapt to it, which can be a difficult and painful process.

The development stages defined by Piaget in terms of ages are not exact and not the same in all children. For instance, the first stage may be two years in one child, while it will go beyond two years in another child and so on for the other stages as well. However, according to Piaget, the stages come in the same order or sequence in all children. Also, the stages shift gradually from physical activities (for instance, grabbing things in the first stage) to more and more mental activities (for instance, analytical thinking and abstract operations in the last stage) (Eliasson, 2009).

Cultural/historical theories (Vygotsky):
The learning theory of Vygotsky is a different model compared to theories that regard development as independent of education or consider development as promoted by education (Eliasson, Aug 2009).
As a response to these contradicting ideas, Vygotsky invented his model, called the Zone of Proximal/Potential Development (ZPD), which explains how a human being can learn with the help of another person (teacher, mentor, parents…) (ibid).Vygotsky's model can be illustrated in different ways, for example, by seeing a child's current ability in the core of a big circle surrounded by of zone of his potential to learn more if he is helped by an external person (ibid).

The Situated Learning theory
The idea of situated learning is one of the most natural ways of learning and transferring knowledge without which human beings cannot survive. Indeed, if this process was not in place then there was no development in the world. Human beings need to take knowledge from their precedents, further develop it and transfer it their successors. Therefore Lave's and Wenger's

theory of situated learning be categorized as a socio-cultural or cultural-historic process of learning. According to Lave and Wenger, learning is an integrated and inseparable part of social practice in our everyday life. Situated learning is about learning in a community of practice in a specific context. In a situation where one party has the skill and expertise and the other party want to gain the skill or expertise, there is a situation of apprenticeship. Apprenticeship can be formal where there is an agreement or contract between the master and the learners or informal where the learning process takes place very naturally such as between a parent and a child.

Lave and Wenger reject the theories of Locke, Piaget and the Gestalt philosophers and argue that learning is not acquired through different structures of the mind; instead, learning is a practice that takes place in a participatory framework in a special context. Learning is distributed among the co-participants not as a one-person-act. The master or expert does not teach the apprentice but the learning is transferred through observation, imitation and practice. The master may not even be able to teach, because he has a silent knowledge or expertise that has come to him by practicing through years of work and experience. This is a fundamental distinction to learning through intentional instruction or teaching (Eliasson, 2009).

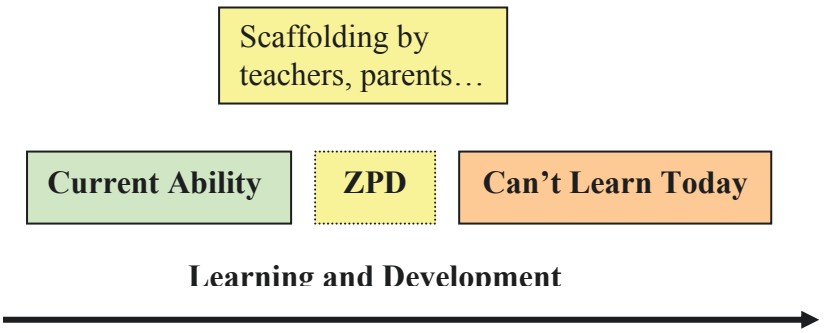
A case from my own experience

Let me bring an example of my two children as a case. I have been helping them as a tutor during their last three years in school and I have experienced them to have different levels of talent, intelligence, self initiatives and enthusiasm. My second daughter, Parwana is now 12 years old and a student of grade six of primary school. Around three years ago, when she entered the upper primary level (grade four), she started referring me to help her in her lessons and home works. Normally, as a father I always helped her, but from time to time I noticed that *I* was solving every question of hers without any participation from her side. In other words, she did nothing, but just brought questions in almost every subject, mostly about language (English, Dari and Pashto) and math and I generously solved the problems for her. Sometimes I asked her to do some of the questions (the easy ones) and only come up with the difficult ones for help, but it did not work and she always complained about her teachers, saying that she cannot learn from them and I accepted her excuses.

Last year, when my third daughter, Khatera, reached grade four and started with the same subjects as Parwana had, I noticed a big difference between the two. Khatera came with fewer questions; if she got 10 questions as homework she tried to do seven or eight by herself and then come up to me with two or three, often with some own options. Very interestingly, when I helped both at the same time, Khatera could answer some of the questions raised by Parwana (her elder sister). This big difference caused me to shake a bit my mind and question myself why it is like this. Both girls are children of the same parents, live in the same family and same environment, go to the same school and so on. Before trying to find the answer to this question I tried to immediately do something to tackle the problem. So I slowly started encouraging Parwana's participation in the process. She showed to be defensive and not ready to accept her shortfalls. Later on I started to be stronger in my stand in a way that I limited my help to solve only difficult problems for her and leave the easy ones as assignment to her with daily follow up. At the same time I started appraising her younger sister for her good job in front of her, in order to stimulate the older one by giving a good example of her younger sister. Finally, it started to work, so I gradually observed a change in Parwana's behaviour and I also intensified my rewards to her for every piece of work she did by herself. Now I have both daughters in almost the same level of referral to me for problems, but it took me a year to reach to this stage.

My case explained by a theory of learning

The analysis of this case with respect to the learning theories discussed above reminds me of the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky and the model that explains the zones of current ability and potential development where a child needs external support to develop. The model presented by Eliasson (2009) in which he explained that the length of rectangles represents the current ability of the child and that the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the Scaffolding differ from child to child.



In the case of my daughters we can easily see that the rectangle of Current Ability for Khatera has been longer than that for Parwana. Also, we can see that the scaffolding worked for Parwana and how much external help she needed in her ZPD, while Khatera needed less support in her ZPD.

Assessing the same case by using Piaget's constructive theory of learning would imply that Parwana maybe was very slow in developing her cognitive structure and passing the stages by the ages assumed in the theory and she needed longer time in each stage of development, while Khatera was very normal in the process.

Knowledge is not neutral (Apple)

Knowledge cannot be neutral since human being as holder of knowledge always keeps political, social, economic and religious ideas. Apple means that it is always someone's knowledge; it is always someone that interprets the phenomenon in the world. And that they do this based on some kind of perspective, some kind of standpoint and the knowledge about this phenomenon is subjective, not objective.

Apple applies the concept of hegemony. The concept of hegemony was formulated by the Italian philosopher, Antonio Gramsci about 100 years ago as _"the central, effective and dominant system of meaning, values, and action which are lived' (Apple, 2004, p. 4) or "the dominant culture" (ibid., p. 5).

Thus, the knowledge that we assume is the right knowledge is the hegemonic ideology. The reproduction of the hegemonic right knowledge is something that is self-strengthened – once something is accepted as the right knowledge, teachers are trained in that and at a later stage they teach students that as the right knowledge. And it has to be like this, because why should they teach something, which is not perceived as the right knowledge? So it is quite natural to reproduce this right knowledge. In this way the hegemonic knowledge is self strengthened.

However, Apple thinks that the world is dialectical; therefore he believes that we can rebuild or change the hegemonic structure and the dominant ideologies of the society but it is very a slow process.

Conclusion

By reading and discussing some of the different theories about learning and knowledge - although sometimes contradicting and to some extent confusing - it can be roughly concluded that:

1. Learning has been at the core of human beings' agenda or, in other words, learning and development (of any kind) have been the essential parts of creation and evolution. Putting aside the matter of which theories of learning have been based on or how much they are proven to be correct, the attention given to this aspect of human life is very important to count on.
2. Apparently, learning is independent of learning theories, i.e. even if no learning theories existed there would be learning and people would learn based on their either innate knowledge and inborn ability as described by Plato and Locke, learn and change their behaviour as expressed by the behaviourists or develop their cognitive ability as stated by the constructivists. BUT, it is very obvious that learning theories have guided researchers to explore new ideas, concepts and facts in the area of knowledge and learning, which eventually have caused experts in education to formulate more effective teaching methods.
3. I believe that apart from Plato's belief of innate knowledge all other philosophical theories and concepts have their own logic and one cannot totally accept or reject them. Every theory, if tested or applied in the way it is expressed or understood, can be proven to be true; however, with slight deviations.

17. REFLECTIONS ON SOME LEARNING THEORIES

By Mohammad Tahir Ismat

Introduction

As learning and teaching are the main and essential foundations in education, every member of a society starts learning from the first moment of his or her life after birth. There is always someone that provides opportunity of learning to the newborn child, parents or others in the environment, and later on classmates, teachers or other members of society. The process of learning and teaching has been in progress since the first day of human life on the globe. Types of learning and teaching differ, e.g. situated learning to informal, non-formal, formal, religious and western type of education in the world.

This assignment is briefly explaining the contemporary society and learning and teaching in contemporary society. It describes Apple's statement "knowledge is not neutral" with short reflections on different references from the course literature, as well as books in local languages and my personal experience with a background from the Afghan society.

A personal experience from my educational life is discussed and then analyzed through Piaget's theory "Four development stages of child's life" and Locke's theory "A child is born with an empty mind". Most of the discussions are based on information and my life experiences from the contemporary society of Afghanistan where there are special values and norms, which need to be respected and acted upon in case it's the intention is to reach full membership in the society.

Contemporary society

Contemporary or modern society is a society of today where some specific norms, values, culture and ideologies have been accepted and agreed upon as basic standards for socialization and full membership. These norms, values, culture and ideologies could be in written form and transmitted through teaching and learning or kept in minds of the core or dominant members of society and transmitted through observations, life experiences and stories from generation to generation (Eliasson, 2009).

As an essential foundation of life each the modern society has some specific rules for education of its young generation through which knowledge as well as values, norms, and rules of the society are transmitted to the junior members of the society.

There are some dominant members or groups in each modern society whose culture and ways of thinking is visibly or invisibly influencing the culture, norms, values and regulations of the society. These dominant members or groups could be religious leaders, political personalities or even illiterate landlords in some cases, at least in Afghanistan.

Education in Contemporary Society

Education is not only the main agent for transmitting values, norms, cultures and ideologies of a contemporary society from generation to generation but education and its institutions, e.g. schools is also playing the role of filter for entrance to full membership of the contemporary society for all newborn children, immigrants, oppressed groups and groups of asocial attitudes (Eliasson 2009)

Education could be of different types, e.g. formal or western type of education or informal and non-formal education; among these only formal types are fully supported and controlled under a pre-defined structure and curriculum by the state while non-formal

education e.g. is learning something from parents, community elders, a TV drama or an exhibition.

But on top of all what is mentioned above one should understand that every word or knowledge transmitted from one source to a learner has some kind of subjective message, which in most cases influences the attitude of learner, immediately or later on. Be it in form of textbooks or other books, through direct teaching or situated learning there is a always a special message (consciously or unconsciously) transmitted from the knowledge source to the learning body.

The curriculum field has its roots in the soil of social control; a curriculum defines the right knowledge and procedures for the young generation and can thus move the educational process towards intended economic, political or cultural destinations (Apple, 2004).

Another very important aspect of education in contemporary society is its role in the correlations between cultural, social and economic capital. Mostly, through one form of capital one can get other types; for instance, the parents with better financial status (economic capital) can spend and allocate lots of funds on education of their child, consequently, she gets education in highly ranked educational institutions and acquires a better and highly valuable degree which gives a particular role to her; thus, she gains cultural capital in her society. At the end, by having a high degree of education one can gain a particular status as a source of knowledge and information for other society members, which is a kind of social capital.

The association between society and education has different aspects. First of all the dominant economic, political and cultural ideologies in a society have their role in educational curriculum and thus education is a means of transmission of the ideologies of the dominant groups in society.

Secondly, and contradictory to the above, education plays a key role for introducing positive changes and development of a society; thus, education can change the dominant ideologies and relations, i.e. the structure of the society.

A third and very extremist opinion is that there is no association between education and society.

The fourth and a common opinion is that education and society have bilateral relations and have effects on each other. Education is the most important of all efforts to create relations among individuals and society (Mansory, 2004).

Apple's theory: knowledge is not neutral

Based on my personal experience of my education, I totally agree with Apple's statement that knowledge in not neutral. When I was a student of grade one (1980) during the Communist government, which was supported by former Soviet Union, all our lessons were circling around democracy, workers' and farmers' rights and propaganda against landlords and capitalist regimes of the world. Though the curriculum was not yet modified by the government the teachers changed the contents of the lessons and encouraged us towards political activities and slogans for support of the new regime. The teachers oriented us towards support of Communism through examples from the society; for example, why a landlord owns hundreds of hectares of cultivated land while others are living as tenants without rights of ownership on just a small portion of land.

When my family migrated to Pakistan I got admission in grade two in a school run by Associations of Afghan Mujaheddin (the holy soldiers). There we used to get examples of *Jihad* (the holy war), *Mujahed* (the holy soldier) and *Azadi* (freedom) in each lesson. Also the contents of textbooks, e.g. the alphabets of our national languages Pashto and Dari were taught in a way so that each example had the names *Jihad*, *Mujahed*, *Shahadat* (martyrdom), *Shaheed* (martyred) and *Azadi* (freedom). Only 50 % of the subjects taught in schools were from natural science, social science or literature the rest was religious studies, which very clearly included

messages of *Jihad* against the occupation of Russian troops on our country Afghanistan. This situation continued during the Taliban time as well.

Now when we have returned back to our motherland and a new curriculum has been developed with financial and ideological support of western countries, particularly the United States of America most of the contents in textbooks speak about peace, democracy, globalization, business and civil society while *Jihad* has been introduced as terrorism to the new generation and the students are encouraged to hate Jihad and move towards western type of civilization. Apple (2004) has described this situation:

> The claim to neutrality is important in this representation, not merely in social life in general, but in education in particular. We assume that our activity is neutral, that by not taking a political stance, we are being objective (p 7).

It has been stated that the school is an institution that reproduces the right and legitimate knowledge and transmits the right culture from generation to generation, but whose knowledge is the right knowledge to be reproduced in our schools and which culture is the right and legitimate culture to be transmitted through our schools in which we are serving as teachers, principals or owner in case a school is a private enterprise? Is it not the knowledge of the hegemonic group and is it not the culture of the hegemonic members of the contemporary society that is being reproduced and transmitted through our schools? The answer will be definitely yes.

The below quoted part of the book *Schools and Society* also confirms that knowledge is not neutral, even if it's transmitted through apparently neutral ways.

> When we consider knowledge, we assume that there are truths and that our educational systems are teaching that truths. The readings … suggest otherwise. Indeed, these readings suggest that the social construction of knowledge is very much a part of the process of education in society and that knowledge is what is created by those … in power, in society (Ballantine & Spade, 2008, p. 179).

Let me give you the example of the national hero of Afghanistan, the great Amanullah Khan who led the Afghan nation against the occupation of British troops in 1919 and got liberation for Afghanistan. He belonged to the Pashto majority, which was the dominant tribe of the Afghan society so he was recognized as a unique national hero of the country. While late Ahmad Shah Masood, a commander of a group of Mujaheddin during 1980 to 1992 in one district belonged to the Tajik minority was announced and recorded a national hero in the textbooks after his tribe came into power when the Taliban regime was overrun by American troops in 2001. Although the Pashto majority and other national minorities e.g. Uzbek, Hazara, Turkman and others do not accept Masood as national hero their children are studying his name in the textbooks as a great national hero since 2001 due to dominancy of Tajiks in the government.

> In essence jus as there is a relatively unequal distribution of economic capital in society, so too is there a similar distribution of cultural capital. In advanced industrial societies, schools are particularly important as distributors of this cultural capital, and they play a critical role in giving legitimacy to categories and forms of knowledge. The very fact that certain traditions and normative "contents" are construed as school knowledge is prima facie evidence of their perceived legitimacy (Apple 2004, p 42-43).

A personal experience of the "human reproduction process"

In 1983, I was around 10 years old and a student of grade 3 with my age. One day a few of my classmates were sitting around me chatting and discussing some different topics. Suddenly, one

of my classmates asked whether we knew how a child is born. One of the friends said, "I have no idea". I said "when a woman gets married she gives birth to children but I don't know why this is not the case before marriage" Sadique, who was around 13 years old said that a man and a woman get married and then children are born as a result of their intercourse. I and another classmate reacted very harshly and replied to our senior class fellow that we do not believe in this way of reproduction because a husband never intercourses his wife, it is not fair by a husband. We also questioned how it is possible that a woman gives birth to a child. We told Sadique that either have you observed such an interaction between a couple it your household or you are telling lie.

Our chatting finished with such harsh words and when the teacher came to the class in order to attend to his lesson Sadique told the teacher the whole story of our discussion on reproduction of children and asked him either to confirm what he (Sadique) had said or explain it in another way. Our teacher, named Mr. Gull Mohammad, very gently confirmed Sadique's version and told us that the same. But a few students, including myself, could not accommodate that into our minds; thus, we did not agree with our teacher and the other class fellows on the topic. Our respectable teacher very kindly told us that we would feel and accept it with time. The question of human reproduction remained un-replied with me. I thought it shameful to ask my parents or anyone else regarding reproduction of the children. In 1985, when I was student of grade five the lesson one day was about the categorisation of animals from reproduction point of view. Our teacher of natural science explained the topic and told that some animals are laying eggs while others are giving birth of children after intercourse between male and female sexes. The gentle teacher also showed some pictures of reproduction to us during the teaching. Fortunately, I was now convinced and could very easily agree with my teacher. My mind immediately recalled the discussion between me and my class fellows in grade 3 on the question how human beings are born. I immediately went to my ex-class fellow Sadique who in that time was studying in another private school and requested apology for my disagreement and for using harsh language to him on the topic of human reproduction when we were students of grade 3.

Analysis of the personal experience (human reproduction) through Piaget's theory of "Four Development Stages of Child's life"

In Piaget's theory a child passes four development stages, starting from birth (zero years) to 15 years of age. Piaget believed that a developing child was busy in constructing cognitive structures throughout his or her four developing stages (Phillips and Soltis, 2004).

Piaget's four developmental stages were described as below by Prof. Eliasson during his lectures for MAP students in 2009:

a- The sensori motor stage (birth to 2 years). In this stage a child is busy in coordinating its physical movements, e.g. grasping and moving things towards its mouth and following objects with its eyes. The child can make a scheme for such interactions with its surrounding environment.

b- The pre-operational stage (2 to 7 years). In this stage the child starts interiorizing its actions and makes a scheme for it's the actions it was performing upon its environment in order to be interrelated. A child needs a concrete objects in this stage and cannot conceptualize the matters.

c- The concrete operations stage (7 to 11 years). In this stage a child starts conceptualizing the operations it performs or observes in the environment. Logical structures are constructed in its mind during this period. Some basic mathematical calculations can for instance be performed by the child.

d- The formal operations stage (11 to 15 years). In this stage the logical structures of the mind of a child become closer to those of the adults. A young learner is able to solve problems, predict things and perform conceptual reasoning.

Through the third and fourth development stages of the constructivism theory of Piaget I can better analyse my personal experience of the question how human reproduction takes place. When I was in my third development stage I could conceptualize the situation but needed a concrete situation in front of me, which was not available at the moment. If I had observed the reproduction stages (from intercourse to child delivery) I would definitely had agreed with my classmate and my teacher. But at the stage four of development my mind structures had become nearly mature and I had observed some physical changes in my body so I was ready to easily accept that a human being is reproduced through some specific interaction between it's a woman and a man. Although there are critics on Piaget's theory of development stages I agree totally with him because I have personally observed modifications in myself from stage to stage as described by Piaget's theory of learning.

Analysis of the personal experience (human reproduction) through Locke's theory: "A child is born with an empty mind"

> Locke realized that the human infant is born with certain biologically preformed abilities, but these lie dormant. He was, of course, thinking about these matters long before the theory of evolution was developed, and he had no way to explain how the human species had come to acquire the various capacities and systems that it posses. But jus as the body was born with certain potentialities, so it was the mental powers or faculties that allow learning to take place, then are "wired in" - they are part of the biological equipment of the human species (Phillips & Soltis, 2004, p 13-14).

The newborn baby knows nothing but immediately starts gaining experience of its environment through its senses. The newborn baby starts observing shapes and colours, hearing sounds, tasting, touching and smelling things. The result is that simple ideas are recorded and memorized with the power of mind; the child will gradually combine simple ideas and make complex ones. The child also experiences some internal phenomena, for instance, concentration, love and anger. So with time a child experiences more interactions with the environment and accumulates more ideas, which make him or her capable to conceptualize complicated abstracts and think about them (Philips and Soltis 2004).

Seeing to my personal life experience of human reproduction as described above I can analyse it through Locke's theory, which he developed from Plato: "knowledge is not innate".

According to Locke a child is born with some basic capabilities e.g. sucking and crying and learns all the rest from experiences and interactions with the environment throughout his or her life and acquires simple ideas, which at the end are combined to complex ones.

If the knowledge of human reproduction was there in my mind from birth then I would of course have been convinced during my first debate with my class fellows and teacher. But on the contrary, I could not accommodate it in my mind immediately, only after a few years I was convinced when I had experienced different types of interactions with my environment and acquired new ideas, which to a large extent matches Locke's theory of knowledge acquisition through interactions and experiences with the environment.

Conclusion

Since long there is a discussion on knowledge, its essence, acquisition, transmission at different stages of life and different circumstances. We can conclude that it is knowledge that

differentiates human beings from other animals, it is knowledge that makes human beings responsible according to norms, values, regulations, social and cultural values, it is knowledge that makes a child aware of what is going to happen in the environment that will affect her life, it is knowledge that make a human being remember her past, learn from lessons and predict her future.

It does not matter if knowledge is innate as Plato thinks or acquired from experiences and interactions with environment as Locke and behaviourists think but it is indeed an essential need for humans to be a normal and constructive member of the society.

Discussing the, cultural, economic and ideological dominancy by certain groups of contemporary society over curriculum, contents of textbooks and types of the knowledge, i.e. on learning and teaching we can agree with Michael W. Apple statement that knowledge is not neutral up to a large extent. However, it should not discourage us in the struggle to make education neutral through teaching and textbook contents and not allow the dominant groups to expropriate the essential message of education, which is to transmit commonly agreed norms, values, cultures and ideologies to coming generations.

However, we realize that no contemporary society can claim the existence of complete common ideologies and consensus of the society members from dominant to oppressed groups. Most educational theorists agree with Apple regarding the non-neutrality of education. The knowledge and messages are transmitted by a specific group of the society from generation to generation through the process of teaching and learning.

18. LEARNING THEORIES AND THEIR APPLICATIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

Mohammad Zaher Akbar

Introduction

A variety of learning theories have been presented over the past decades and centuries. They discuss various purposes of education, and different outcomes and results. Some aim at changing a visible behaviour of the learner and others aim at changing cognitive structures of the human mind. Learning theorists and educators are divided on issues such as processes of learning and how instruction should be designed.

Two learning theories

Constructivism

Constructivism is a learning theory, which is based on the idea that we create our understanding of the world by reflecting on our own knowledge and experiences (Philips & Soltis, 2003). The learners are central in the learning process. According to this theory every individual generates his own mental models and adjusts the mental models to accommodate new experiences. Learning is affected by personal experiences, the surrounding environment, the passage of time and the mental maturity of the learner (Ozer, 2004). The teacher is a facilitator and a guide, who plans, organises and provides a direction to the students.

Behaviourism

Behaviourism is a learning theory that focuses on objectively observable and visible behaviour and how new behaviour is acquired rather than how new knowledge obtained. Behaviourism does not deal with cognitive changes that happen in the mind of learners. According to this theory students' responses to environmental stimuli shape their behaviours. Rewards and punishment are the main elements that modify students' behaviours in the classroom (Philips & Soltis, 2003). The teacher's role is to determine the desired behaviour and through encouragement and reinforcement ensure the required behaviours (Philips & Soltis, 2003).

A personal experience

It was my second university semester. I was in an English language class. The teacher had divided the class into several groups, each with three students, and he gave each group a chapter of the textbook to read and to find new, unfamiliar words in the text. First, we had to practice, pronounce and repeat the words several times and then use the words in sentences. The teacher was moving around in the classroom, telling the students that this was the best way to learn English. He advised us and provided assistance if needed or requested. Then a representative from each group was asked to come up to the front of the class and present their elaborated sentences with the new words. The other students listened and were asked to write down questions and comments and read these at the end of the presentations. Every student in the class had the right to comment, ask questions and give feedback on the sentences and assess whether the words were applied correctly and thus accepted or wrong and then rejected or modified. The students and the teacher discussed all the groups' work in an open environment. Every group had to justify and prove why its sentences were correct and try to find mistakes made by other groups. Finally, the students and the teacher together reached a conclusion, a final agreement on how to use the word in the best possible and suitable way.

Analysing the above case in the light of two learning theories

From the constructivist point of view:

Each group made own sentences by using new/unfamiliar words. They were engaged in a process of constructing their own knowledge and used their own previous experiences to build new knowledge and experiences. The social constructivists believe the classroom to be a social unit in which students explore ideas and build their own knowledge (Fears, 2008). The students made the inquiry themselves and they were encouraged to give ideas, opinions and feedback.

The students developed new ideas, innovations and creativity by constructing own sentences. Their prior knowledge and experience constitute the main part of the activity. They worked as independent learners with limited support from the teacher. The task was carried out in order to encourage students to create their own meanings from the text.

My case can be seen as an example of Jean Piaget's notion of learning as individually constructed. Every group was given a specific assignment to accomplish and was allowed to solve the problem in a collaborative way, which motivated them and increased their learning. According to Vygotsky, when students are provided help from teachers and peers their development and intelligence are fostered while Piaget insists that students should be left alone and work alone to develop understanding and construct knowledge (Wood, 2004). Piaget's concept of action upon object, in order to know the objects (Philips, & Soltis, 2003) is also evident in this case: the students work with words and try to make sentences with every single word and use the new vocabulary in their own language.

Students' activities, such as finding the new words, pronouncing them and using them in sentences and achieving this assignment with only little help from the teacher is also a good indicator and example of scaffolding and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Collaborative learning and learning from adults and peers in Vygotsky's social constructivist theory have a visible presence here. Interaction and collaboration among learners is considered central in the learning process according to Vygotsky.

To build schemas and perform those in the actual environment imply assimilation and accommodation, i.e. fitting new information into existing schemas or altering/creating schemas in response to new information to achieve equilibrium (Philips & Soltis, 2003) are crucial elements of Piaget's theory. The teacher - by various activities – seeks to establish the processes of assimilation and accommodation in the students when they learn.

The outcomes of learning in this theory are the learners' own products, not tests or quizzes (Ozer, 2004). Students, by constructing their own text, had constructed their own products. Constructivism is linked with student centred learning (active learning) in which the teacher plays a supportive role. In the above case we see the teacher providing help based on actual needs. The teacher is a support pillar for students to lean on when they are in need, but the main responsibility rests with the students. The students are exposed to discussions, research and collaboration, project groups and the teacher acts as a facilitator and a guide who plans, organises and provides direction to the students.

Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that learning happens in the context and culture in which it occurs as situated learning; learners are involved in a practice to acquire certain behaviours. In the above case, students are part of the context and involved in a practice, which embodies the required behaviour, i.e. using a new word.

From the behaviourist point of view:

Rehearsal or repetition, the main characteristic of behaviourism, is also found in the above case. Students were requested to repeat the new words several times in order to pronounce them correctly and at the same time memorize them. Thorndike explains why repetition is necessary: When doing something new, nerve pathways are established. By practicing the behaviour the stronger the nerve connections will be and the stronger the "learned" behaviour will be (Phillips & Soltis, 2004). To read aloud in front of the classroom could be regarded as a reward for students and consequently they became motivated by their presentation.

Reading, pronouncing and using the words in sentences are overt and visible acts that can be observed and measured, an important matter for the behaviourists. The activity gives students the opportunity to practice correct behaviour and write correct sentences. Through this practice students develop reading, writing and pronouncing skills. Working in groups promotes and improves collaboration amongst students and leads to positive and effective social interaction with different members of the small society that is constituted by the classroom.

Skinner states that rewards and praise play important roles in learning. Thorndike believed that positive response stimulation motivates a student to learn easily and effectively. Thorndike's theory, which indicates that the more the behaviour is practiced and repeated the stronger it will be learned is obvious in the above case: students were rewarded and praised by the teacher so that they wanted to present their production in the class and take active part in class discussions. The teacher's positive reinforcement when they presented their findings and his feedback during the group work are features of behaviourism.

Reflection on Apple's statement: "Knowledge is not neutral"

Since long there is a debate among educationists, philosophers and sociologists regarding the function, role and outcome of education. Some believe that education leads to harmony and cohesion in the society while others consider education as a crucial factor in enhancing stratification and inequality in the society.

Michael W. Apple is interested in how political, economic and other forms of power affect education and knowledge. He is discussing politics and education and the relationship between culture and power in education. According to Apple, the curriculum is not just a simple body of knowledge; it is selected and prescribed by some dominant groups who want to legitimize and guarantee that their interests, values and norms are represented.

Educationists focus on the economic role of education, i.e. schooling for the labour market, future incomes, social mobility and the selection of students for continued education. Apple considers this to be a one-sided picture of the role of schools and education and argues for the need to incorporate cultural and ideological aspects. He claimed that education is not neutral (Apple, 2004).

Knowledge and symbols in educational institutions are intimately related to the social and cultural control in a society. The knowledge taught in schools is someone's knowledge and represents a kind of a cultural capital, which reflects the perspectives of some powerful segments of the society (ibid.).

Apple further argues that the school as education provider is designed and controlled by dominant groups or individuals in the society, in order to transfer their specific culture and values. The role of education is to preserve, maintain and keep their values alive. Educational institutions offer different education to different groups of society and thereby contribute to the stratification of the society. Education assists the dominant individuals to maintain their dominant position in the society. Schools are influenced by the outside world, the political, economic and social world, and function as cultural and ideological agents, which promote and create the hegemony of specific individuals in the society (ibid.).

Wright (2006) explains Apple's notion: The school acts as a reproducer of economic, social and cultural capitals, which leads to inequality and paves the way for special group domination. The school is manipulated by a small number of powerful members of the society.

Apple states that educationalists are not unbiased. They are, as all human beings, influenced and controlled by dominant social and political trends; consequently, the knowledge produced by educationalists is affected by prevailing social, ideological and economic values and beliefs embedded in the system and contents of education. Teaching in schools is affected

or influenced, regardless of what we want or realize. Dominant cultures and values influence the contents of education, the curriculum, and eventually these values penetrate into all social structures of the society.

The Conflict theory

The conflict theory advocates and gives strength to Apple's statements. According to the conflict theory, originally launched by Marx, every social institution, including the school, is installed by certain groups and organizations in order to serve their aims and intentions. The role of the educational system is to spread inequality in the society, not equality. Dominant groups impose their will on subordinate groups through different means such as economic, political, cultural and military power. Those with power legitimize inequality and unequal distribution of positions, materials and cultural goods, which in turn leads to conflicts in the society. The school is exemplified as a battlefield, where everyone fights against each other in order to ensure their own interests and benefits. According to conflict theorists the school organisation is similar to the organisation of the society and, those who organise and control the society control the school as well. Cultural reproduction and cultural capital are concepts developed by the conflict theorists. School passes to the student a special identity and places him in a specific future position of the society

There is a hidden curriculum that teaches and prepares every individual student- based on his background and social status - to play his role in the society in the best way. If the student is from the lower classes s/he should be taught obedience and if s/he belongs to the higher classes s/he should learn how to lead. Schools meets the social needs of the society and fits the students into their respective social and economic order and trains them to get a the personality and character that are required for his particular position.

Conclusion

The theories of education are important tools and have great impact on the way teachers teach and students learn in the classrooms. Teachers employ these theories and tools in their daily teaching. Learning theories design and direct the behaviours and activities. Teachers try to achieve and obtain the aims and objectives set by national curricula and policies.

Constructivism and behaviourism are two dominant theories in today's classrooms. Both offer some assistance and provide applicable principles to teachers. Every teacher, dependent on the subject, topic and teaching environment, can chose and utilize one of them or use them together. At the same time the teacher should consider the type of society, in which he is teaching, the aims and purposes and changes the society wants from the educational institutions.

In a comprehensive perspective most theorists mean that the relation between the individual level and the society/cultural level is dialectical. It means that culture influences the individual and the individual influences, or construct, the culture.

19. ISLAMIC EDUCATION: A COMPARISON OF MOE PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Sherzoi Ahmad Jawid

Introduction

Islam is the core religion of most Afghan people. According to the Constitution of Afghanistan all schools in Afghanistan have to teach different Islamic subjects to students but for those who want to study Islamic subjects in more depth, there are different Islamic schools, as *madrasa* (Islamic schools, grades 7-12), *Dar-ul-Heffaz* (school for memorizing of Holy Quran) and *Dar-ul-Ulums* (Institutes of Islamic Education, grades 13 – 14); all are supported by the Department of Islamic Education within the Ministry of Education.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for providing Islamic Education from grade 7 to 14 for all children and youth of Afghanistan who wish to enrol. Not only has the general education of the Afghan education system but also the Islamic education system been deeply affected by the long-lasting conflict and repressive regimes over the past three decades. The core values transmitted via the education curriculum were repeatedly changed with the establishment of each new regime. While Taliban was in power (1996-2001) the number formal *madrasas* and *Dar-ul-Heffaz*s increased to 1,000 with more than 100,000 students attending (MoE, 2007) but the new government when settled in 2002 due to funding constraints only supported the *madrasas, which had* been formally approved and operational before 1996.

For the enhancement of Islamic education along with general education the Ministry of Education endorsed a National Education Strategic Plan for Afghanistan1385-1389/2006 – 2010 (NESP 1) and a National Education Strategic Plan for Afghanistan 1389-1393/2010-2014 (NESP 2)

This paper briefly describes how Islamic Education is planned in MoE strategic planning documents, what the differences over time are, what the explanation is for some differences and also discusses women's rights to Islamic education and compares Islamic education in Indonesia, Morocco and the Philippines with Afghanistan.

The Curriculum Framework, The NESPs and Globalisation

Curriculum provisions as stated by the Ministry of Education (2003) are extremely important in that they guide people in acquiring and developing sound knowledge and appropriate skills in order to engage in quality work and live fulfilled lives.

During the three decades of war, the education system in Afghanistan was severely affected and impaired, including is the curriculum, which lost in unity and balance as stated by the Ministry of Education (2003): "curriculum design/organization has suffered, and appropriate links between different education domains, as well as between different grades, education stages and types of school were no longer possible. In consequence, the quality and efficiency of education in Afghanistan has declined" (p.14). To solve the problem, the Ministry of Education recently has developed and implemented a new curriculum for all grades and all types of schools. In the preparation process of the curriculum development education policy statements of the Government were of major importance and represented a first prerequisite (MoE, 2003). In order to reshape the curriculum in compliance with Government policy the Ministry of Education conducted a thorough needs analysis, followed by the planning of comprehensive curriculum activities. These included the development of a Curriculum Framework, as well as syllabi and textbooks according to contemporary needs and opportunities (ibid).

Some signs of globalization are visible in the Curriculum Framework (CF), for example that equal education opportunities have to be provided for all Afghan citizens: "By the completion of schooling cycles, when young people enter the world of work, as a result of the implementation of the new curriculum, they will be good Muslims, civilized human beings and true, self-reliant Afghans" (p.11). However, other interrelated issues of globalization in regards to education such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) are missing in the Afghan curriculum framework.

Our society is facing some challenges in an increasingly interdependent world as mentioned by Ministry of Education (2003): "new technologies, new labour market trends, global competition in the sector of goods and services, new trends in knowledge, culture and education" (p. 13). It is added that in order to support people to deal successfully with these challenges and play an active role in global processes, in all areas of social, cultural and economic life, education must continue to play a major role (ibid). Curriculum development is thought of as being the backbone of overall education reforms because it has comprehensive consequences for improving quality and equity in the education system.

Women's right to education

Comparing the reading of the CF, NESP 1 and NESP 2 it can be stated that there are many sentences related to women's education in these documents. For instance, according to NESP 1 more than 5.4 million children are enrolled in schools today, nearly 35 % of them are girls, compared to a little more than one million children 5 years ago, out of which only few were girls. It is also stated that up to 90 % of rural women are illiterate. To decrease these rates it is planned that by 2014 the net enrolment rate for girls and boys in primary grades will be at least 60 and 75 %, respectively. Moreover, based on NESP-2 girls' will have equal access to all types of educational facilities of the same quality as boys from primary school to Teacher Training College.

Education should contribute to the restoration of the Afghan society so the education policy in Afghanistan is focusing on a) how to provide equal opportunities for all students; and b) how to facilitate equal education opportunities for both males and females from urban as well as rural areas (Ministry of Education, 2003). There is a need to increase the number of female teachers in remote and underserved areas because parents do not let their daughters go to school unless there are female teachers. However, the Ministry of Education (2007) took this into consideration and has planned that by 1389 (2010) they will educate 17,000 new teachers of whom at least 40 % will be women, a measure that will help to increase girls' enrolment.

In general, it seems to be progress in regards to women's rights to education. However, there are still many challenges for women's education in Afghanistan. For instance, security, shortage of the female teachers, distance to schools and unprotected learning environment e.g. lack of school building and lack of surrounding wall.

Islamic education in Afghanistan

There are two types of education in Afghanistan: Islamic Education and Contemporary or Western Type of Education, the first consists of instruction of Islam as religion and has a longer history in Afghanistan than the Contemporary Education, which undertakes contemporary or modern knowledge and general information. MoE (2007) claims "the strategic objective of the Ministry is to make quality Islamic education accessible to boys and girls across the country" (p. 18). In 2007 the number of students of Islamic Education reached 91,000 (6,916 were girls or approximately 8 per cent of the total enrolment) and in 2008 the students were approximately 120,000 – a level that is unprecedented in the country (see Table 1). Also based on the data of MoE, in 1386/2007 3,300 students graduated from grades 12 and 14 of Islamic *madrasas*; about 2 per cent of these were girls.

Table 19:2 Number of Islamic Schools, Students and Teachers by Region.

		Students			Teachers			
Region	**Schools**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**	**S/T ratio**
East	69	13,996	1,551	15,547	490	2	492	32
Central	40	11,440	2,074	13,514	518	21	539	25
Northeast	56	9,578	584	10,162	390	11	401	25
West	25	5,358	650	6,008	150	13	163	37
Southeast	39	5,156	215	5,371	266	-	266	20
Nortwest	27	3,663	122	3,785	147	5	152	25
Kabul	11	2,137		2,137	16	-	16	134
South	6	1,561		1,561	44	1	45	35
Central	0					-		
Highlands	2	278	165	443	5	-	5	89
Total	**275**	**53,167**	**5,361**	**58,528**	**2,026**	**53**	**2,079**	**28**

Source: MoE educational statistics cited in NESP (2007. p. 38)

Before 1992 there were, according to MoE (2007), 13 religious *madrasas* and *Da-rul-Heffazs* in Afghanistan and during the years 1992 to 1996 the number of *madrasas* and *Da-rul-Heffazs* increased to 314. Under the Taliban regime the number of informal Islamic schools further increased. During the present government (of president Hamid Karzai) 41 *Dar-ul-Ulums*, 369 *madrasas*, 84 *Dar-ul-Heffaz* and 17 outreach schools had been established by 1387/2008; thus the number of Islamic Education institutes increased to 511 with more than 106,000 students - compared to 58,000 in 1385/2006. By establishing 41 D*ar –ul-Ulums* across the country there is now at least one *Dar-ul-Ulum* in each province. In order to facilitate access to officially supported Islamic education 40 *madrasas* were established in 2007 and 128 in 2008 in districts that were previously without *madrasas.*

And to further increasing the number of students the MoE (2010) has planned to by the year 1393/2014 establish 280 new Islamic schools, 77 new *Dar-ul-Heffaz*, 32 new *Dar-ul-Ulums* for females in 32 provinces and to enrol 190,000 students in Islamic schools and additionally 10,000 students in grades 13-14 of *Dar-ul-Ulums.* Moreover, it is planned to encourage the private sector, national business people, and partner institutions to provide assistance for the development of Islamic Education.

The Ministry has also planned to establish one dormitory in each of the 34 provinces and one dormitory for *Kuchi* students to facilitate access to Islamic Education for children who are living in districts without *madrasas*. The dormitory facilities will provide for 7,470 students of Islamic Education *madrasas*.

The involvement and participation of the private sector in education, including Islamic Education, is part of the Ministry's strategy for implementation of the National Education Strategic Plan. Therefore, the Ministry has also developed regulations for certification of students of private and crossborder *madrasas*. Beside the community run Madrasas, in 2006, the private sector had established 10 *madrasas* (of the same type as government madrasas) in Herat, Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif and Nangarhar provinces –examples of the rapid expansion of Islamic Education in the country.

Teachers

According to the Ministry's guidelines, graduates of grade 14 should teach grade 7 – 9 students in *madrasas* and graduates with bachelor degrees should teach grade 10 – 12 students in *madrasas*. However, only 26 per cent of existing teachers have graduated from Grade 14 or

higher (see Table 2). Some teachers have also taught in neighbouring countries and are therefore not familiar with the curriculum in Afghanistan.

Table 3: Teacher's Qualifications by Number and Percentage

Teacher Qualifications	**Number**	**% of total**
Baccalaureate / grade12	1,181	53
Grade 14	461	21
Bachelor's degree	103	5
Private education	483	22
Total	**2,228**	**100**

Source: MoE educational statistics cited in NESP (2007. p. 39)

The Islamic Education Department statistics show that the number of teachers of Islamic Education has increased from 2,079 in 2005 to 4,144 in 2008 (see Table 1). The Islamic Education system still faces a lack of qualified teachers. In order to solve this problem the Islamic Education Department has recruited 750 new teachers in 2008. Also, to improve the academic and methodological knowledge of the teachers the Ministry awarded scholarships to 173 teachers to Libya, Kuwait, Egypt and Iran to pursue their studies. Also, one of the main goals of *Dar-ul-Ulums* is to train teachers for *Madrasas*. Therefore, the Ministry has established at least one *Dar-ul-Ulums* in each province in order to provide professional teachers for *madrasas*.

Curriculum

Quality curriculum and textbooks are two main components of any education system. These components play an important role in providing quality education. Based on MoE (2007), Islamic Education Department has revised the curriculum several times but admit that it does not match the present-day needs of students and the Afghan society. For example, there is a great deal of repetition within the syllabi and the curriculum, which makes it difficult for students of Islamic education to transfer to General Education if they desire.

According MoE (2010), the curriculum of the Islamic Education system is being revised to as also include content of the general education curriculum. In addition to inclusion of general education subjects the new curriculum of Islamic Education is based on two formal religious sects (*Hanafi and Jafari*) in Afghanistan, which is thought to improve the quality of Islamic education in the country.

The new curriculum framework and syllabi for grades 7-14 of Islamic schools as well as the teachers' guides have been completed by Islamic experts through a national consultative process in 1386/2007. Beside the religious subjects, the new curriculum includes mathematics, science, foreign languages and computer skills. Teaching of these added subjects is another challenge since teachers of Islamic education do not have sufficient knowledge to teach these subjects. However, MoE (2010) admits that "the process of developing the curriculum and learning materials for education faces many challenges including a shortage of experts to develop Islamic textbooks; inadequate budget for printing, purchasing and distributing textbooks; and lengthy and slow procurement procedures" (p. 34).

Management

In order to provide quality Islamic Education, the MoE (2007) has planned, consistent with the intention to devolve responsibility for operations, expenditures, planning and management, that *madrasa* staff will be included in training programs on management issues. In addition, the

system of monitoring, evaluation and supervision of teachers' performance, which is inactive in Islamic schools, is planned to be reinstituted.

The Ministry has also in 1386/2007 established the National Council for Islamic Education with the duty to regulate and revise the Islamic Education system, monitor activities and the implementation of Islamic Education programs. The content of Islamic Education has always been controversial in Afghanistan. Therefore, the Ministry has consulted with religious leaders, the *Ulama* (religious scholars) and other social leaders to regulate the Islamic Education system on the basis of a national consensus, which is essential for success of the Ministry's Islamic Education system.

The Ministry has developed a question-bank to evaluate students and graduates from crossborder *madrasas* to determine their educational levels. They will be awarded formal Islamic certificates after their educational level has been determined.

As with all other teachers, the Ministry will open bank accounts for the Islamic Education staff to eliminate corruption with regard to the payment of salaries and to ensure that staff is paid on a timely basis.

In order to improve the administrative capacity of the central and provincial Islamic Education staff and to fulfil the objective of devolution of responsibility for planning and management of operating expenditures the Department has conducted methodological workshops in all 34 provinces for the heads of Islamic Education Departments and other provincial representatives.

Islamic education in Indonesia

Indonesia is a Muslim country where there is a bigger Muslim population than in any other Islamic country in the world. There are state and private schools in Indonesia, like in Afghanistan, but with different names. For instance, *Pesantren*, *Madrasas* and *Sekolah* are three types of institutions where Indonesian students are achieving Islamic education..

Sekolah, which is also called public or private school is "paralleled by the mostly organized *Madrasah* system, which was championed by *Muhammadiyah* and the modernist movement in the early twentieth century" (Pohl, 2006 p. 397) Students of these two institutions are allowed to continue their education in institutes of higher education while those who study in *Pesantren* are not allowed to take admission into institutes of higher education. In Indonesia most of the *Madrasas* are applying a government curriculum, which consists of 70 per cent secular and 30 per cent Islamic subjects (ibid). *Pesantren*, as opposed to *madrasas* operate as Islamic boarding schools and provide private, nonformal (religious) education and cannot issue state recognized certificates for the students.

By comparing the Curriculum Framework of Afghanistan, it is obvious that there are some similarities in the education of Afghanistan and Indonesia. First, in Indonesia as in Afghanistan Islamic education is a compulsory part in the curriculum of public schools in addition to *madrasas* for those who want to get specialization in Islamic subjects. Second, there are some non-formal *madrasas* and schools in both countries, such as Mosque schools in Afghanistan and *Pasantren* in Indonesia.

There also some differences in the education systems of Afghanistan and Indonesia. For instance, the central government pays all costs of education, particularly up to grade 9, in Afghanistan while in Indonesia political parties have taken the responsibility for costs of a huge number of schools, *Madrasas* as well as universities.. For instance, in Indonesia there is a political party by the name of *Mohammadiya* that supports 30 university campuses and there is another political party by the name of *Nahdlatul Ulama* with whom a lot of *Pesantrens* are affiliated. But in the documents of the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan there is no role for political parties in the implementation of the Afghan education system. Instead of political parties, communities run madrasas are and were common.

Islamic education in Morocco

There are different types of Islamic schools in Morocco; one is called *msid*, another *kutab* and a third type is the *madrasa.* The teacher is called *fqih* and he is lodged and fed by community members (Boyle, 2004). In the *msid* students memorize the Holy Quran. There are many similarities between the *msid* and the *masjid* (mosque) school of Afghanistan. By replacing *fqih* with *mullah* the following description of the *msid* is as valid for the Afghan *masjid* school:

> In *msid, fqih*is paid by the community or parents of students, no specific curriculum is applied, no limit of age and grades are considered, students are seated on the floor around the *fqih*,still accepts corporal punishment as disciplining technique, serves students of varying ages in group classes, utilizes a good deal of one-on-one coaching as an instructional technique, utilizes peer tutoring among students, with older children helping out and quizzing the younger ones as an instructional technique, fosters a sort of master/ apprentice relationship between the *fqih* and the student over time, allows students to progress new lesson by memorizing the old one (Boyle, 2004, p. 71).

There are some differences between *msid* and *masjid* schools. For instance, in the *masjid* school not only memorization but also learning from other Islamic books happen while in the *msid* students memorize only the Holy Quran.

In the kutab, another type of traditional Quranic school financed by local communities, NGOs and the government department of education, children of a specific age group (3-6 years) are studying. The *Kutab* school of education is accepted as pre-primary school for public schools and *Madrasas*. On top of memorization of some chapters of the Holy Quran, *Kutab* schools have specific subjects, including secular ones, which are taught under a particular timetable. Public and private schools are the third type of schools in Morocco where Islamic subjects are studied beside the secular ones (Boyle, 2004). When comparing *Kutab*s with Islamic schools in Afghanistan there are some similarities with the formal *madrasa* where students are taught not only Islamic subjects but also other subjects as math, chemistry, and physics, the state support, and regulations from the Ministry of Education. However, the age group is very different.

Islamic education in Southern Philippines

The Philippines is a country that for 400 years was colonially dominated by Spain and later by the United States. There was a clash between the Christian majority and Muslim minority. Education and education policies were important issues in this conflict. Islamic education in one form or another was introduced into the Philippines along with Islam itself as early as the fourteenth century. From the twentieth century there were schools by the name of *pandita* schools where a small group of boys was studying Islam under the tutelage of a local learned Muslim (Milligan, 2006).

"Spanish and American Colonization of the Philippines not only highlighted the Muslim-Christian dichotomy as a cultural and religious divide; it also led to the development of two parallel systems of education: one ostensibly secular but Christian-influenced and government-controlled and the other Islamic and largely outside government control" (ibid, p. 413).

The political decentralization in general and educational decentralization in particular in Southern Philippines have a since long been a topic of policy debate. For Muslims, decentralization meant Islamization. Muslims in this country wanted to have Islamic content and values into the curricula of public schools (Milligan, 2006). The Islamic Education has experienced many changes in the Southern Philippines. Disputes with Christians on the contents of the national curriculum where Islam was not incorporated as religion in the textbooks of formal public schools funded by central administration. Most Muslim parents sent

their children to secular public schools founded by local educational authorities, and where certificates were recognized by the central administration. But the Muslim parents in Mindanao did not want their children to get this education since it had nothing in curriculum as regard to Islam. After some time the government understood that Islam should be included in curriculum at least in places where Muslims are the majority and thus, local educational authorities and local communities have established formal educational institutes, which include teaching about Islam (ibid). As Muslims are a minority in Philippines, its education cannot be compared with Afghanistan where Muslims are a majority, but regarding the curriculum, Afghanistan has also experienced many changes in curriculum during different regimes.

Conclusion

The Ministry of Education in Afghanistan has done much in regard to Islamic education, for example, the National Education Strategic Plans . Both NESPs include overall goal, overall strategy, objectives, priority program components and targets predicted to be achieved.

Women's rights to Islamic education are considered in both NESPs but in the first one it is not clearly stated while in NESP 2 it is planned to extend Islamic Education for females. The Afghan education system is improving day by day. The Ministry of Education (2010) hopes that every Afghan child should have access to quality basic education by the year 2020. However, it seems too ambitious and hard to achieve.

20. THE USE OF NEW TEXTBOOKS: CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS AND TEACHER INTERVIEWS

Husnia Tareen

Introduction

The primary education curriculum has changed several times the last decades in Afghanistan, from the pre-war government to the Communist rule in the 1980s, to the Mujaheddin government to the Taliban regime and up to now (Karlsson and Mansory, 2007).

The contents of textbooks are often a disputed issue, so also in Afghanistan. Several books have been revised repeatedly. According to the new curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2003) textbooks have been produced. From 2008new textbooks in all primary school subjects including guidelines or instructions to the teachers on how to use them have been distributed to schools.

The National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) (MoE, 2007) mentions that the new teacher education curriculum for primary level "will also incorporate elements of modern pedagogical methods" (p. 59). The Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 2003) argues for the need of raining the professional standards of teaching in schools and for a more student-centred approach to teaching. The quality of schooling in Afghanistan is affected by more than two decades of war, which has resulted in a shortage of qualified teachers and therefore many unprofessional teachers have been employed. Both the academic and the pedagogical content of the teacher training programmes have been neglected and the transformation of the curriculum into daily classroom experience has become a major challenge.

Objective:

To explore teachers' views and use of the new language textbooks.

Research questions:

- What is the idea of teachers about the advantages and disadvantages of new textbooks?
- How do teachers use new textbooks?
- Do teachers teach according to the guidelines/instructions?
- What do teachers think about the instructions in the new textbooks?
- What is the difference between trained and untrained teachers when it comes to in using the textbook instructions?
- What are the differences between male and female teachers' use of the textbook instructions??

METHODS

Two methods for data collection have been used: classroom observations and teacher interviews. Data was collected in ten language classes of grade 4:

- 2 girl classes taught by female teachers;
- 2 mixed classes taught by female teachers;
- 2 boy classes taught by female teachers;
- 2 boy classes taught by male teachers;
- 2 mixed classes taught by male teachers.

The teachers used the new Dari textbook. The classes were in different schools in Kabul city. The teachers were informed that the study was carried out by a postgraduate student who practised research methods. The teachers' names were not asked for.

In advance, I had prepared myself by reading the Dari language textbook for grade 4, including the lesson instructions, in particular the lesson that I was going to observe. When in class I filled in the observation form and took notes on things, which I found important. After the class observation I interviewed the respective teacher and used an interview form with semi-structured and open questions. In addition I wrote down things, which I thought could be important for the study. When I had finished the collection, I coded my data.

FINDINGS

The classroom observations and the teacher interviews are here discussed separately. Half of the teachers had attended training courses about the new textbooks. In general, they thought that the training was very useful but the time was too short.

The interviews

Advantages and disadvantages of new textbooks

All teachers said that the quality of the new textbooks is better compared to the old books. They mentioned that the layout, the colourful illustrations and the font of the text are good and more attractive to the students. Teachers also expressed some negative points of the new textbooks, for example:

- The new textbooks are too voluminous
- The language is often too difficult and is not on students' level For instance, there are many poems, which are difficult for children to read and understand considering that some of the students cannot even write and read their own names.
- Each lesson in the textbook starts with an objective, which was found confusing.
- The instructions cannot be carried out due to shortage of time and too big classes. In particular, group work is impossible.

The instructions

Eight out of ten teachers said that they followed the lesson instructions of the guidelines but according to my observations none of them did so completely. Mostly, they taught by using their own methods. Two of the teachers declared that they never used the instructions; as reasons they mentioned the shortage of time, the big class size and the uselessness of the instructions.

The classroom observations

The classroom observation form had 28 questions and each one had 4 options, which were coded: 1= No; 2=No, not much; 3= Yes, to some extent; and 4= Yes.

YES answers

For several observation items I could fill in YES for all the teachers: see table 1.

Table 1: YES-answers by all teachers

1	5	8	9	10	22	26	27	28
Did the teacher introduce topic and objective of the lesson?	Did students read or work individually?	Were students involved in discussion?	Did the students perform any role-play?	Was the teacher kind to the students?	Were students encouraged to provide ideas and suggestions?	Did the teacher give homework?	Was the teacher's language on children's level?	Did the teacher use students' names when asking questions?

All the teachers introduced the topic and the objective of the lesson; however, I found that some of them did not know the meaning of the topic or the objective. They did not explain it but just read it for students.

Unfortunately, our teachers do not know the meaning of child centred learning. In some of the classes, which I observed, the teachers asked the students, especially those in the first row to read the text. In six out of ten classes, students read the text first and then the teacher asked them to find the meaning of difficult words. If a student was not able to read correctly the teacher did not help but just asked another student to read.

Teachers called the students by name – but only the best students were called, which means that only a few students were asked questions. Maybe my presence affected the teachers to ask only the clever students.

NO answers

For the following observation questions I filled in No for all the teachers; see Table 2.

Table 2: NO-answers by all teachers

4	11	13	18	19	20
Were students involved in any group or pair activities?	Did the teacher use any material besides the textbook and the blackboard?	Did the students use any type of low/ no cost material?	Did the teacher scream to the students?	Did the teacher beat the students?	Did the teacher insult students verbally?

The teachers argued that they did not have enough time to act according to the textbook instructions. This was said to be the reason for not organising students into groups; the students were not involved in any pair work either.

The only material used in the classes was textbooks, notebooks, and the blackboard. According to my observations no teachers beat the children, neither did anyone scream or insult the students. However, these results may not be reliable but rather due to my presence as an observer in the class. The teachers may have restrained themselves. That we not always get a true picture is a general disadvantage of observations.

4.2.3Both YES and NO answers

On some issues the teachers answered differently; see Table 3.

Table 3: YES and NO answers

	2	3	6	7	12	14	15	16	17	21	23	24	25
Teachers	Did the teacher check the homework?	Did the teacher explain difficult words of the textbooks?	Did the teachers provide any wrong information?	Did the teacher follow the lesson instructions of the textbook?	Did the students write synonyms or antonyms form words of the textbook?	Did the teacher check student's understanding by asking for explanation or example?	Did the teacher relate the topic of the textbook to the daily lives of the students?	Did the teacher approach all students in the classroom?	Did the teacher praise and encourage the students?	Did the teacher use why questions?	Did the students ask questions?	Did the teacher treat the students equally?	Was the lesson reviewed/ concluded?
FT 1	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
FT 2	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
FT 3	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y
FT 4	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N
MT 1	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
MT 2	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
MT 3	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N
MT 4	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
MT 5	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y
MT 6	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N

- As regards question No 2 (check of homework) eight out of ten teachers checked the homework; however, I saw that some of students' notebooks were full of mistakes and the teachers signed the homework as correct anyway.
- Regarding questions No 3 (explanations) and 6 (wrong information), eight out of ten teachers explained the difficult words of the text; however, three teachers provided incorrect information.
- Seven teachers carried out the lesson in accordance to the textbook instruction but far from completely; for instance, they asked students to read the text aloud but did not divide the students in groups when requested.
- About question No 12 (synonyms and antonyms) I saw quite many students who wrote the words of textbooks.
- Only four teachers controlled whether the students had understood the text by asking for explanations and examples. Six teachers asked why questions.

- Four teachers related the topic of the text to the pupils' daily lives.
- Seven teachers approached all the students in the classroom. Six teachers repeatedly said 'very well' (*Afarin* and *Shabash*) when students responded correctly.
- Seven teachers treated the students equally but I also saw examples of certain preferences.
- Only in three classes, the lesson was reviewed. The other teachers argued in the interview that they did not have enough time.
- I could not find any particular difference between female and male teachers. However, I observed that male teachers more often related the topics to students' daily lives than female teachers did. The reason might be that male teachers are responsible for the family and think more about daily life.

CONCLUSION

- The teachers in this study used the instructions of textbooks only to some extent.
- Seminars and workshops about the textbooks had reached only a small percentage of the teachers.
- Even when teachers had attended some training they had not changed their teaching methods. (According to Schwille & Dembele, (2007) for professional development of classroom teachers the cascade model of training does not have any advantages).
- This study had a very small sample. Therefore, the findings do not claim for validity or reliability.