

**Developmental Policy for the Education System
of Afghanistan**

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Contents:

1. Executive Summary.
2. Structural Problems in the Education System of Afghanistan.
3. Description of the Situation.
4. Analysis of the Situation.
5. Solution.
6. Policy Suggestions.
7. Conclusion.
8. References.

Policy Paper:

Executive Summary:

This paper starts with an introduction to the structural problems in the education system of Afghanistan. It identifies the main problems that has challenged the effectiveness of education system of Afghanistan since 2001. The paper further provides and presents an account to the problems in remote areas of Afghanistan and the marginalization of residents of specific locations which has deprived young generation of Afghans from acquiring education. The problems are mainly connected with the government education policies, the way they are implemented and the outdated Afghan education system.

Moreover, the paper presents policy suggestions which would overcome the structural problems in the education system of Afghanistan, and as well improve the level of effectiveness and efficiency in the education system of Afghanistan. Besides, it presents alternative actions in the whole education sector of Afghanistan which will make it for school and university students to get the education required in their own hometown without the need to travel tens of miles to schools and universities.

Additionally, the paper will introduce a new system of education in Afghanistan which will include the division of high school years into three parts; Primary, Elementary and Secondary which will reduce the minimum age to enroll to schools from 7 to 5. The system would as will effectively enable students to decide about their upcoming career while being in the high school year with a focus on their potential future major.

The Paper would be concluded with the results of analysis of the policy suggestions and problems. Moreover, it will evaluate whether the policy suggestions that are presented in the paper, would help address and solve the problems and whether will it have an effective outcome to provide the Afghan young generation with the education that would help them raise in the twenty first century.

Structural Problems in the Education System of Afghanistan:

Description of the Situation:

Over the past few decades Afghanistan has encountered and is still encountering wars and conflicts that severely affected the education system and development of the country. Including but not limited to Afghanistan, in most developmental countries; education is one of the fundamental issue that has to be taken serious and properly addressed. However, after the New Islamic Republic of Afghanistan took power in 2001, a sharp increase in the numbers of schools have been observed due to the international community encouragement. However, little focus had been given to the quality of education and the system redesign and adjustment to properly match with the 21st century requirements, and the necessary updates required did not take place. Although focus has been given to the number of students which dramatically increased in public schools and universities over the past fifteen years. But, adjusting the education system to developmental requirements, quality and access to education, corruption, the mismanagement of the system and disparity are the most challenging issues that have not been taken into

consideration by the government. As a result, an education system that is very low in quality, extremely fragile and outdated has been implemented. Unless properly reviewed, adjusted and radical changes being brought to the education system in upcoming years, it would be meaningless for someone to get formal education or even to go to school for twelve years, with no use for their life.

Analysis of the Situation:

Ineffective Education System and Outdated Curriculum:

Afghanistan is a country that has tried to maintain and stay along with competitive states in the field of education. As mentioned before the education system is so crumbly and is based on obsolete ideologies which is used for political purposes rather than educating students. On the one hand, the educational system does not meet the requirements to educate students with a developed system which would be equivalent to the needs of 21st century and these students will be able to work efficiently to

take part in the development of the country. Numan Dost¹, a professor of journalism and a journalist, has expressed his concerns about the curriculum, “Education has become the victim of political ideologies”. The current curriculum being thought in schools is limited to few ideologies and does not allow critical thinking of students to learn a wide assortment of ideologies and subjects which fits the requirement of our society and the twenty first century.

In addition, age and comprehension level of students that are studying the curriculum is not considered and not taken into account by the developers of the curriculum. This with several other examples has led to an education system which became a source for political violence and extremism in rural Afghanistan.

On the other hand, in Afghanistan a certain age of 7-15 years, is required for students to enroll to schools and to start a formal education². The prerequisite of age and the requirement of going

¹ Numan Dost is an activist, independent journalist and a professor of journalist. He is known for his wide criticism of inefficiencies in the Afghan System.

² <https://raziasrayofhope.org/education-in-afghanistan.html>

to school for twelve years with no intention and choice being given about their future career, for some students it is too late, and it discourages the participation of students in the public schools. According to journalists and many other scholars, more than 2/3 of the graduates from public schools are not prepared for their future career choice when it comes to an undergraduate degree and professional life. The Education system which the Afghan Ministry of Education has adopted and copied from other states is so outdated, that a student studying for twelve years at the end will not be able to focus on a particular area of interest, which as a result affects the upcoming generation of professional workers. Besides, the education system and the examination system for entrance exam to the universities is so ineffective with bad quality of design and inefficiency. For example, a student who is interested in Business Administration gets enrolled to Civil Engineering faculty; whereas another student who is interested in Engineering is being accepted to Business Administration. This with all other issues to be address have led to an ineffective and fragile education system that is in serious need of development and change.

Mismanagement:

It is obvious and has been proven in several circumstances, management in the Afghan educational system especially in the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education is weak and insufficient. The ministries have been managed by people who strictly opposed girls' education in the past; for instance, the ex-education minister, Farooq Wardak, according to Al-Jazeera³ had a history of opposition to girls' education. Moreover, systematic corruption is another problem that believed to be the fundamental reason for each single of the education system. Appointments in the offices and their sub departments are based on nepotism and corruption which directly undermined the quality of education. In provinces and rural areas of Afghanistan teachers are recruited to teach in schools who do not have proper schooling.⁴ Or there are some teachers with no particular knowledge about a subject that they are teaching it, a teacher whose major is chemistry might be teaching a course of literature, while a history major would be teaching chemistry.

³ <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/talktojazeera/2014/06/farooq-wardak-afghan-education-minister-2014613104831495189.html>

⁴ http://outlookafghanistan.net/topics.php?post_id=14188

These all are connected to the systematic corruption in the internal leadership of the education system of Afghanistan.

Access to Education and Disparity:

Under the Taliban regime the enrolment rate to schools was so low and access for girls to education was zero in the year 2001. According to statistics from the Afghan Ministry of Education four million children are not able to get an education due to access issues, and other one million children are not getting formal education which includes but not limited to poor economic condition, war and quality of education in public schools⁵. (MOE, CPE, P 9). Access to education is one of the vital and basic area that the government has tried to focus on since the collapse of Taliban regime in 2001. A dramatic increase of 110 percent can be observed in the enrollment to schools, according to the ministry of education statistics. However, access issue remains the same in rural Afghanistan. Afghanistan a country with more

⁵<http://moe.gov.af/Content/files/CPE%20Policy-Pa.pdf>

than 75 percent of population living in rural areas and areas that mostly are located in mountainous regions.

On the one hand, due to the lack of infrastructure and schools and educational centers nearby, it is difficult for students from these areas to commute to and back from school which are located up to 15-20 miles away from their homes therefore a difficulty of transportation arises which prevents students and especially girls to get a formal education which the government have not focused to improve the infrastructure in these areas.

On the other hand, disparity and discrimination against the Pashtuns living in bordering provinces with Pakistan are being pointed out by some in the education system. These areas are mostly the least favorite and has been given little attention to improve the education level and literacy. Approximately 70 percent of people above the age 30 are illiterate and have no clue about education. People from this area has a different perspective on the government education system, they feel discriminated and perceive this action of government as efforts to keep these areas both illiterate and unsafe. Whereas in reality

mostly in such remote areas and in remote schools instead of the afghan curriculum, a narrow-minded extremist ideology and prospective about the people who work in the government is being thought to the children.⁶

⁶ Based on Interviews and Documentaries from Al-Jazeera and different TV Networks.

Solution:

Policy Suggestion:

Education is the backbone for the development of a war-torn country. A good education system is an education system which addresses all the necessities of a society and presents possible frameworks for the development and reconstruction of the society. As mentioned, Afghanistan's education system does not fulfill the mentioned criteria. Therefore, to improve the education system of Afghanistan the following solutions should be adopted and implemented as a developmental policy to present the Afghan youths in each corner of Afghanistan with a quality education.

- a. Implementing fundamental changes in the management of the education system.
- b. Designing and creating the Primary, Elementary and Secondary education system where students would be able to decide on their major, and study subjects related to prior to entering the faculty of their desires in secondary schools.

- c. Universal Access to Education throughout Afghanistan.
- d. Improvement Trainings and boost in salaries to the teachers.

A. Fundamental Changes in the Management of Education System:

In the Afghan Education system, the idea of *Ministry of Education, MOE, and Ministry of higher Education, MOHE*, should be abolished and presented as a one Department of Education. The combination of those two ministries as one would lead to an effective management in the education system and would decrease the bureaucratic red-tape. It would as well solve the problems created by the division and will heal the problems with communication between the two different ministries and would help in the delivery of quality education. In addition, this change would easily help the government to cut-out extra expenses and help fight corruption.

The new Department of Education should receive public funding from the government through which it would be

able to open inspection and research centers to observe and research the education system as a whole with focus being given to the redesign and updating the curriculum.

B. Purposed design of the Education System:

The newly established of education would work on a plan to establish the idea of primary, elementary and secondary schools. This would bring down the age threshold from seven to five or even in some cases to four. In the primary school years, which would be from preparatory program till grade 6 would introduce the students to the basics. For example, writing, math, ethics, languages, literature, sciences, computer and new technology with focus being given to the self-improvement of children to work on projects which would help their analytical and critical skills respectively. Students after successfully completing primary education, should be enrolled to the elementary education (grade 7-9) where they would be receiving a more challenging part of education while the education

would be divided into sub-fields; For instance, Social Sciences, Sciences, Mathematics and Philosophy. This period of education would enable the students to develop their skills in different field of interests. Whereas, in secondary education period, student should be evaluated, divided and assigned the subjects where the students are most probably to continue their future education career. The assignment should take place based on the area of a student's interest. This new change in the secondary education part would help a student to develop in a specific area of interest with the proper education required to enter his future career. As an example, a student whose interest is in social sciences should be assigned to a particular department where they will be focusing on social sciences where other students whose interest is in engineering would be assigned to the Science division where they will be focusing on math, trigonometry, algebra and other technology which helps them in their future career. The purposed system, respectively, would enable students to develop special

interest in their upcoming career and would best prepare them before entering the undergraduate program for their major.

The new curriculum which would be prepared and designed should meet the developmental requirement of the society while being competitive to those being though in developed states. The developer of the system should take into the account the social status of Afghanistan and shall work in a way which will promote peace, stability and unity while preserving the status of an advanced education system.

C. Universal Access to Education:

Afghanistan is a mountainous country with more than 65% population living in rural areas. Most of these areas are hard to reach due to the lack of transportation sources or affected severely by the war and are now underside of the anti-government forces. As education is a fundamental right of children to receive, therefore, the DoE should work with the local societies, to negotiate with the opposition forces to enable students get a formal

education in governmental schools and not to shut down them in the besieged areas for students.

The newly established Department of Education working along with the central and local governments should work on a developmental strategy which will enable youths from all over Afghanistan regardless of their ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation receive a formal and quality education. The developmental strategy should focus on building schools, libraries and research centers in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan while working on a campaign to raise awareness about the issues of girls' education and persuading families to support their children throughout their education career.

D. Improvement Trainings for the Teachers and giving boost in salary to the teachers:

As pointed out, in rural areas of Afghanistan mostly the teachers who are teaching the courses and subjects are not well-qualified or simply do not have the required skills to be teaching a particular subject. Therefore, the

suggested Department of Education should initiate a program where teachers will be receiving trainings on delivering the lessons to the students. Besides, they will be examined based on the skills whether they would be able to teach the particular courses or not in the new system. Therefore, qualified teachers should be able to receive a boost in their salaries which would enable them to work hard and focus on the lessons while not being worried about their financial situation. This boost and trainings would automatically help to improve the quality of education and eventually would lead to a well-educated society.

Conclusion:

Although structural problems decreased with the new Afghan government in 2001 and 2014 respectively. But a lot of areas as mentioned under situation analysis needs to be addressed. The policy suggestions would effectually create an education system which would be successful in addressing the needs of the Afghan society in twenty first

century. These policy changes would overcome the structural problems in the education system of Afghanistan, and as well improve the level of effectiveness and efficiency in the education system of Afghanistan. Besides, it would create a standard education environment which will enable the students to be best prepared to study their undergraduate degree and will help reduce the number of illiteracy in Afghanistan. Overall, the policy suggestion, introduces radical changes to the whole education system, which will play an important role in the development of a best education system and the development of Afghanistan.

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