



Education in Afghanistan: Private Higher Education Sector Contribution

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Abstract

Afghanistan is among one of the poorest countries around the globe. Since the Russian invasion in 1979, it has been the panorama of a series of conflicts that have continued for more than three decades. This is the very reason the economy has not attained a self sustaining stage and consequently depending mostly on foreign aid. Incidentally population is also growing at fast rate, an estimated 34.3 million people (2012)[1]. The large density of population is as low as 40 per sq. km [2]. GDP Per capita growth 5.7 (annual %) (2011)[2]. The fast growing rate of population with very low rate of growth in productivity has been putting the economy of Afghanistan in the whirlpool of poverty. Not to speak of the higher education, in spite of enormous efforts the overall literacy rate could not be increased beyond 34.1%. [3]. (Male 49% female 18%) [3]. The towering rate of illiteracy in Afghanistan is appearing to be the first biggest obstacle to stability and civilization.

Higher education in present day Afghanistan remains a delicate area, hugely dependent upon foreign assistance, having meager resources and weedy infrastructure. Importantly, the system of higher education being encouraged is not in conformity with the traditional and religious value system of the country. During the last decade some serious efforts were made like, the name of the ministry has been changed from 'the Ministry of Higher Education and Vocational Training' to 'the Ministry of Higher Education'. The ministry devised a ten year (2005-2015) [4] plan for the growth of higher education and first, second and third phases of the plan span two years, three years and five years respectively. Clear objectives were set for each phase.

However Private Higher Education institutes also play a very important role in changing the whole scenario of students who are willing to pursue their studies. Therefore, the number of students gaining admission in higher education institutes is increasing every year. At present total number of Government and private universities are 69 and total number of faculties are 285 all over the country in 2011-12. Number of government universities students' are 77654 while number of private universities students are 34713[5].

Consequently, the Afghan scholars, educationists and academicians need to plan upon the overall dynamics of today's Afghanistan, existing system and status of education in general and higher education in particular to devise a comprehensive education policy. They need to develop a practical and concrete action plan so that the people working for the cause of education reach a clear understanding of educational goals and steps to be taken. The policy should also guide the government towards to taking revolutionary steps, allocate most of its resources for this department, and employ the available resources wisely.

In conclusion, nothing constructive can be fully realized as long as Afghanistan is in a state of war. Therefore, it is necessary to bring the war to an end and establish peace on a solid foundation so that growth and development of the educational system can be focused.

1. Introduction

Afghanistan is among one of the poorest countries around the globe. Since the Russian invasion in 1979, it has been the panorama of a series of conflicts that have continued for more than three decades. This is the very reason the economy has not attained a self sustaining stage and consequently depending mostly on foreign aid. Funds were flowing but management of these allocated funds was a challenge for Afghanistan government and few donors was not satisfied with the results achieved through these projects, but on ground realities Afghan government tried their level best to make proper use of these funds in different areas of the life.



Incidentally population is also growing at fast rate, an estimated 34.3 million people (2012)[1]. The large density of population is as low as 40 per sq. km [2]. GDP Per capita growth 5.7 (annual %) (2011)[2]. The fast growing rate of population with very low rate of growth in productivity has been putting the economy of Afghanistan in the whirlpool of poverty. Ultimately a series of quandaries took place like improvement of infrastructure, providing basic needs to refugees coming back from different countries, opening an opportunities of jobs for the people, basic health facilities and ensuring education system both primary, higher all over the country. The important point is that efforts were sincere but recourses were not enough to meet all the needs of a country who squander three decades in a war.

Therefore intricate moments are still the part of the system. Not to speak of the higher education, in spite of enormous efforts the overall literacy rate could not be increased beyond 34.1%. [3]. (Male 49% female 18%) [3]. The towering rate of illiteracy in Afghanistan is appearing to be the first biggest obstacle to stability and civilization. There were regional variations in literacy rates. Region in which respondents were most likely to be illiterate were the West (23%), North West (20%), and North East (19%) regions. The South East (5%), East (6%), Central/Hazarajat (7%), regions have the lowest percentage of illiterate respondents [4].

1.2. Higher Education in Afghanistan

Higher education in present day Afghanistan remains a delicate area, hugely dependent upon foreign assistance, having meager resources and weedy infrastructure. Importantly, the system of higher education being encouraged is not in conformity with the traditional and religious value system of the country. During the last decade some serious efforts were made like, the name of the ministry has been changed from 'the Ministry of Higher Education and Vocational Training' to 'the Ministry of Higher Education'; In a result the 42 institutions of vocational training, which had been in its sphere, were taken away from it and all the institutions of higher education were placed under it.

The ministry devised a ten year (2005-2015) [4] plan for the growth of higher education; first, second and third phases of the plan span over two years, three years and five years respectively. Clear objectives were set for each phase. Some of these goals are:

- Standard of Education: Improvement of the standard of education, provision of required
- In educational institutes, capacity building, taking measures to maintain the standard, and efforts to reform the syllabus.
- Reforming the System and Institutional Growth: Improving upon planning and financial affairs; making institutions autonomous in financial and educational affairs through implementing the newly developed law for higher education.
- Access to Higher Education: Encouraging the private sector to establish institutions for this purpose, introducing two shifts in the government-run institutions, and setting up new public sector institutions.
- Providing Financial Resources: one of the most important goals for the plan is to provide financial resources for higher education by employing different means and resources.

Each phase's objectives and goals are under monitoring and evaluation procedures. Formation of quality assurance department is the key indicator of execution of quality education in higher education. New departments were instigated, induction of new faculty in multiple disciplines, expansion in diverse provinces and attracting students from all over Afghanistan in numerous field of studies; alongside Ministry of Higher Education not only facilitate but provide full support to the private sector to come forward and contribute in the growth of Afghanistan; these are the measures acquired by higher education within their resources.

1.3. Contribution of Private Higher Education Provider

However Private Higher Education institutes also play a very important role in changing the whole scenario of students who are willing to pursue their studies. Therefore, the number of students gaining admission in higher education institutes is increasing every year. At present total number of Government and private universities are



69 and total number of faculties are 285 all over the country in 2011-12. Number of government universities students' are 77654 while number of private universities students are 34713[5]. Though Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan invite business men and academicians to come forward but initially a very few people took initiative in this newly develop service providing segment. Later on almost in every urban area higher education institute was established and starts contributing and shore up the main case of Ministry of Higher Education- to provide higher education in every corner of Afghanistan.

Although the trend of inclination towards education is existing but the pace of change is still trifling. The low rate of literacy, besides economic drawbacks has several social repercussions as well.

1.4. Where the problem lies?

Higher education enrollment in Afghanistan is one of the lowest in the world. The higher education gross enrollment ratio (GER) is about 5 percent.[6]

Private Higher Education Sector in Afghanistan has been altered into a vibrant sector that is swiftly surfacing and developing the capacity to serve as an engine of growth for the socio-economic development of the country. While good progress has been made numerous challenges remain and the following have been identified as key issues to be addressed:

1. Lack of international curriculum implementation in private higher education.
2. Lack of Funds – adoption of new technologies in Teaching Methodology
3. Lack of Funds – less growth.
4. Low quality and lack of employability from local market.
5. Lack of suitably qualified & high quality research faculty for private higher education.
6. Deficient in faculty and staff development.
7. Less enrollment in the higher education sector.
8. Lack of Governance and experience in private higher education sector.

1. Parent's Capacity to educate. The root cause of low literacy rate is low per capita income. It is with increased income that the rural people will be able to spare their children for schooling. Thus without boosting the per capita income the dream of 100% literacy will never realize. The focus should, therefore, be on the poverty alleviation. Again in case of rural areas a policy of synchronized development is all the more important.

2. Quality improvement. To ensure the devotion and commitment, the selection of the educational staff and their future grooming/ elevation is made purely on merits and merit alone. Minimum appointment criteria are raised to at least graduate with minimum "B" grades throughout academic career. This will, by improving the quality of educational services, create a new urge among the parents, who were hitherto not inclined, to get their children educated.

3. Political support. The political magnets may, however, play their role with a will to participate as stakeholder for the development of this vital sector by providing the infrastructure and logistics to facilitate the process. Political interference in the administrative affairs of the educational institutions which may retard the growth and development process or for that matter de-motivated the administrative and teaching staff must be checked and even all such chances must be eliminated altogether.

4. Availability of funds. Fund allocation must be increased to at least 5% of the GDP in the initial stage and subsequently increase by

Consequently, the Afghan scholars, educationists and academicians need to plan upon the overall dynamics of today's Afghanistan, existing system and status of education in general and higher education in particular to devise a comprehensive education policy. They need to develop a practical and concrete action plan so that the people working for the cause of education reach a clear understanding of educational goals and steps to be taken. The policy should also guide the government towards to taking revolutionary steps, allocate most of its resources for this department, and employ the available resources wisely.



In conclusion, nothing constructive can be fully realized as long as Afghanistan is in a state of war. Therefore, it is necessary to bring the war to an end and establish peace on a solid foundation so that growth and development of the educational system can be focused.

1.5. Research Methodology

To find out the causes, dynamics and also suggest practical solution we have already taken upon ourselves to make enquiry through collecting fresh data with the help of questionnaire to be used in the process of interview of various samples of the population residing in different areas of Kabul Afghanistan.

To avail the secondary data we shall benefit from the information available in the form of statistical reports issued periodically by the Govt. of Afghanistan and other international agencies.

Table 1 Legend. Source: Ministry of Higher Education

Indicator	2011-12	2010-11	2009-10
No of universities & institutions	69	54	34
Government	26	24	22
Private	43	30	12
No of Students	112367	84184	68307
Govt. Students	77654	63837	61261
Private Students	34713	20347	7046

Table 2. legend: Number of students and Teachers in private Higher Education Institutions 2011-12

University/Institution	Teacher	New students	Total Students
M.J.Balkhy Higher Ed	42	333	1024
Bakhtar Higher Edu	43	317	815
Maiwand Higher Edu	22	554	1328
A.Afghan university	48	370	563
Khatam-Al Nabieen Higher Edu	82	630	1216
Sadat Higher Edu	31	76	300
Rana Higher Edu	29	289	908
Salam Higher Edu	123	1154	2270
Kardan Higher Edu	69	1116	3112
Kateb Higher Educ	113	-	1841
Pashgam Higher Edu	4	194	250
Khorasan Higher Edu	33	849	1689
Maryam Higher Edu	22	144	689
Ariana Higher Edu	42	-	998
Aria Higher Edu	88	749	1864
Dawat Higher Edu	160	-	6626



References

- [1] Source: CIA World Fact book - Unless otherwise noted, information in this page is accurate as of January 1, 2011
- [2] Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2011-2012
- [3] Ministry of Higher Education, "Strategic Development Plan," Ministry of Higher Education, Kabul, March 2005, <http://www.mohe.gov.af/?lang=en&p=plan>
- [4] National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2010-2014; <http://www.mohe.gov.af/?lang=en&p=plan>
- [5] Keith Shawe, A survey of the Afghan People, 2013
- [6] Fasih, T. (2008). Linking Education Policy to Labor Market Outcomes. The World Bank, Washington DC.