ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

The quality of education is a multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be determined only by measuring one specific influential factor. Therefore, quality of education as a continuous process encompasses teacher, teaching methods, curriculum, learners and their learning environment, instructional materials, governance and pedagogical leadership. As it is stated by UNICEF (2002), quality education is influenced by whatever happens in the classroom and all relevant activities carried out outside the classroom into the learning environment. In other words, the high/low quality of teacher and teacher's instruction can be measured concerning the outcomes of the learners in an institution. According to Alton-Lee (2003), pedagogical practice is the most powerful influential element which directly affects the students' learning outcomes. And students' learning outcomes are the required knowledge, skills, abilities and values that students should possess. Now again when it comes to the definition of quality teaching, it also lacks consensus among educators and experts of pedagogy. But here it is not supposed to reconsider this debatable issue of defining quality and quality education as it was already discussed in more detail in the previous chapters, especially in the first chapter of this thesis. Consequently, the main topics discussed in this chapter are: a brief summary of the research, major findings, results of the data analysis presented in the previous chapter and educational implications of the study.

TITLE OF THE STUDY

"A Study on the Pedagogy as a Quality Indicator in Secondary Schools of Paktia Province in Afghanistan."

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The Afghan education system after a long-lasting war is facing a number of challenges and deficiencies and for this reason; the quality of school education is a considerably high controversial issue for the Afghan public. Hence, experts of education, students, parents and the reports published by governmental and non-governmental organizations have been frequently expressing their concerns attached to the role of poor instruction in quality of school education in Afghanistan. They have raised a lot of questions on the quality of teaching-learning activities, evaluation and assessment procedures, and curriculum implementation practices in schools. But, as it is mentioned earlier there was not even a single academic study on these mentioned areas, trustworthy evidence was needed to prove whether the pedagogical practices in schools are truly unsatisfying. Therefore, taking the importance of pedagogy as a quality indicator in education and with regard to public dissatisfaction with the quality of school education, the researcher has come up with the idea of carrying out this important study to discover the truth and respond to the questions of Afghan public. Since no research study has been conducted so far on the quality of Afghan secondary education, this study would be a valuable work in this respect.

There are a number of quality education indicators but knowing the significance of pedagogy as an essential quality indicator, it can be realized that pedagogy is the dominant one. Leach and Moon (1999) explained pedagogy as a joint effort activity. In other words, a set of attempts both teachers and learners make together in order to achieve the anticipated learning goals.

On the other hand, quality instruction has a significant impact on students' academic achievement and it is believed that teacher's pedagogical knowledge has more impact on students' performance than content knowledge. And only pedagogical content knowledge is supposed to have an impact on the quality of teaching. (OECD, 2014) Research studies also indicate that there is a strong relationship between teacher pedagogical practices and students' academic performance. (Bird, 2017;Sirait, 2016; Duruji, Azuh and Oviasogie, 2014;Ganyaupfu, 2013; Sisilya, 2012; Marikoviz, Bjekic and Zlatic, 2012; Suwan, 2011; Lata, 2011; Dilshad, 2010 and Heck, 2009)

The present study was designed to carry out in Paktia, the south-eastern province of Afghanistan with around one million residents. Paktia province is about 104 kilometers away from the capital city Kabul. At present, there is a total of 352 schools, 16 Islamic studies centers, one main and 8 supportive teacher training colleges plus 15 other private schools. In addition to this, one governmental university, two professional studies institutes, and one private university are also there in this province. The first reason why the researcher has chosen this province for the study is that in this province, non-governmental organizations such as UNICEF, Care International, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank and other responsible organizations for the teacher training programs alongside the Afghan government have implemented a large number of in-service- teacher training programs. Not only school teachers were the focus of these short term capacity building programs but principals and other administrative staff were also trained. Secondly, the researcher himself worked in an educational project which was conducted by AWEC (Afghan Women's Educational Center) in 2009 in this province. This project aimed to train secondary school teachers and advance teachers' teaching capacity in all 13 districts of this province. So, the researcher as an insider was already a participant observer of the situation.

Given the above discussion, the present study has been designed to investigate teachers' classroom performance for his/her pedagogical practices. In other words, it was intended to carry out a detailed analysis of what was happening inside the classrooms in secondary schools relating to classroom teaching-learning practices, curriculum implementation, and evaluation process. Consequently, the present study is considered to be a sincere effort for answering the following important questions especially about the education quality of Afghan secondary schools.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study was intended to answer three specific research questions as follows:

i) What are the usual teaching-learning approaches/methods the Afghan Secondary School teachers adopted conforming to the quality education?

ii) To what extent the implemented curriculum and textbooks in Afghan Secondary Schools are appropriate for quality education?

iii) To what extent the evaluation procedure used by the Afghan school teachers is appropriate for ensuring quality education?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study has been carried out with a view to achieve the following major objectives:

(i) To study the classroom pedagogical practices in the Secondary Schools of Paktia province in Afghanistan with respect to:
- Teaching-Learning process
- Curriculum and text-books
- Evaluation procedures

(ii) To study pedagogy as a quality indicator in the Secondary Schools of Paktia province in Afghanistan as perceived by the students, teachers, and principals.

EXPLANATION OF THE TERMS

- **Pedagogy**

Simply stated, pedagogy is the art and science of teaching. It is an academic concept commonly used in studies to describe teachers' teaching methods. The teaching method is a description of the way that information or behavior is carried forward or consolidated during the instructional process. An instructional method is a set of approaches, principles, and techniques which the instructor uses to transfer knowledge and the required skills to students. Consequently, pedagogy is both the theories of various teaching-learning approaches and also the practice of these theories into action in real classrooms.

- **Curriculum**

The term curriculum refers to the academic content, materials or lessons taught in schools, course or an educational program. The term curriculum can also be used for the overall plan or design for a course and how the content for a course is transformed into a blueprint for the teaching and learning process which enables the desired learning outcomes to be achieved.

- **Evaluation**

Evaluation is a process that critically examines the effectiveness of the educational course. It involves collecting and analysing information about educational processes, their characteristics and outcomes. Its purpose is to make judgments about the educational process, to improve its effectiveness and/or to inform decisions in terms of value judgment.

- **Quality of Education**

Quality of education refers to the degree of the entire educational process managed by the school or any other institution under the consideration of standards of quality i.e. quality of learners, quality of the curriculum, quality of management, quality of materials, quality of evaluation and quality of outcomes for the purpose of the fulfilling learners' requirements, needs or desire, satisfaction or demands and expectations of the community.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study was delimited to the secondary schools of Paktia province in Afghanistan. Also, pedagogy as a quality indicator was studied under the present study with respect to its three major parameters viz.: (a) the Teaching-learning process, (b) Curriculum and textbooks and (c) Evaluation procedures.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was all about pedagogy and the effects of pedagogical practices on the quality of education in secondary schools of Afghanistan. Thus, the present study was about what teaching-learning practices and strategies the Afghan secondary school teachers

usually carry out in the classrooms. Hence, looking at the nature of the study, the methodology adopted for the present study was based on the Survey method.

Research Design

The present study was Descriptive Survey research which was conducted for the description of a specific situation (pedagogy) and behavior of a specific group of the participants (teachers and students), which has allowed the researcher not only to present the prevailing situation but also to interpret and report the existing facts on the ground. According to Best and Kahn (2006), descriptive survey type studies are used to find out '*what is*' and therefore the detailed information is required for answering the research questions. So looking to the study and its objectives, a descriptive survey design was found the most appropriate method to collect detailed information about the current status of school education in Afghanistan with regard to teachers' teaching strategies and classroom pedagogical practices.

Population

The population of the present study comprised all 189 schools (90 lower and 99 upper secondary schools in the year 2018), in 13 districts of Paktia province. All these government-funded schools were following a national curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education and the local authorized body. Thus, the population for the present study comprised a total 189 principals, 4275 teachers and 41154 students associated with these schools.

Sample

From 13 districts of Paktia province; two schools were randomly selected from each district as the sample for the present study. Thus, the sample for the present study comprised a total of 26 secondary schools, 26 principals and 220 teachers of these 26 schools. Moreover, a total of 210 students were also selected purposively from the selected 26 schools, both from lower secondary and upper secondary classes.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

The tools and techniques adopted under the present study are as follows:

(i)   Questionnaire [For the Teachers]

(ii)   Semi-Structured Interview [For the Principals]

(iii) Focus Group Discussion [For the Students]

(iv)   Classroom Observation Schedule

DATA COLLECTION

To find the answer to the research questions stated above, the detailed qualitative data were required to be gathered from the sources. Therefore, it was planned that the data should be collected from principals, teachers, and students with the help of data collection tools such as, Questionnaires, Semi-Structured Interviews, Focus Group Discussion and Classroom Observation Schedules. The relevant aspects of the investigation were categorized in compliance with the study's objectives under three major headings: (i) aspects related to the teaching-learning process (ii) aspects related to curriculum/textbooks and (iii) aspects related to the evaluation procedures.

DATA ANALYSIS

In close alignment with research methodology and the mechanism of data collection, the data analysis process was also divided into three major sections namely; data analysis related to the teaching-learning process, data analysis related to the curriculum and textbooks and data analysis related to the evaluation procedures. The data collected through the Questionnaire, Semi-Structured Interviews, Focus Group Discussion and Classroom Observation Schedule were mostly qualitative and needed to be analyzed and interpreted descriptively to provide a full narrative of the status of pedagogical practices in Afghan secondary schools. Further, looking to the requirements, the frequency and percentages distribution was employed for displaying the data analysis and interpretations.

MAJOR FINDINGS

On the basis of the analysis and interpretations, the investigator has arrived at the following major findings.

➢ Most of the teachers did not plan daily classroom teaching-learning activities before the class.

➢ Most of the teachers did not plan an effective homework in terms of its quality, reinforcing previously taught lessons, practicing skills, increasing cooperative work among students and also teachers' instruction for students on how to complete the homework.

➢ Most of the teachers did not use varied teaching-learning methods for their teaching.

➢ Most of the teachers employed low tech teaching approaches to learning.

➢ Teachers engaged students in high-level cognitive skills-developing activities, but in a somewhat effective way.

➢ Most of the teachers created a favorable learning environment where all students felt free to ask questions, but still, concerns are there.

➢ Students were provided limited opportunities to apply new knowledge.

➢ Teachers' strategies for students' motivation were somewhat effective.

➢ The textbooks contained appropriate information and relevant practices for the students.

➢ Most of the teachers did not use any other supplementary teaching-learning materials except school textbooks.

➢ Textbooks used in the Afghan schools were fairly up-to-date in terms of knowledge, skills, and values.

➢ The content of the textbooks was aligned with the National Curriculum objectives but still, the students have complaints about the difficulty level of the content of school textbooks.

➢ The content of the textbooks provides opportunities for students' engagement in high-order thinking.

➢ Schools' evaluation policies and practices were somewhat aligned with the curriculum objectives.

➢ Teachers used a few common teaching techniques for students' daily basis assessment.

➢ Poor strategies and procedures were employed in encouraging students' self-evaluation.

➢ Students' performance evaluation was somewhat based on three learning domains namely; cognitive, affective and psychomotor.

➢ Most of the teachers planned oral classroom evaluation at the beginning and end of the class only.

➢ In general, teacher-student classroom interaction was friendly and no corporal or verbal punishment was recorded.

DISCUSSION

Since this is an investigative study, a further discussion on the available findings and possible implications is also required to determine the effects of the identified deficiencies with reference to the quality of education. Hence, this section of the chapter briefly discusses the investigator's overall neutral views regarding the results of the analysis and their possible implications for the quality of secondary education in Afghanistan.

From the analysis of the data, it was found that most of the teachers come to the classrooms without appropriate pre-planning and preparation. It was seen that most of the teachers did not give considerable attention to lesson planning and did not prepare a well-organized

lesson plan for their daily classroom teaching. Having a lesson plan in the classroom is considered a significant element of the teaching-learning process and it helps the teacher in many respects. In the first place, a well-designed plan can ease successful teaching in the class. It can help a teacher to carry out all the determined teaching-learning activities step by step and manage his/her session time effectively. An effective lesson plan should have at least three basic components: the aim and objectives of the lesson, teaching-learning activities and activities for assessment (Jones, 2018). Accordingly, if a teacher does not have a written lesson plan including all mentioned necessary elements, how would he/she be able to teach a class effectively and maintain the alignment among learning objectives, teaching-learning activities and assessment.

The results of the present study revealed that teachers in most of the schools did not have written lesson plans. It leads to the conclusion that the teachers teach aimlessly, and therefore it is not clear whether they achieved the target objectives for the lesson or not. It also implies that the teachers are satisfied with their lecture as the only teaching-learning activity and the textbook as the single teaching-learning material. Specifying learning objectives in pre-planning helps the teachers to choose and prepare appropriate teaching-learning materials, classroom activities and evaluation procedures. According to Henrichsen et al. (1997), lack of planning can make the learning poor and reduced, frustrate the teacher and students and waste the time and effort.

The present study indicated that most of the teachers were starting their classes in a somewhat effective way in terms of giving time to the students to recall the previous lessons and eliciting information about the previous lesson from the students. The initial stage of the lesson is very crucial for recalling and refreshing the previous knowledge. According to Weimer (2015), letting students have a quick review of the previous lesson is advantageous not only with respect to reminding and refreshing students' memories from the previous lessons but it also helps them improve their presentation skills. Also, it was found that most of the teachers were not effective. The results indicate that most of the teachers were eliciting information from the students about the previous lessons but not in an effective way. Teachers were opening the lesson simply by asking some oral questions about the previous lesson. The first problem with this opening activity was not giving time

to the students to think-pair-share. Teachers were asking questions and students were supposed to respond immediately. Weimer (2015) also suggested that the teacher should let students prepare a summary of the last lesson and then share that in the class. Since the previous class might be days or maybe one week ago, so the students tend to forget what exactly happened in that last class. Therefore, they need time to recall and contemplate how to answer.

The present study also revealed that most of the teachers did not engage students in problem-identification and problem-solving learning activities in an effective way. It should be noted here that problem-identification or problem-solving does not refer only to mathematics, but it focuses on problem-identification and problem-solving learning in different observed classes. According to Hmelo-Silver (2004), problem-based learning emphasizes the importance of students' practical experience in learning. Problem-solving learning allows students to integrate theory and practice and apply knowledge and skills to find a practical solution to a defined problem. (Savery, 2015) Accordingly, the empowering of students' problem-solving abilities should be a primary goal of quality teaching. Therefore, students should be provided with opportunities to meet the challenges, use their logic, analysis and resolve problems. On the other hand, engaging students in problem-identification and problem-solving learning should be designed in a well-organized and systematic way. Simply put, the teacher should plan all the activities he/she should carry out in the class to engage students in problem-solving learning. By contrast, as it was observed in this present study, in almost all of the classes teachers did not have a systematic pre-planned for teaching to develop students' problem-identification and problem-solving skills. In other words, teachers did not adopt teaching to empower students' abilities of problem-identification and problem-solving, instead, they used problem as a mean to teach for example mathematics. In this way, teachers usually ask students to memorize for example a mathematical formula to solve a problem. So, the teachers seemed not to have any significant strategy for developing students' problem-identification and solving skills purposefully by designing some well-organized classroom teaching-learning activities.

Another finding related to engaging students in high-level cognitive skills improving learning, the results of the present study indicated that the vast majority of the teachers

engaged students in high-order thinking skills somewhat effectively. These skills help students not just to memorize but to evaluate, criticize, synthesize and discuss the information and make interpretations. For engaging students in the activities based on higher-order thinking skills, learners need to go beyond the primary level of comprehension to the more complex level where they should analyze, synthesize, evaluate and interpret the text. Thus, the teachers need to help and guide the learners on how to develop their higher-order thinking skills by designing appropriate pedagogical practices. The results of the study demonstrate that most of the teachers did not or somewhat provided opportunities for their students to develop high-order thinking skills such as synthesize/summarizing or generalizing information, comparing, contrasting and explaining ideas, making inferences and drawing conclusions. Teaching students how to synthesize or generalize information is a time taking process and requires a careful plan and thought. (Teaching Students to Generalize & Synthesize Information, 2016)

Higher-order thinking enables the learner to connect the ideas they learn inside the classroom with the outside world and understand why the different learning ideas and facts are valuable in their real life. Accordingly, this present study has found that the teaching-learning strategies adopted by most of the teachers were somewhat effective and helpful to develop students' higher-order thinking skills. But, it was seen that teachers did not have appropriate awareness about the effective strategies that can help students improve their higher-order thinking skills. As a result, students were supposed to be engaged in superficial learning only which is generally called rote learning. In other words, the learners were not involved in a critical analysis of the learning facts or concepts. Instead, they had to accept the learning ideas and facts uncritically and trying to memorize them in an isolated way. To conclude, students in secondary schools were learning to the most extent only by rote memorization of the information. It was seen that most of the teachers did not have awareness of promoting higher-order thinking abilities in students. Even most of the questions asked in the class were lower cognitive questions that can engage students in lower-order thinking.

Similarly, the present study also revealed that most of the teachers did not engage students effectively in some other high-level cognitive skills like evaluative judgment, and making

decisions. These skills are key for students, particularly at the time of their employment after graduation. Students should develop their evaluative knowledge to become independent learners and therefore they need first to understand the criteria and standards that help them to make good judgments. (Sadler, 1989) Accordingly, the role of the teacher is already evident. Thus, it depends on the teacher which classroom teaching-learning strategies he/she should adopt to engage students in evaluative judgment and decision-making activities. Teachers have to create planned learning opportunities for students to practice both mentioned skills. Students should be instructed on how to evaluate different situations and make good decisions. The teacher should interact with students and provide different choices for them that they make decisions based on the advantages and disadvantages of the given choices.

The results of the present study demonstrated that in all observed classes teachers used brainstorming activities, but not in an effective way. According to Watson (2019), brainstorming is the best strategy to generate ideas about a topic and to promote thinking skills. The brainstorming technique encourages students to use their prior knowledge and generate some new ideas related to a given topic. Therefore, a teacher needs first to have the necessary awareness and skills on how to use different brainstorming strategies in the classroom. In this way, a teacher can involve the students more in the lesson without having the fear of making mistakes because the teacher does not mind that (Bledsoe & Baskin, 2015). Further, it can be said that teachers were seen not having any classroom pre-planned and structured brainstorming activity as it should be carried out at several stages. On the other hand, brainstorming activity should be conducted by guiding students step by step. In contrast, it was found in this study that teachers were just asking some questions about a topic that may be for testing students' prior knowledge only. Thus, it cannot be considered as a planned and intentionally structured activity for brainstorming ideas. On the other hand, asking some fixed-choice questions for all time really hinders students' creative thinking, also.

The present study indicated that most of the teachers used the didactic lecture method as the only teaching-learning activity in their classes. Few others employed student-centered activities such as pair/group work or classroom discussion. Students learn in different ways

as per individuals' learning styles. Therefore, teachers need to use a variety of teaching strategies and techniques to address students' learning needs. There are so many strategies that can be adopted in different situations based on the requirements. A study conducted by OECD (2016) in eight different countries, categorized all the teaching-learning strategies that teachers adopted in these surveyed countries into three major groups: Active learning, Cognitive learning and Teacher-directed instruction. The results of the study concluded that the use of these varied strategies had an impact on students' performance to various extents in different countries. Similarly, a study carried out by Shinn (1997), concluded that employing various teaching-learning strategies and the use of various evaluation procedures help students to learn well. According to Struyven et al. (2010), the approaches to teaching defined in educational literature can be categorized into two distinct groups: teacher-focused and student-focused. The teacher-focused approach helps students to obtain knowledge particularly from the teacher as the main source of information in the class. Teachers are not supposed to encourage students for active participation in learning activities. Conversely, the student-focused approach emphasizes the role of students as the creators of knowledge and therefore, they are considered to be the center of all teaching-learning activities.

In most of the classes of subjects like; Mathematics, Science, Social Science and Languages, students were not given time even to discuss the content of the lesson with each other except asking few questions usually at the end of the session. The researchers have stated that the lecture method can be effective for communicating theories, ideas and facts, but it cannot address the different learning styles and needs of the learners as they do not learn actively. Instead, students have to listen to the lecture passively. (Centre for Institutional Development & Distance Education, 2014) On the other hand, based on the general knowledge and beliefs, students' attention span is 10-15 minutes. (Briggs, 2014) Therefore, if a teacher continuously talks for more than 40 minutes in a class, capturing students' attention seems to be more challenging. But still, the problem with the lecture method is not only the holding of students' attention throughout the entire lecture but as Gifkins (2015) also pointed out that through dictating the facts and learning ideas, students can develop only the lower-level thinking skills such as memorizing and understanding. On the other side, it is not effective in promoting higher-level thinking skills like applying

the knowledge, analyzing and evaluating. Further, Freeman et al. (2014) reported that the students, who are taught with the traditional stand-and-deliver lecture, are 1.5 times more likely to fail than students who study in active learning classes.

Another result of the present study indicated that most of the teachers were somewhat effective in providing a conducive classroom climate and a safe space for the students to express their ideas and pose questions. In a traditional classroom, the teacher usually asks questions to check students' understanding and encourage them to participate in the teaching-learning process. But when it comes to the students, every individual in a class may have his/her different problems, doubts or unclear concepts. He/she wants to ask about that to the concerned teacher or other classmates. Thus, it mostly depends on the teacher to create a good classroom climate where students are allowed to ask questions and share ideas. The results of this study indicated that the vast majority of the observed teachers created at least a positive classroom environment where their students could ask questions at different stages, especially at the end of the session. But the big question one can still pose is the use of this classroom autonomy effectively in terms of asking high-value questions. As it was pointed out in the previous section, most of the observed teachers and students were asking questions that can be less helpful to develop higher-order thinking skills among the students. In other words, their questions were not multi-layered that can encourage students to apply their critical analysis to answer the questions. Instead, most of the questions were mainly either convergent or simply for further clarification.

Referring to the results of the present study, it can be concluded that most of the teachers lacked the awareness of some effective strategies that can help them train students on how to raise some high-value questions, what Spencer (2017) called it 'Culture of Inquiry'. Hence, this culture of inquiry needs to be fostered in students by adopting appropriate strategies. According to Spencer, the teacher should encourage students to recover their natural curiosity by creating a climate of curiosity inside the classroom. Therefore, providing a positive classroom climate is not only giving freedom of expression and asking questions, but the questions should help students to boost their critical thinking ability and therefore at least the students need time to discuss the content of the lesson with each other and then ask some more valuable questions. Doing this has to take time and students be

given a pre-planned activity in the class for the same. Now, if a teacher keeps on speaking one-sided for the full session and then at the last moments, he/she calls on students to raise questions, it would be difficult for students to think about some high-value questions at that time.

Based on the results of the present study, it is revealed that most of the teachers were somewhat effective in incorporating activities for the students to apply new knowledge. One of the fundamental tasks of the teacher in his/her classroom is to engage students in activities that provide opportunities for them to apply new knowledge. As highlighted by Strauss (2015) many students face difficulties when they try to apply the knowledge they have gained in one class to another or outside the school situations. Therefore, a teacher has to adopt appropriate teaching methods through which a helpful learning environment is created in the classroom where students are provided with a variety of learning experiences. According to Ingmire (2015), when students physically practice learning concepts, they understand more deeply. Ingmire reported a study conducted on the human's brain at DePaul University by Prof. Sian Beilock and her colleagues, who explained that students who took hands-on learning activity had activation in the parts of the brain that deals with sense and motor later when they thought about concepts like angular momentum and torque.

The results of this study indicated that most of the teachers could engage students in learning activities to apply new knowledge, but somewhat effective. Most of the teachers as it was mentioned earlier used only traditional lecture method in which students had to simply listen. Therefore, students were not given opportunities to get involved in experiential learning. Even if it is in a lecture method, the teacher can split it up into several portions to make it more interactive. According to Gifkins (2015), the teacher can reduce the drop-off of concentration among students by using different approaches not by changing the topic but the way students are engaged. In other words, the lecture has to be integrated with varied other teaching-learning activities to engage students in teaching-learning materials in different ways. Now, since the lecture has been used as a dominant method of teaching from the very beginning in schools, therefore, it is not easy for the

teachers to quit it suddenly but at least it has to be improved. It needs to be changed from the current form as a didactic lecture to an interactive instructional method.

But still, students' involvement in different activities to apply new knowledge is an issue even beyond the teaching method. Teachers need to do a lot to promote students' abilities to apply knowledge. Smith (1982) emphasized that the best way students learn is engaging them personally in the learning experience. He added that learners get engaged with more enthusiasm when they are allowed to set their learning objectives and then actively pursue them. Thus, teachers need to prepare a variety of classroom teaching-learning activities to provide plenty of opportunities for the students to apply new knowledge. The teacher should teach students how to understand new learning facts and apply new knowledge by using their prior information. Therefore, students should be given practical opportunities to deal with different teaching-learning materials and practice new skills.

The results of the present study revealed that most of the teachers gave homework to their students, but around half of them were somewhat effective in terms of its quality, reinforcing previously taught lessons, practicing skills, increasing cooperative work among students and also teachers' instruction for students on how to complete the homework. According to a number of studies conducted on the impact of homework on students' academic achievement, homework is believed to be an effective positive factor in students' achievement. (Cooper, 2008) There are a number of significant reasons why homework is important. The most considerable reason is that since school time is not enough for students, they have to be given homework for further practice and reinforcement of classroom learning. Accordingly, a review of the educational studies led by Cooper et al. (2006) concluded that particularly in the case of secondary education, the correlation between students' academic performance and doing homework was much significant. Now the fundamental question is that what is appropriate and meaningful homework that helps students more in their learning? Vatterott (2010) defined the best kind of homework as the one which should not engage students in rote learning, instead, it deepens student understanding and builds their skills. She introduced five specific characteristics for the best homework. First, the assignment should have a clear academic objective for example, it may be a practice, a try for understanding and it can be applying new knowledge or skills.

Second, the homework should effectively demonstrate students' learning. Third, the assignment promotes ownership of students' learning. Fourth, it encourages the sense of competition among students as all students then attempt to complete it successfully. Fifth, the task looks wonderful and aesthetically pleasing. The present study found that most of the teachers' homework giving practices were quite traditional and less effective. For example, teachers were asking students to solve a set of problems in Mathematics and bring them to the next class regardless of the purpose and quality of the homework. One more example, teacher assigned students to write the answers to the questions which were given at the end of a lesson (unit) in their textbooks. In some other cases, teachers, particularly in History and Geography subjects, assigned students for a passive reading. Students were not asked what and how they should do the next. For example, they could have been asked to preapare a presentation for the next class to share the knowledge they have built from their reading. It was observed in some of the cases that the purpose of the assignment was not clearly explained to the students that why they need to do that particular homework. At the same time, the study has also discovered that in many cases despite all of the students' hard work, teachers did not check students' homework carefully. In some cases, even students were not given any feedback on their work at all. Most of the teachers were saying because of the large number of the students in their classes, they were unable to give feedback to all of them. In some other classes where the quantity and frequency of the homework were the issues of matter as the students were saying that their teachers did not give them homework frequently. Both quantity and quality can be considered for an effective homework but the quality is to be more a matter of concern. A study conducted by Fernandez-Alonso et al. (2015) concluded that doing 60 minutes of homework per day is a feasible and appropriate amount of time for a student. This study also indicated that both the quantity of the homework and its frequency affect the academic performance of the students. But still, Pual (2011) believes that the quantity is not that much important as the quality of the homework should be.

The results of the present study related to students' motivation revealed that most of the teachers were somewhat effective in this regard. One of the challenging tasks in the teaching-learning process is how to motivate students to be more successful achievers. There can be a lot of reasons for the lack of motivation in students. But the role of

motivation in students' success and in the learning process is undoubted as Cerdan (2017) emphasized: "without motivation, there is no action." (n.d., para. 1) According to a study conducted by OECD (2015), motivated students are supposed to do 38 points higher than that of not motivated students in Science. Now, here the responsibility of the teachers is that they can motivate the students by using a variety of techniques and strategies in the classroom. Especially, this should be for the students who consider themselves incapable or they think their intelligence does not support them to learn brilliantly as their other schoolmates do.

As the researches have shown, one of the effective ways to motivate students is interaction and keeping in touch with them and therefore it is recommended that the teacher needs to vary in his/her daily basis teaching-learning activities in the classroom. Giving freedom and different learning choices, as Willis (2019) mentioned is one of the influential strategies in students' motivation. Thus, as the results of this study indicated that in most of the classes, students were exposed only to one specific teaching-learning experience, that is lecture. Hence, students tend to be less interested and motivated because they have different learning styles, likes/dislikes, learning needs and problems. And therefore, when they see teachers take care of their needs, they get more motivated intrinsically in their learning. So seeing the current scenario related to classroom teaching-learning process and teachers' behavior, one cannot say that the students are comfortable and motivated within the environment they are studying in.

The results of this study show that no corporal punishment was observed in any class and there was a friendly interaction between teachers and students in all observed classes. Several, including psychological factors, can affect students' success in the classroom. One of these factors is teacher-student interaction. The teacher can create a positive classroom learning atmosphere where students can feel physically and psychologically protected and comfortable. According to Walberg (1984), teacher's praising and punishment have a robust impact on students' learning. In essence, to the most extent, a conducive classroom atmosphere can be shaped based on the instructional method a teacher use in his/her classroom. Similarly, the instructional method of a teacher can also play a critical role in building teacher-student relationship. Since as it was discussed earlier almost all of the

teachers adopted the lecturing method in their classes, students are supposed to obey their teachers without question. Usually, in a traditional didactic lectures, students are passive listeners only and therefore the frequency of teacher-student interaction tends to be very low. Thus, the chances for students' misbehavior also decrease as it was seen in most of the observed classes in this study. Also, the expectations of the teachers from their students can be limited only to some oral questions to check students' understanding.

Overall, the present study revealed that teachers were somewhat successful to encourage all students for an active participation in the class. Students' active participation is the key to their learning. Therefore, they should be provided with further opportunities to interact with one another and express their ideas and opinions regarding learning topics in the class. They have to ask questions, discuss, synthesize, summarize and solve problems by putting their prior knowledge and skills into action. On the other side, classroom participation is also a tool for assessment. Teachers ask questions to figure out what every student knows and what they still have trouble with. Willis (2018) emphasized that teacher as a facilitator should encourage students to feel free and speak out. Therefore, the teacher needs to use some suitable techniques and strategies on how to hearten students to raise the questions, discuss the topics and participate actively in the classroom teaching-learning activities. However, the important point a teacher should think about is that whenever students feel comfortable, they become more active in classroom discussions, project work and other classroom activities. Therefore, a teacher should show empathy for his/her students and let them not only to interact with him/her but also with their peers next to them and discuss the things related to the lesson. (Kriegel, 2018)

Several aspects related to curriculum and teaching-learning materials were studied in this research and the findings were presented in the previous chapter. The textbook and other teaching-learning materials play a very crucial role in the learning process, particularly in classroom-based settings. Besides, some other supplementary instructional materials are also used to reinforce and make the teaching-learning process more interesting and comprehensible. A comprehensive curriculum analysis is a huge work that may be covered through several distinct academic studies. However, the researcher in this study has collected the opinions and insights of school principals, teachers and students on the

curriculum, textbooks and teaching-learning materials. Some complaints were made by the teachers, principals and students about the difficulty and complexity of the content of some textbooks, particularly Science and Mathematics subjects. Especially, teachers and students explained that some content in the Science textbooks is not at the right level for the students. Some other teachers and students also pointed out to the ill cohesion and coherence of the information in some of the textbooks. A recommended modification was related to the structure of the textbooks as the principals suggested should be improved in terms of coherence and continuum of the topics and the list of the practice exercises followed by every lesson throughout the textbooks for all grades. But, at the same time teachers, principals and students believed that the existing school textbooks are useful educational and pedagogical resources for both students and teachers. According to Morgan (2014), well-designed textbooks make learning more interesting, funny and meaningful. Particularly, the integration of image-text may considerably influence the process of learning and students' academic performance in school (Janko and Peskova, 2013). Accordingly, most of the surveyed school principals, teachers and students under the present study expressed their satisfaction with the textbooks because they believed that the textbooks present new information, skills, values, attitudes that students need to learn. Also, the textbooks included pedagogical guidance for teachers on how to use the textbooks in the classroom. Moreover, the results of the present study also showed that most of the teachers and students were satisfied with the layout and the structure of the textbooks that they believed were attractive and user friendly.

The present study also indicated that most of the teachers did not use some other supportive teaching-learning materials in their classes. Teachers need to prepare some supplementary teaching-learning materials to make their teaching more interesting, facilitated and effective. Under the present study, it was observed that almost all the teachers pertinently used some of the supplementary teaching-learning materials such as charts, pictures, maps and some other self-generated materials. The use of media was not seen in any of the observed classes. One of the key advantages of using a variety of teaching-learning materials and aids is increase in students' motivation and interest. When they are exposed to varied means and learning materials, they do not tend to feel bored in the classroom.

Looking at the present technological advancement, it is also desirable to use technology in teaching.

The main reason for not using supplementary teaching-learning materials as it was seen is the teachers' instructional method itself. Almost all the teachers relied entirely on textbooks as the main resource for their teaching in the classroom. The second reason can be the lack of professional skills related to design and prepare appropriate supplementary instructional materials, as it was also highlighted by some of the principals. Lastly, school administrations should be also held accountable for not encouraging teachers to adopt varied supplementary instructional materials. Even in the case of capacity building, school administrations should provide training opportunities for the teachers to enhance their knowledge and professional skills.

The findings of the present study revealed that to the most extent the content of the textbooks is aligned with the general objectives that are specified by the National Curriculum of Afghanistan. The goals and objectives of the National Curriculum are likely to vary depending on countries and nations. Alignment means that the curriculum is coherent; curriculum, instruction and assessment are in a close association and this alignment is fundamental to the success of the curriculum. (Drake & Burns, 2004) According to Drake and Burns there are two different types of alignments: external and internal alignment. The external alignment refers to the association among the curriculum, expected standards and testing objectives. Therefore, the teacher (curriculum implementer) should make sure that the expected standards have been achieved appropriately at each level. The internal alignment occurs among teacher's classroom pedagogical strategies, assessment procedures and intended standards. Thus, teacher's classroom instructional strategies should be designed in close alignment with the expected standards to equip students with the required knowledge and skills. Accordingly, both the types of alignments are essential for the success of the curriculum and achieving the target (goals) through daily classroom teaching. Consequently, as it was mentioned above, the internal alignment of the textbooks and national curriculum objectives depends on the effectiveness and success of teachers in the classroom. If the quality of teaching in terms of relevance and association with expected goals are not guaranteed, alignment between textbooks and curriculum

objectives cannot be fulfilled. Looking to the all related major findings, it can be revealed that though most of the surveyed school principals, teachers and students expressed their satisfaction with the textbooks; the teachers were failed to ensure the above stated internal and external alignments.

Several aspects related to evaluation and classroom assessment process were investigated under the present study. The results of the present study revealed that almost all of the teachers mainly focused on the testing of knowledge rather than skills and attitudes. In other words, all surveyed teachers' assessment was somewhat based on three learning domains namely; Affective, Cognitive and Psychomotor. As explained by Piaget (quoted by Smith,1985), education should enable people to innovate new things, not to repeat what they are exposed to. Accordingly, a suitable evaluation method should also be employed to measure students' performance in all aspects. This is what the Afghan National Curriculum Framework insists on. The NCF (2003) urged teachers to design the assessment that can determine all-round development of the students in terms of what students have learned and how well they are able to use that acquired knowledge. Therefore, the alignment of the learning objectives, teacher instructional strategies and assessment procedure is fundamentally important. Here the curriculum objectives can be perceived as the required standards expected in the National Curriculum Framework for each educational program and every single grade. The NCF as the cornerstone of Afghanistan highlighted the importance of quality assessment with special emphasis on the diversifying of assessment activities. The framework encouraged teachers for adopting the variety of assessment tools and appropriate techniques to measure students' progress in learning in respect to knowledge, skills, and values.

Against this background, the findings of this study showed that in most of the schools, evaluation and assessment procedures were not in close alignment with curriculum objectives. Most of the teachers used traditional assessment (paper-pencil tests) only to measure students' progress what Mueller (2016) believes is a curriculum derived assessment that mainly focuses on knowledge rather than skills.

The results of the present study indicated that teachers mostly relied on summative assessment. Assessment is unavoidable and at the same time challenging task in the teaching-learning process. Students' learning progress may not be measured only through summative assessment techniques and tools as; this type of assessment is usually carried out for grading purposes. Instead, as suggested by Race (2009) assessment needs to be diversified in terms of its process and instruments that no student should remain disadvantaged because of the format of assessment. On the other hand, the NCF (2003) of Afghanistan also stressed the importance of appropriate use of assessment types and tools. Therefore, this official curriculum document emphasized on multi measures and suggested that special attention should be paid to the diversity of assessment procedures and instruments. Due to this, the NCF persuades the authorized bodies and teacher training designers to address the issue of quality assessment in both pre and in-service programs, particularly with respect to *what* to be assessed (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior), and *how* to be assessed (which tool and procedure should be employed). In other words, the NCF is in favour of providing multiple formative assessment opportunities for the students during the semester that they can improve themselves before their upcoming final examination. Conversely, the findings of this study have shown that most of the teachers used different but some common and mostly summative assessment procedures and techniques in their classes. Even the teacher evaluation approaches that heavily rely on students' test scores are criticized because this type of evaluation cannot help teachers figure out their strengths and weakness. (Baker et al., 2010) Consequently, the assessment approaches and procedures adopted by most of the Afghan Secondary School teachers for both daily bases and long term assessment are not much helpful in measuring students' holistic development in learning. It is mostly an assessment of learning, not for learning.

The results of the present study also indicated that teachers were somewhat effective in encouraging students for self / peer assessment. Self or peer assessment means that students use their judgment to assess their performance or learning. (Race, 2001) The educational systems of the 21st century mostly emphasize students' autonomy and self-directed learning. (Tan, 2015) Thus, self-evaluation helps students take responsibility for their learning and become more independent learners. But at the same time, self-judgment is also conditioned to a range of skills that the students should be equipped with beforehand.

Students need to develop those required skills for making a correct judgment about their work. To put it simply, the teacher should make sure the reliability and correctness of assessment while he/she is using self, peer and group assessment. The NCF of Afghanistan identified a number of specific objectives, a meaningful assessment should achieve. One of these objectives is finding out whether the students can evaluate and monitor their learning or not. On the contrary, the results of the present study indicated that teachers' strategies to encourage students for self-evaluation were somewhat effective. It was seen in very few cases that teachers engaged students in self-evaluation classroom activities. Yet, the monitoring and procedures of how students should be put in pairs and groups to assess one another and provide feedback on each other's work were undermined. At the same time, it should also be kept in mind that assigning students in the classroom to assess each other is not free of risks. Students need to be guided first on how to measure each other's work.

In the present study, however, it was not often that teachers assigned the students to assess each other, but still, it occurred in some classes. The teacher was asking students to take out their homework and measure each other's homework in pairs. Nonetheless, the main problem with activity was the poor monitoring and checking of reliability. Teachers were moving around the class to see whether all students are busy with their work, but whether the students really could provide correct and appropriate feedback on each other's work or not, was not clear. The very common technique most of the teachers were using was the oral questions. They usually asked questions in the beginning or at the end of teaching session as a check for comprehension. Very few teachers were observed using some other techniques like think-pair-share, summarizing the main points or key concepts of the lesson at the end of the teaching session. Peer and group assessment activities were observed very rarely in classes and outside the classroom.

Another finding of the present study indicated that most of the teachers assessed students in the beginning, during and at the end of the classes. But again the finding showed that most of the teachers relied on oral questions only to check students' understanding at different stages. Students' assessment at all stages of the lesson is important because the teacher has to check whether the students can understand the teaching-learning materials

presented by the teacher or not. Assessment at the beginning of a new teaching session is important because, by this, a teacher can gauge students' prior knowledge of the topic which is going to be taught and to identify students' learning needs. This can also help a teacher evaluate the effectiveness of his/her instruction in the previous classes. In the same way, the teacher has to make sure what is not clear yet to the students and he/she needs to provide further focus on that. Similarly, at the last moments of the class, the teacher has to assess students to know whether they have achieved the objectives for the session or not. In a list of research-based strategies suggested by Rosenshine (2012) for effective classroom instruction, one is that a teacher should try to check students' understanding at every stage of the lesson and then re-teach whatever is needed. Therefore, teachers are supposed to use a variety of classroom assessment techniques concerning different educational needs of the learners and classroom situations.

Now the matter of concern is that, did all of the students feel comfortable in raising their hands and answer teacher's questions? Or some introverted students were also there who may prefer to remain keep quiet even if they had some difficulties in their minds regarding the lesson? Therefore, as Fisher Frey (2014) pointed out that such general question is not enough for checking students' understanding. Moreover, students are not self-monitoring to understand what they know and what they don't. Thus, sometimes they may pretend they understand the learning facts covered in the lesson, but in reality, they may not have understood. Consequently, the teacher has to assess students' understanding several times and at different stages of the lesson by using different techniques. For instance, an assessment technique such as a one-minute paper at the end of the class can provide an equal chance for the introverted students to write down the key points they have learned during the lesson and the ones still they are not clear about and look forward to knowing more in the next classes. (Cross and Angelo, 1998)

Another issue of crucial importance about assessment in Afghan Secondary Schools is the effectiveness of assessment with regard to measuring higher-order cognitive skills in students. As explained by Cross and Angelo (1998), many teacher-made assessments focus on the lower level learning skills only, which make students reproduce the things they have heard from their teacher. But, the 21st century education emphasizes the importance of

higher-level thinking abilities. Therefore, assessment has to include all levels of cognitive skills, especially; critical thinking, problem-solving and the ability to use knowledge in various situations.

Particularly about the assessment of language oral expression in the classroom, the results of the present study indicated that "Calling on individual pupils to repeat phrase/word/sound" was the only strategy used by most of the teachers in language, particularly English language classes. Assessing students' oral expression of language is a common task teacher usually undertakes in the classroom. But as it is highlighted by Harmer (2007), the teacher should be very careful with this task, especially when a teacher tries to correct students' oral errors at the time of an ongoing conversation. If a teacher corrects students' mistakes in an insensitive way, he/she can discourage students and harm their confidence. Accordingly, different error correction or corrective feedback strategies can be employed by the teachers to deal with this issue in a language class. It is to be stressed again that employing an appropriate corrective feedback/error correction strategy is the key to students' success in a language class because using an inappropriate strategy can hamper student's language learning and make him/her annoyed. (Truscott, 1999) Therefore, asking students to repeat the utterance he/she said incorrectly may not be the appropriate strategy in all settings. Particularly, for a shy student if he/she is not able to reproduce the correct version of that utterance might be humiliating. Another issue with this type of error correction strategy is that it is too focused, particularly grammar-based which might be demotivating particularly for reluctant students and they may not speak at all. Hence, using an appropriate strategy at a proper time is key for oral error correction in a language class.

In like manner, the results of the analyzed data also show that to the most extent, both teachers and students used their mother tongue (L1) in English classes (TEFL). As it is highlighted by Scott and Fuente (2008), there is a general consensus among foreign language teachers over the past 30 years that teachers should maximize the use of target language (TL) to the possible extent in the first language teaching classes (FL). In this way, students are exposed to the maximum input in TL and acquire the target language which is better than learning a foreign language. (Atkinson, 1993)

Consequently, assessment as an inseparable part of the teaching-learning process cannot be modified without the improvement of the whole process. Put it differently, if the teacher adopts some common traditional ways of evaluation, developing assessment based on three learning domains (cognitive, affective and psychomotor) is not enough. Some immediate causes addressed by some of the principals and teachers for failure to plan comprehensive assessment were; overcrowded classes, lack of skills and teachers' own beliefs towards the evaluation process. Thus, most of the teachers observed under the present study, use the traditional teacher-centered methods for teaching which substantially influence their beliefs about assessment designing and practices. Hence, adopting a suitable pedagogy should be a conscious decision and commitment to every teacher. As an alternative explanation, it would be better to quote here, as it says: *"both practices and beliefs are shaped by pedagogical and cultural traditions".* (OECD 2009, p.93)

It is a realized fact that unlike quantitative research, qualitative research takes the researcher's contact with the field and its members as a precise part of knowledge instead of viewing them as hurdles. The researcher's reflections on his/her actions, observations in the field, his/her impressions, feelings, dislikes etc. become the supporting data for his/her interpretations under the study. One can very easily visualize these aspects from the above discussions. Hence, the investigator felt on the basis of his experiences during the course of study that, the present study could have been done better as a pure qualitative research study. There would have been a better scope of using Mixed methods and applying different types of Triangulation in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The results of the present study provide a detailed picture of the realistic scenario of teaching-learning practices in Afghan Secondary Schools. To put it simply, it tells what is going on inside classrooms and how the situation affects learning outcomes and the quality of school education as a whole. It would help Afghan policymakers, working non-governmental agencies, authorities, teachers, students and parents to recognize the deficiencies and weaknesses of the education system and current teaching-learning process in the secondary schools. The major implications of this study would be as follows:

- The results of this study will help education policymakers; particularly curriculum developers to rethink their policies with respect to facts based on ground realities and the grass-root level educational needs and the situations in the secondary schools of Afghanistan.

- The present study will also draw the attention of government to improve modalities for the preparation of textbooks, the teacher education process and provide more professional development opportunities to the Secondary School teachers.

- It will also help teachers, principals and school administrators to reconsider teaching-learning strategies, evaluation procedures and make necessary changes in the overall pedagogical practices.

- The present study can be an important start for many other academic works by Afghan researchers in the field of education. Afghan educators, scholars and teachers will have at least a shred of scientific evidence that demonstrates the effects of teacher and teacher pedagogical practices on the quality of education in secondary schools in Afghanistan. The findings of the present study will hopefully draw the attention of the authorities and policymakers towards the improvement of the current situation.

- The study will also provide convincing evidence for the non- governmental organizations and donor agencies working in the sector of education in Afghanistan to revise their working approaches and strategies, especially their teacher training policies and procedures that need to be upgraded as per the needs of the teachers.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FURTHER STUDIES

This study presents an extensive analysis of the data related to pedagogy as a key and most important quality indicator in secondary schools of Paktia province in Afghanistan. The term pedagogy deals with several different aspects in the broad sense. Thus, studying pedagogy with its all complementary and supplementary elements needs further studies, particularly in the Afghan context. Accordingly, the following areas are suggested for further studies:

(i)   Teacher preparation programs both pre-and in-service have to be reviewed with respect to appropriateness for preparing professional teachers for teaching in secondary schools.

(ii)   In-service training has to be studied in connection with curriculum objectives and classroom pedagogical practices.

(iii) Study on Teachers' pedagogical skills in particular subject areas.

(iv)   Study on Career-long national strategy for enhancing teachers' Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK).

(v)   Effectiveness of Teachers' Training Programme at all levels with reference to Pedagogical practices.

(vi)   A comprehensive follow-up monitoring and support strategy for the successful implementation of in-service training.

(vii) A study on different quality indicators affecting pedagogical practices at school level.

(viii) A study on use of ICT in the classrooms and its effectiveness on quality of education.

(ix)   A study on teachers' awareness with respect to their Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge.

(x)   Effectiveness of innovative pedagogical practices on students' achievement.

(xi)   Teachers' professionalism and Students' motivation.

(xii) Impact study of External School Inspection on the quality of education.

(xiii) A study of quality in education with reference to certain variables (like; Teachers' teaching proficiency, Principal's academic vision, Educational resources, Co-curricular activities etc..)

(xiv)   A study on the effectiveness of Teaching Learning Materials on students' achievement.

(xv)   Correlation between Classroom climate and students' achievement.

CONCLUSION

The present study depicts a comprehensive investigation of pedagogy as a quality indicator in secondary schools of *Paktia* province in Afghanistan. The study was split up into three main areas: teaching-learning process, curriculum/textbooks and the procedures of evaluation. In consequence, taking the findings of the study into account, teachers' poor performance in all studied pedagogical aspects has to be a matter of concern with respect to quality education in general. It is worrying that most of the teachers despite taking in-service training, still lack essential pedagogical skills and seem to be firm believers in traditional teaching-learning methods. Particularly, the successful implementation of the new curriculum seems to be a more challenging job for most of them. One of the key reasons for teachers' failure and low performance is their ill-preparedness for the career. Especially in Afghanistan a war-torn country, where the poor performance teacher education institutions are unable to prepare quality teachers for the nation. Therefore, the immediate need for improvement in professional development strategies and training is absolutely imperative. It is highly recommended that every new strategy for teacher professional development designed by the government itself should consist of continuous follow-up and classroom-based monitoring activities. The follow-up strategy should support and reinforce teachers' knowledge and skills on how to apply effective pedagogical approaches and practices. Most of the teachers, as they were observed in their real classroom situations, need continuous support to improve their daily basis classroom instructional practices. As it was seen in this study, most of the teachers who had already received some series of professional development programs in pedagogy were still relying on non-interactive instructional methods (didactic lecture) only. Therefore, the new professional development and enrichment programs should help teachers to improve their beliefs and attitudes towards teaching-learning practices, especially the assessment

process. Professional development programs should also enhance teachers' skills in use of technology use in the classroom.

Besides, teacher socio-economic status is another essential factor in connection with their performance and school effectiveness. The higher salary of school teachers not only increases their school-based efforts but as it was found out by a survey recently conducted in 31 countries; there is a strong link between teachers' higher cognitive skills and their high salaries. (Evans, 2019) In low-income countries including Afghanistan, where teachers receive low payment and suffer from different socio-economic problems that can undermine their school-based activities and academic performance. Thus, the Afghan government has to pay more attention to these influential factors along with the above-mentioned findings with regard to the quality of Secondary School Education in Afghanistan.

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