

A STUDY ON THE PEDAGOGY AS A QUALITY INDICATOR IN
SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF PAKTIA PROVINCE IN
AFGHANISTAN

A

Ph.D. Synopsis

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The history of Afghan School Education dates back to its very elemental feature of Mosque-centered education. People used to receive tuition in Islamic studies from the clerics (*Mullahs*) in mosques and *Madrassa*. These institutions still remain as the traditional education centers in the Afghan society with minor changes in its teaching methodology. Accordingly, the modern education system was instituted at the end of 19th century for the first time of Afghan history. In 1878, two schools for modern education (one military and one general) were built in Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan. Later, in 1903 another high school was founded with not more than ten Afghan and Indian teachers. Subsequently, the pace towards modernization was quickened afterwards. New school textbooks as well as teacher guide (guide-book) were developed for the first time in 1906. Next, when it was realized that the teaching of the new textbooks requires professionally trained teachers, first teacher training institute was established in 1912. The process of modernization of education was literally speeded up by coming of King Amanullah Khan in power (1919-1929), who is named a reformist king and famous for his modernistic vision in the contemporary history of Afghanistan. Therefore, he is believed to be the founder of modern education in Afghanistan. The King Amanullah Khan made primary school education compulsory to all Afghan citizens. He allowed a number of innovations in different sectors including girls' education and the Ministry of Education were also established for the first time. Further, the number of schools was increased and hundreds of schools were built across the country. (UK Essays, 2018; Khwajamir, 2016)

Thereafter during 1929 to 2001, considerable enhancement can be seen in the sector of education alongside many challenges and deficiencies. A decades-long war broke out after communist revolution in 1978 and Soviet Union invasion in the following year. During this period of time some changes were made purposely in school curriculum with respect to new radical policies adopted by communist regime. The government tended to integrate politics in education, particularly in school curriculum as per their policy, what they called the process of modernization, the communist ideology should have been taught in all Afghan schools. Thus, seeing all these moves, a negative public response was provoked, people started to mistrust the attitudes of the regime and refusing to enroll their children in schools. As it is demanded in a synthesized research

paper released by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA, 2011), only 10 per cent children of primary and secondary age were attending schools; most of them belonged to communist party members. At the same time, war against Soviet Union was further escalated and millions of people were forced to flee their country. In addition to this, educational infrastructures had been seriously devastated. Schools, teacher training centers, universities and other community-based education centers were dreadfully damaged or destroyed and teachers had to leave the country.

Afterwards, during the new Government (Hamid Karzai presidency, 2001-2014), education was incredibly bloomed. The very recent updates published by the Ministry of Education (2017), depicted that there were around nine million students in more than sixteen thousand schools and training centers all over the country, whereas 2,02,733 teachers were teaching in these schools. By contrast, the enrolment in the beginning of *Back to School* campaign in 2001 was less than one million.

To conclude, the issue of concern one should take into account with respect to education in Afghanistan at present time, is the growing dissatisfaction towards the quality of school education among the parents, students, educators and practitioners. [Afghanistan National Education for All (EFA) Review Report, 2015; National Education Strategic Plan (NESP), 2015; Education Sector Analysis Report, 2010 and Mansory, 2010] This is not to say that quality of education is only the matter of concern for Afghans, but it is a pressing issue or need for every nation in all countries. However, the quality education becomes as a serious challenge for the governments in a post war countries where the dearth of human capital, sources and infrastructural facilities hampers the reconstruction process of education. Hence, the key question then arises as what does 'quality' and 'quality education' actually mean? There is a lot of controversy over these concepts among educational practitioners and intellectuals. More importantly, the quality is considered as a continuous process for betterment and further improvement in services or products regardless to the debate on its theory and definition. Thus, it can vary in different contexts as per the dominant conditions and requirements, as Crosby (1979) says: "Quality is conformance to requirements". But still, in addition to particular governments or institutions, the internationally recognized organizations, such as United Nations (UN), Organizations for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have introduced some specific indicators for quality in education that provide a springboard for the local policies for quality education.

2.0 DIMENSIONS FOR QUALITY EDUCATION

It should be noted that the world declaration on education led by United Nations (Education for All, 2000) introduced an operational plan (Dakar Framework for Action-2000) and the world was asked to achieve all its goals by 2015. This declaration highlighted the issue of poor quality education in all countries and laid emphasis on the improvement of it. Dakar Framework for Action acknowledged that access to quality education is the right of every child regardless of gender, wealth, location, language or ethnic origin anywhere in the world. This framework recognizes five key dimensions for quality namely; characteristics of learners, environment, process, content, and outcomes. All these dimensions are described as under:

(a) Characteristics of Learners

This is mainly related to the nourishment of mental/physical health and preparation of the learners for their active participation in the learning process. Especially, in early childhood it is to be very imperative. Healthy learners must enjoy full support of their families for their education. Any worrying trend can be a hindrance to the development of learners and school attendance. Pre-school healthy psychological background particularly plays a very crucial role in how learners would be in their learning experience onwards.

(b) Environment

The learning environment should be healthy, safe, supportive and free of disparities and prejudices. Especially for girls, a non-discriminatory classroom climate must be there at school as it is still an issue in many countries. A helpful learning environment provides plenty of learning resources and facilities for learners and they are allowed to have an easy access to useful learning materials. Learners must feel full secured and safe within their learning environment. Moreover, a quality learning environment according to UNICEF (2000) should have the required facilities such as; building, clean water, health services, hygienic sanitation system and reasonable class sizes where students, particularly girls can learn comfortably. Giving sufficient time to learners to think and create is another characteristic of quality environment underlined in UNICEF's definition for quality learning environment.

(c) Process

It has direct concern with the quality of teaching – learning process. The role of teacher in quality instruction is crucial and cardinal with regard to students' achievement in school (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996; National Education Goals Panel, 1998). Therefore, a qualified teacher has to be able first to identify students' learning needs and then help them to be responsive to their needs effectively. Therefore, it is highly recommended that a teacher should have deep understanding not only of subject content but also of pedagogical skills that assist him/her to deliver the content skillfully and use his/her school time with maximum efficiency. (UNICEF, 2000) Hence, it is recommended that teachers should be professionally well-prepared for the career by continuous professional capacity building to avoid failure in school. Preparation should be both in content knowledge as well as in pedagogical aspects, because teacher's teaching methodology directly affects students' performance and learning outcomes.

(d) Content

Content, as a quality dimension is generally being reflected from the curriculum and learning materials used for the education. The curriculum and learning materials should be suitable and relevant to students' learning needs and level in terms of overlapping the required knowledge, skills and emotional competences in reference with the national goals for education. Besides, a quality curriculum as recommended by (UNICEF, 2000) should be gender- sensitive to both boys and girls. It should also address the needs and differences of individuals as well as disadvantaged groups. Curriculum and learning materials should enable students to read, write, use numbers and should also focus on life skills (psycho-social skills). Another key point related to curriculum is *peace education* as a core value, particularly in a conflict zone it has to be highly considered. A quality curriculum is thought to inculcate a peace loving character in learners as well as to resolve a conflict peacefully.

(e) Outcomes

The expected outcomes for quality education or teaching-learning process is producing a holistically developed learner who is able to read, write, use numbers, apply knowledge in real life situations, have high-order thinking skills and knowledge of using technology. Besides, other outcomes as highlighted by Dakar Framework for

Action (2000), are enhancement of human progress and national development in general, lifelong learning and positive participation in society. It is needless to say that all the dimensions of quality education can be taken care of by using appropriate pedagogy.

3.0 PEDAGOGY

The term pedagogy simply refers to the *science* and *art* of teaching, but it cannot be defined as easily as it seems. It is to be somewhat obscure and vague concept. According to Chapuis (2003), pedagogy is essentially a combination of knowledge and skills required for effective instruction. Watkins and Mortimer (1999) believe that pedagogy refers to all those activities that are designed consciously for the aim of educating other people. Alexander (2003) believes that pedagogy is not only the practice of teaching, but it also includes the skills that a teacher should use in order to make different decisions related to his/her professional career. Leach and Moon (1999) explained pedagogy as a joint effort activity. In other words, a set of attempts both teacher and learners make together in order to achieve the anticipated learning goals, is called pedagogy. Likewise, pedagogy is the set of teaching-learning practices that form the interaction between teacher and students.

Hence, bearing the above definitions in mind, pedagogy does not cover simply teaching but learning too. Accordingly, teachers need to have knowledge of current teaching methods and effective teaching strategies that can help them to educate students with the skills of deep understanding, critical thinking, innovation and the ability to apply the knowledge in their real life situations (Cogill, 2008). Thus on the basis of the above fundamental knowledge it can be revealed that, pedagogy can also be considered as a quality indicator.

4.0 PEDAGOGY AS A QUALITY INDICATOR

Quality education or quality separately as a sole concept may not overlap all the indicators fitting to every single context. Instead, different nations, communities and organizations, educational institutions may have their own definitions consistent with their particular situations. Regardless of the agreement on quality or quality education, pedagogy as an individual quality indicator plays a dominant role in quality education. If we see the main five indicators identified by UNICEF (2000) for quality education

namely; *learners, environment, process (teaching-learning), content (curriculum and learning materials), and outcomes*, three of them are closely associated with teacher and his/her teaching strategies. When it comes to the *environment*, teacher and his / her teaching methodology play an influential role here in providing a supportive, safe and discrimination free learning environment inside the classroom. Then again, as it is recommended that the *content (curriculum and teaching-learning materials)* should be relevant to students' learning needs; teachers are the key factor both in regard to preparation and implementation of leaning materials. In the same way, school and students' outcomes may not be thought in the absence of teachers and their pedagogical practices at all.

Pedagogy is evident in all teaching-learning activities carried out or led by teachers for the sake of students' learning inside the classroom or in any other educational setting. Therefore, pedagogy identifies that how teacher teaches and what he/she teaches is inseparable from how and what he/she assesses and how he/she learns. Hence, the quality of pedagogy is the most powerful factor among others, which can substantially affect the quality of learning and learners' outcomes. Thus, the three essential dimensions that form a pedagogy model which can improve students' learning outcomes are: pedagogy that can promote high level intellectual quality, pedagogy that can promote a quality learning environment and pedagogy that develops and lets students clearly understand the significance of their academic work. (NSW, DET, 2003)

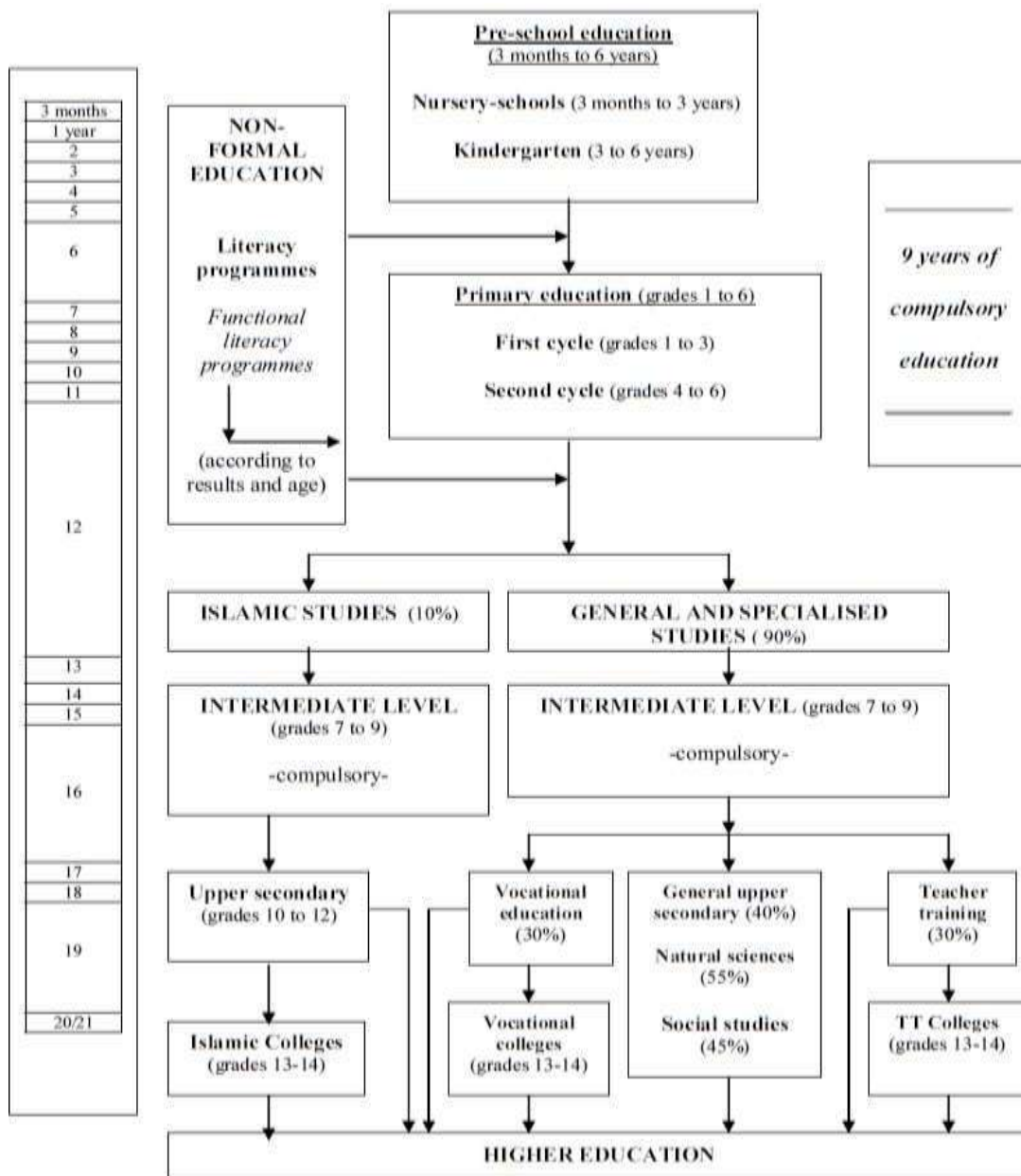
In the same way, the quality indicators recognized by Organizations for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 1998) in six categories, almost all of them demonstrate the significance of teacher and pedagogy in terms of input, process and output/outcomes. These six categories are: context of education, financial and human resources invested for education, access to education, participation and progression, learning environment and organization of schools, individual, social and market outcomes of education, and student achievement (outcomes). These six indicators can be sorted into three main categories as the component parts of a productive system such as, input, process and output. Hence, all three indicators have to be centred on teacher and his/her daily basis pedagogical practices. In other words, school and student outcomes directly depends on what and how has been put in terms of pedagogical practices during a specific period of time. Considering the pedagogical practices as an

important indicator of quality, the present research has been conducted to study the same keeping in focus the secondary education in Afghanistan.

5.0 SECONDARY EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

In Afghanistan school education begins at age 6-7 and continues to age 20. The school education covers different phases; first 6 years Primary education (3 years lower primary and 3 years upper primary education), 6 years Secondary education and 2 years Post school education. The secondary phase is a two-stage education (lower secondary and upper secondary). The lower secondary school begins with grade 7 to 9 for the pupils of age group 12/13 to 15/16. The upper secondary school education is of grades 10 to 12 (for the age group 15/16 to 18/19). It is worth mentioning that the education cycles in formal setting start from the age of 3 months to the age of 3 years (pre-school education). The whole school education is free of charge, which is, from pre-school to post-school education. The subjects taught in secondary school are: Mathematics, Science, Languages, Islamic Studies, Life Skills, Arts (practical work and technological education), Physical Education and Sociology. The number of the subjects is 16 to 18 in each grade both in lower and upper secondary schools. The structure of School Education system in Afghanistan can be seen from the given figure.

Structure of School Education System in Afghanistan



[Source: *National Curriculum Framework of Afghanistan (2003)*]

A new curriculum for secondary schools was developed in 2009-10 as mentioned in National Education Strategic Plan (2010). The new secondary school textbooks were also developed based on the principles and objectives of National Curriculum Framework (2003). According to the guiding principles of this curriculum framework, the content of the new textbooks and teaching-learning materials should be developed with a view to equip students with relevant and up-to-date knowledge, factual information and highlighting concepts, relationships and structures between concepts, facts and values. This new curriculum fosters the development of higher level

intellectual skills, emotional and social skills, as well as the development of positive/constructive attitudes (NCF, 2003). Some other inclusive issues were also added afterwards to this newly developed curriculum such as; human rights, gender equity, drugs (counter-narcotics), awareness of HIV/AIDS, family planning and environmental protection.

The Article twenty of Afghan Educational Law (2008) specifies the objectives for secondary school education. Thus, students are expected to be educated with the following characteristics in terms of knowledge, skills and values:

- 1) Develop and strengthen understanding and solidify Islamic belief and values of the students. Non-Muslim students are exempted from this provision.
- 2) Develop and strengthen the spirit of loyalty to the home land, the system of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, preservation of independence, defending territorial integrity and national values, protecting properties and public assets, consolidating democracy, inconformity with Islamic values and nationally accepted traditions.
- 3) Develop and expand culture of peace and equality.
- 4) Aware students about the harms of tobacco, drugs, intoxication, danger of AIDS, terrorism, war, violence, discrimination and every kinds of prejudices and other prohibitions.
- 5) Develop and expand Islamic knowledge, social and natural sciences and mathematics.
- 6) Develop and strengthen skills in national and international languages.
- 7) Use of contemporary technology, including information technology.
- 8) Develop and expand the habit and culture of reading, thinking and analysing academic researches and self-evaluation.
- 9) Develop and strengthen the sense of initiation, intelligence and identifying problems and seeking logical solution.
- 10) Improve and strengthen respecting to the human and woman rights.
- 11) Aware the students to the importance of the protection of the environment and its proper use.
- 12) Prepare students for continuing and higher education, trade and occupation.

6.0 AFGHAN GOVERNMENT POLICY ON QUALITY IN EDUCATION

As an initiative, the National Curriculum Framework which was designed and drafted in partnership with a number of international organizations like; UNESCO, UNICEF, Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, Care International etc. in 2002 and then 120 national and international education experts discussed and revised it in a 5 - day workshop. Finally after incorporating the suggested elements, Board of Education of Afghanistan approved and adopted the framework in 2003. This framework presents need analysis of beyond-war situation and then identifies the vision of the government consisting a number of leading principles for contemporary Afghan quality school education. This framework also stated the policy dimensions of Afghan government for quality education which should equip learners with required knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that enable them to make significant contribution to their war-torn society and have a prosperous life. Consequently, the framework focused on all influential factors that are necessary for quality of education, which are ranging from physical facilities and infrastructures to teacher professionalism, gender sensitivity, equity and effective governance.

Furthermore, the National Curriculum Framework (2003) provides a particular attention to classroom pedagogical practices. It recommends that the teacher should employ learner-centered approach which should take students' learning needs and styles into consideration. According to this framework, teacher's teaching strategies should provide a supportive learning environment and encourage students for a better participation. The framework also highlights some other major responsibilities of teachers in classrooms, as it says the teachers should be facilitators for their students' learning and play their role more than a learning source in the class. Teachers should use various teaching strategies and techniques to foster quality learning by providing opportunities to the students using their knowledge in the real life situations and be creative. Likewise, teachers are required to ensure the effectiveness of assessment and learning evaluation process by considering these important questions: "What has to be assessed (e.g. knowledge, skills, attitudes, students' behavior etc.)? How should be assessed? And when should be assessed? As a whole, this framework encourages high-level intellectual skills, as well as spiritual, emotional and social development.

In addition, the long-term strategic plans developed by the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan also paid particular attention to the issue of quality of school education in the country. The First National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) formulated in (2006), first highlighted the poor quality of school education in Afghanistan and then identified lack of professional teachers as the more considerable reason for lower quality. This document indicated rote learning as commonly adopted technique in the classrooms which did not equip students with basic level literacy, numeracy and critical thinking skills. Therefore, the NESP called for accelerating the teacher training process and staff capacity building activities.

Later on in the same way, the next NESP (2010) also focused on the quality of school education. That five-year strategic plan described the procedure with three focus areas for the purpose of quality improvement in terms of providing a better learning environment, promoting teachers' teaching skills, developing human capacity of educational institutions for effective governance and policy making to help quality improvement. The plan also reported a number of works, which had been done by the Ministry of Education, particularly for quality improvement; for instance, establishing of school councils in 8,000 schools, providing teacher training opportunities and construction of school buildings.

The new National Educational Strategic Plan for 2017-2021 consists three main parts: quality and relevance, equitable access, efficient and transparent management. This strategic plan emphasized on quality teaching-learning through which learners at all levels should acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to be productive, healthy and responsible citizens to be prepared to contribute to the welfare of society and equipped for viable employment in the national and international labor market (NESP, 2016, p.2). This strategic plan highlighted the need of a more relevant quality based curriculum and its successful implementation. Therefore, it is indicated in this plan that the curriculum will be improved in line with labor market's needs and demands. Another focus area of this strategic plan is teacher and his/her pedagogical practices. Therefore, this plan stated government's strategy for an effective continuous teacher professional development process and teacher evaluation policy. (NESP, 2016)

To sum up, the Afghan government has prioritized dealing with the poor quality of education in this country. Lots of efforts have been made to improve the system of education and quality of educational services, but most of the work needs to be done

ahead for quality improvement. The quality should have been maintained along with the rapid pace of quantity over the past 18 years, but as it seems, it is imbalanced in all sides. Therefore, beyond policies, more substantial steps are needed to be taken ahead for quality improvement in all aspects of the education system such as; quality of teacher, teaching-learning process, governance and learning environment. It is evident that, all above aspects are closely related with the pedagogy and its effectiveness.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS OF THE REVIEWED STUDIES

The researcher has reviewed 23 research studies. These studies were focused on a number of quality indicators; particularly pedagogy as a key indicator for quality education. The reviewed studies are divided into three main categories, mentioned as follows:

Studies conducted by Duruji, Azuh and Oviasogie (2014), Sisilya (2011), Lata (2012), Marikoviz, Bjekic and Zlatic (2012), Suwan (2011) and Curtis (2012) were mainly focused on teacher competency and its effects on the quality of education. The findings of all these studies revealed that teacher competences related to subject, profession, creativity and students' motivation had a significant positive effect on the quality of education. According to these studies, only quality and competent teachers understand how to manage teaching-learning materials, classroom activities and the time consumed in the classroom effectively. Moreover, Dilshad (2010) is another researcher who had also investigated about some other key factors that affect teacher quality with respect to his/her pedagogical practices in the class. This researcher also concluded that teacher performance is greatly influenced by his/her professional competencies; especially the method he/she employ for delivering teaching-learning materials in the classroom.

In addition, Khedkar (2015) and Sindhi (2015) investigated some other important quality indicators such as; the role of external and internal inspection and supervision. The results of these studies indicated that both external supervision and inspection (conducted by the ministry of education or other authorized institutions) and internal inspection carried out usually by principals and heads of departments, play a crucial role in school quality education. Similarly, some other studies done by Chaungule (2010), Murphy and Troff (2012), Dahiya (2011) had also supported the above findings. According to them, effective school leadership in close co-operation with the teachers' involvement in teaching - leaning process, has mostly seen to be a contributing factor

in quality school education. Other studies conducted by Juneam (2011) and Dangar (2015) evidenced that to a certain extent, high quality school education depends on a satisfactory and trustworthy supervision for quality maintenance and improvement.

The third category of studies was mostly focused on the significance of teaching - learning facilities and easy access to teachers in schools as the influential quality indicators. Loku (2013), Dilshad (2010), Atieno (2014), Josep (2013) and Jafri (2011) found that easy access of teaching - learning facilities to the teachers like; learning materials, library and related labs profoundly had impact on students' academic achievement in the schools, particularly in secondary schools, where they need not only to get the theoretical knowledge of various subjects but also to practice for acquiring the necessary skills. Specifically about teacher involvement and readiness, Pipatsivapong (2011) concluded under the study that teacher involvement in the process of learning alongside students had a significant relationship with total quality improvement. Also, the teacher-student ratio was identified as one of the important quality influential factors in the study conducted by Bangladesh Research and Evaluation Division (BRAC, 2004).

Consequently there are many educational quality indicators, out of which pedagogy or classroom pedagogical practice is one of the vital important ones. It can be deduced from the reviewed studies that despite the significant role of pedagogy, no study has been exclusively focused on pedagogy as a quality indicator. Particularly, despite the fact that all reports and official documents mentioned that the quality of Afghan school education is poor, no study has been conducted so far on the role of teachers and their pedagogical practices, considering them important quality indicators, in Afghan schools. Therefore, looking to this research gap, the investigator has decided to carry out the present study with the intention of getting answers of the following research questions:

- a) What are the usual teaching-learning approaches / methods the Afghan secondary school teachers adopted conforming to the quality education?
- b) To what extent the implemented curriculum and textbooks taught in Afghan secondary schools are appropriate for quality education?
- c) To what extent the evaluation procedure used by the Afghan school teachers is appropriate for ensuring quality education?

8.0 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Since the present world has become unprecedentedly competitive in every sector of life, quality education is the leading cause for all the advances being made. Technology is a major instance of these progresses which has become an inescapable part of our daily life today. Thus, all nations of the world have shifted their focus from the quantity to quality of education. Now-a-days quality of education is being considered in relation to students' learning outcomes and with respect to market demands. Accordingly, the recent advancements in education system suggest student-centered instruction in educational institutions. Moreover, a relevant and learner-centered curriculum is also essential for quality education. In the same way, learning environment should also be helpful, stimulating and attractive to the students.

As mentioned previously, Afghanistan came out of a constant war in 2001 but unfortunately this country is in some sense still a conflict zone. But at the same time, a legitimate government The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan led by an elected president is ruling this country now. Over the past eighteen years, a lot of remarkable achievements, particularly in the sector of education were made by the government in partnership with international donors. But most of the gains can be considered as the quantitative in essence, while there is a widespread dissatisfaction over the quality of education among the public. Reviewing the available literature on Afghan school education suggest that the quality of school education is unsatisfactory and poor quality instruction is one of the main reasons as per the reports published by the government. [Review Report (EFA, 2015); NESP, 2016; and Education Sector Analysis Report, 2010] Although the situation is as mentioned above, no research evidences have been found so far related to quality of education, quality of Afghan school teachers and / or their pedagogical practices with reference to daily classroom teaching-learning processes.

On the other hand, apart from the national demand for better schooling and quality of education, the Afghan government has also been obliged by the commitment of international community with regard to providing quality education to the citizens, particularly in terms of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. It should be pointed out that the Afghan government receives a huge amount of financial aid from the international community and organizations for the purpose of developing

school buildings, teachers' professional development and providing services for quality improvement of education in the country.

Some remarkable progress has been made so far by the Ministry of Education mainly with respect to quality improvement, but much more is needed to be done ahead. Some of that can be mentioned as the developing of the new curriculum framework and school textbooks, printing and distributing of teacher's guide books (particularly for teachers with less teaching experience), conducting teacher capacity building programs, increasing the number of Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), developing of new detailed syllabi, textbooks and supplementary resource materials for two-year TTC program, developing of three professional training packages for both teachers and school administrators etc. Moreover, quality assurance committees have been established by the Ministry of Education in partnership with some of the international organizations such as UNESCO, Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) and UNICEF. Also, a new Education Law (EL) was approved and enacted in 2008 which consists 11 chapters and 52 articles. This new law was passed for the purpose of assuring the equal access to education and elimination of illiteracy in the Afghan community. This law also places stress on the quality of education and teacher professional development. (Education Law, Gazette No.955-2008)

Despite all these efforts, the quality of secondary school education is poor (Mansory, 2010; EFA, Review Report, 2015; NESP, 2016; Education Sector Analysis Report, 2010). Thus, considering the very significant role of teacher and classroom instruction and their effects on the performance of students and learning outcomes, it has really needed to investigate the role of Afghan teachers with reference to their practices of teaching and curriculum delivery. Few relevant studies have been done on the teacher teaching practices in Afghan schools, but not accessible. Therefore, the raised research questions under the present study were extremely pertinent regarding classroom pedagogical practices and curriculum implementation. The main investigation about teaching-learning process under the study was about studying appropriateness of classroom pedagogical practices in terms of curriculum objectives, students' outcomes and contribution to the quality of education, at large. In essence, as the key important inquiry, it was to determine that what constitutes the teaching philosophy of Afghan secondary school teachers in terms of their daily classroom practices / teaching-learning strategies adopted to educate Afghan students. Secondly, it was to investigate that

whether these teaching-learning strategies are adequate and appropriate in order to promote quality learning and quality education in general or not. Also, another important aspect to be studied was about the appropriateness and relevance of curriculum implemented in Afghan schools, as the Ministry of Education has developed new curriculum and school textbooks for secondary schools. At the same time, the appropriateness of pedagogical practices to support successful implementation of national curriculum was also equally important issue to be considered under the study. Another fundamental aspect related to teaching-learning process which cannot be singled out was evaluation. So it has to be identified what sorts of techniques are presently used by the Afghan secondary school teachers to evaluate their students in line with quality teaching-learning and curriculum objectives. Also to what extent the evaluation helps students improve their performance and to judge their progress effectively.

Therefore, taking into account all the concerns stated above, the present study has been designed to investigate all the mentioned aspects with respect to studying pedagogy as a quality indicator in secondary schools of Afghanistan. In other words, the study was intended to investigate what is happening in secondary schools relating to classroom teaching-learning practices, curriculum implementation and evaluation.

In conclusion, concerning the teaching-learning practices, this study has been focused on ‘pedagogy’ as a very influential factor of quality education and its fundamentals; namely teachers’ teaching-learning strategies, curriculum and textbooks implementation skills and their assessment procedures. It has been studied and observed in the real classrooms that to what extent all these facets are being used in alignment with the estimated objectives. Consequently, the present study is considered to be an effort for answering all the framed research questions. Since even a single research study has not been conducted so far on the quality of Afghan secondary education, this study would be a valuable work in this respect.

9.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

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

10.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

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

- 1) To study the classroom pedagogical practices in secondary schools of Paktia province in Afghanistan with respect to:
 - a) Teaching-Learning process
 - b) Curriculum and text-books
 - c) Evaluation procedure
- 2) To study the pedagogy as a quality indicator in secondary schools of Paktia province in Afghanistan as perceived by the students, teachers and principals.

11.0 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 teacher’s *teaching method*. Teaching method is a description of the way that information or behaviour is carried forward or consolidated during the instructional process. Instructional method is a set of approaches, principles and techniques which the instructor uses to transfer knowledge and the required skills to students.

➤ Curriculum

The term curriculum refers to the academic content, materials or lessons taught in school, 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 blue-print for teaching and learning which enables the desired learning outcomes to be achieved.

➤ **Evaluation**

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

➤ **Quality of Education**

Quality of education means the degree of the entire educational process managed by school under the consideration of standard quality i.e. quality of learners, quality of curriculum, quality of management, quality of material, quality of measurement & evaluation and quality of outcomes for the purpose of the fulfilling learners' requirements, needs or desire, satisfactions or demands and expectations of the community.

12.0 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) Teaching-learning process, (b) Curriculum and textbooks and (c) Evaluation procedure.

13.0 METHODOLOGY

The present study is about pedagogy and the effects of pedagogical practices on the quality of education in secondary schools of Afghanistan. The methodology adopted for the present study is based on Descriptive Survey Design. According to Best & Kahn (2006), descriptive survey type studies are used to find out '*what is*' and therefore the detailed information is required for answering this question. Thus, this study is about what teaching-learning practices and strategies the Afghan secondary school teachers carry out in classrooms. So looking to the study and objectives of the study, a descriptive survey is required to be conducted which helps the researcher to collect the detailed information about the current status of school education in Afghanistan with regard to teachers' teaching strategies and classroom pedagogical practices.

➤ Population

Afghanistan is divided into 34 provinces. Out of these 34 provinces, Paktia province was selected purposively for the present study. There are total 13 districts in this province and the total number of students is 1,82,765 studying in 369 government schools (general education) in all 13 districts. Out of these total students, 41,154 students are studying in 189 secondary schools. The total number of teachers and principals serving in these secondary schools are 4,275 and 189 respectively. Hence, the population for the present study comprised all the mentioned schools, students, teachers and principals in Paktia province of Afghanistan. The detail of district-wise schools can be seen from the table given below:

Sr. No.	District	The Total number of Schools in 13 Districts of Paktia province		
		Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary	Total
1.	Gardiz	17	33	50
2.	Zurmat	13	12	25
3.	Shwak	0	1	1
4.	Waz-e- Zadran	2	0	2
5.	Dandi Pathan	6	5	11
6.	Laja Mangal	5	1	6
7.	Jani Khel	4	6	10
8.	Chamkani	3	9	12
9.	Laja AhmedKhail	6	4	10
10.	Said Karam	10	7	17
11.	Jaji Aryoub	9	12	21
12.	Ahmedaba	9	9	18
13.	Garda Serai	6	0	6
14.	Total Schools			189

[Source: Ministry of Education, Afghanistan (2017)]

➤ Sample

From 13 districts of Paktia province; two schools were randomly selected from each district as the sample for this study. Thus, 26 schools were selected randomly as the sample for the present study. Total 210 students were selected randomly from the selected 26 schools, both from lower secondary and upper secondary classes. Moreover, total 220 teachers and 26 principals serving in the above schools were selected as the sample.

➤ **Tools and Techniques**

The researcher has developed and used the following data collection tools:

a) Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to study the pedagogical knowledge and teaching-learning strategies of secondary school teachers they use in their classrooms regarding teaching-learning process, curriculum transaction, using textbooks and evaluation. The questionnaire included 43 items in three separate parts viz. teaching-learning, curriculum and evaluation. The questionnaire was distributed to 220 teachers serving in 26 secondary schools to collect the data.

b) Semi-structured Interview

Interview is particularly useful when one wants to get the story behind a participant's experience. Interview can pursue in-depth information around a topic (McNamara, 1999). The researcher had developed and planned a semi-structured interview schedule for the secondary school principals to discuss the issue of quality in education with respect to teaching-learning, curriculum and evaluation process in their schools. All 26 secondary school principals were interviewed personally by the researcher in this study.

c) Focus Group Discussion

As Kruger and Casey (2000) described, the purpose of Focus Group Discussion is creating of a comfortable atmosphere for people to discuss a topic and express their ideas, experiences and attitudes about that. Focus Group Discussion can be used for a variety of purposes such as making decisions, assessment and evaluation, problems finding, needs analysis, planning for future etc... The group is guided by a moderator or facilitator who introduces the topic and encourages group members to participate in the discussion. In other words, for gathering the in-depth information, Focus Group Discussion should not be as a face to face interview but a lively discussion among group members. The Focus Group Discussion was used as a data collection technique under the study with the help of school students. At least one Focus Group Discussion was conducted in every school with a group of student. In each group 8-10 students participated in the discussion about the quality of school textbooks, curriculum,

teacher-student interaction, teachers' behavior, other teaching-learning related activities, evaluation etc.

d) Classroom Observational Schedule

Observation schedule as a data collection tool is used to document the activities, behavior and physical aspects of people without making them answer our questions or depending on their willingness and abilities (Powell & Steele, 1996). More precisely, in using different tools and techniques such as; interview, Focus group discussion, questionnaire, the researcher has to depend mostly on participants' willingness and abilities to express their thoughts and insight, that is to say, they may not be able provide for no apparent reasons. Hence, the observation is thought to be an effective data collection instrument to obtain the authentic information about the behavior and actions of participants. The researcher has prepared a classroom observation schedule prior to data collection which contained structured objects regarding teaching-learning practices, evaluation procedure and students' involvement. Four descriptive ratings were used to each trait under the classroom observation schedule in terms of Effective, Somewhat Effective, Ineffective and Not Observed. The classroom observation schedule was used during total 65 classes in the selected 26 secondary schools of 13 districts to collect first hand information personally by the researcher.

➤ Data collection

The qualitative data were collected under the study with the help of the tools and techniques such as Questionnaire, Semi-structured interview schedule, Focus Group Discussion and Classroom observation schedule. Apart from this some documents review was also done. The content of the school textbooks were reviewed by the researcher to gather the data about the design and arrangement of the textbooks' content.

➤ Data analysis

The data collected through Questionnaire, Semi-structured interview schedule, Focus Group Discussion and Classroom observation schedule were mostly qualitative in nature and needed to be analyzed and interpreted descriptively in order to provide a full narrative of the status of pedagogical practices in Afghan secondary schools. Further

looking to the requirements, some of the gathered data were also analyzed with the help of percentages and frequency distribution.

14.0 MAJOR FINDINGS

- It was found that majority of the teachers in secondary schools adopted ineffective traditional teaching-learning strategies and therefore, their daily basis classroom pedagogical practices were less helpful to promote quality of education.
- It was found that despite some deficiencies; curriculum was relevant, up-to-date, well organized and appropriate to the students' learning level.
- It was found that most of the teachers relied only on the textbooks as a learning resource, while the other supplementary teaching-learning materials such as graphics, handouts, charts, posters, audio/video and PowerPoint slides were rarely used in the classroom teaching-learning processes.
- It was observed that, to some extent the Afghan teachers paid attention towards importance of using variety of assessment techniques that can measure the holistic development of students' learning and academic performance.
- It was found that some of the teachers also conducted formative classroom evaluation with the help of the techniques like; giving homework, oral questions in classroom, discussions and group / pair work.
- It was found that most of the summative evaluation techniques used by the Afghan teachers are; achievement tests, mid-term and final exams.
- Particularly, the teachers did not embrace the strategies which can help students have reflection on their own learning and promote self-directed learning among them.

15.0 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The results of this study provide a detailed picture of the realistic scenario of teaching-learning in Afghan secondary schools. Thus, it tells what is going on in classrooms and how the situation affects learning outcomes and quality of education as a whole. It would help Afghan policy makers, working non-governmental agencies, authorities, teachers, students and parents to recognize the deficiencies and weaknesses of the education system and teaching-learning process going on in the secondary schools.

- The results of this study will also help education policy makers; particularly curriculum developers to rethink on their policies with respect to facts based on ground realities and the grass-root level needs and situation in the schools.
- This study will also draw the attention of government and non-governmental organizations to improve 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 their teaching-learning strategies and evaluation procedures and make necessary changes.
- The present study can be a good 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 which 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 authorities and policy makers to the improvement of current situation.
- The study will also provide convincing evidence for the non- governmental agencies and organizations working in the sector of education in Afghanistan to revise their working methods, especially their teacher training policies and procedures need to be upgraded as per the needs of the teachers in career.

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