CHAPTER-1

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The history of Afghan School Education dates back to its very elemental feature of Mosque-centered learning. People used to receive tuition in Islamic studies from the clerics (*Mullahs*) in mosques and *Madrasas* (educational institutions for religious studies). These institutions still remain as the traditional education centers in the Afghan society with minor changes in its program of studies and teaching-learning methodology. Accordingly, the modern education system was instituted at the end of the 19th century for the first time in Afghanistan. In 1878, two schools for modern education (one military and one general) were established in Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan. Later, in 1903 another high school was also founded with not more than ten Afghan and Indian teachers. Subsequently, the pace towards modernization was quickened afterward. New school textbooks, as well as Teacher's Guides (Guide-books), were developed for the first time in 1906. Next, after the analysis of the challenges faced by teachers in teaching these new school textbooks, a first Teacher Training Institute was also established in 1912 to make teachers ready for the successful implementation of this new curriculum.

The process of modernization of education was speeded up by the coming of King Amanullah Khan in power (1919-1929), who is known as a reformist king and famous for his modernistic vision in the contemporary history of Afghanistan. Herein Khan is believed to be the founder of modern education in Afghanistan. Khan made primary school education compulsory to all Afghan citizens. He allowed several innovations in different sectors including girls' education and because of his special consideration for education, The Ministry of Education was established for the first time in 1920. Further, the number of schools was also increased and hundreds of new schools were built across the country.

Thereafter, from 1929 to 2001 considerable enhancements can be seen in the sector of education alongside many challenges and difficulties. At the time of the communist revolution (*Saur Revolution*) in April-1978 which was followed by the Soviet Union invasion, some substantial changes were made purposely in the national school curriculum. Thereafter, the communist ideology was suggested to be taught in all governmental schools. Seeing these irregular changes, people started to mistrust the moves of the communist regime because they considered this act as a result of foreign imposition on the education system of their country. Therefore, most of the people did not want to send their children to these schools. Consequently, as it is claimed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA, 2011), only 10 percent of primary and secondary school-age children were attending schools at that time.

At the end of the Soviet occupation, the government of Dr. Najibullah was ousted and *Mujahideen* seized the control of the country in 1992. During this period the country was pushed to another chaotic situation as the fight among different groups of *Mujahideen* broke out and the remaining undamaged infrastructures in the Afghan-Soviet war were also destroyed. Millions of people were forced to run away from the country. Most of the schools were closed and a large number of school buildings were demolished. At the beginning of the Afghan-Soviet war (*Jihad,* 1979-1989), millions of Afghans fled the country and settled in the refugee camps in neighboring countries, especially in Iran and Pakistan. At that time, the parties of Afghan *Mujahideen* developed a discrete curriculum for schools with more focus on *Jihadi* ideology with a tendency to radicalism, and accordingly, new school textbooks were printed and distributed to the Afghan schools in refugee camps.

Later on, inside the country, when the Taliban came in power (1996-2001), the situation became progressively worse. The Taliban regime enforced a very strict version of law prohibiting, music, television and cinema. This regime also banned girls' schools as they disapproved of girls' education. In this period the number of *Madrasas* was considerably increased because the regime was placing more emphasis on religious education. Therefore, *Madrasas* were the main source for both primary and secondary education at that time. Also, schools were in poor quality and conditions, while the number of students was less than one million throughout the country. The rule of this regime was overthrown at the end of 2001.

Afterward, during the new government (Hamid Karzai presidency, 2001-2014), education was incredibly bloomed. According to the report published by the Education Ministry of Afghanistan (2012), the number of students in all 16,600 schools and training centers across the country was around nine million, whereas 2,10,000 teachers were teaching in these schools. By contrast, the enrolment at the beginning of the "Back to School" campaign in 2001 was only 900,000. Although the Afghan nation suffered a lot in the four-decade war, the public opinion about education has significantly changed now in Afghan society (UK Essays, 2018; Khwajamir, 2016). At present, almost every individual in this country demands a quality education even in rural areas. The latest survey conducted by the Center of International Cooperation (CIC, 2016) demonstrates that 96.7 percent of Afghans believed that sending their children to schools should be one of their priorities.

As mentioned above, during the long-lasting war in Afghanistan educational infrastructures were seriously devastated. Schools, teacher training centers, universities, and other community-based education centers were dreadfully damaged or completely destroyed. At present, in consequence, low-quality education is one of the long-term impacts of this war and it is a matter of serious concern to all of the citizens including educators and pedagogues in this country now [Mansory, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2015; NESP, 2015; Pouras Consult Aps., 2016; UNESCO, 2014; UNICEF, 2019; Danish, 2019]. In addition to this, some other studies conducted by Karalson & Mansory (2007), and World Bank (2017) also concluded that the quality of school education in this war-ravaged country is poor and most of the teachers adopt teacher-centered pedagogy and 'lecturing' method is broadly used for instruction in schools. The main reasons for this problem are identified as teachers with minimum qualifications, lack of facilities in schools, lack of quality teaching-learning materials, school buildings, appropriate classroom environment, effective school governance, and security threats in some areas. (Ministry of Education, 2015)

Quality of education is an issue of global concern for every nation across the world. Nonetheless, in regards to conflict-affected situations like Afghanistan, the quality education becomes like a serious challenge for the governments where the dearth of human capital, sources, and funding scheme hamper the reconstruction process of educational infrastructures. As a result, the key question then arises that what

constitutes a 'quality education'? And what are the crucial dimensions of quality education? Answering these key questions requires an in-depth discussion on the term 'quality' which should be initiated with a clear definition of this word. There is a lot of controversy over the concepts like quality, quality education or quality in education among educational practitioners and intellectuals. More importantly, the quality is considered as a continuous process for the betterment and further improvement in services or products regardless of the debate on its theory and definition. Thus, the concept of quality education can vary in different contexts as per the dominant conditions and requirements; just like Crosby (1979) says: "Quality is conformance to requirements". However, in addition to particular governments and institutions, internationally recognized organizations such as United Nations (UN), Organization 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.

1.1 QUALITY EDUCATION

'Quality education' and 'indicators of quality education' are two inseparable discussions. Education as a process through which knowledge, skills, and values are passed on to the new generation cannot be measured directly. On the other hand, education itself as a broad system includes some interrelated subsystems or components such as school, teacher, teacher education, curriculum, student, instruction, management, and infrastructure. Now, different indicators can be adopted for quality measurement in every particular aspect of the education system. Even a single aspect like the teaching-learning process as Shavelson et al. (1991) pointed out, can be difficult to be measured directly in a perfect way. Because, the process of teaching-learning itself overlaps many relevant aspects, such as teacher's competence in subject content and pedagogical knowledge/skills, teaching-learning materials, environment and also the learners. Therefore, as explained by Mainguet and Baye (2006) some indicators can be used as the tools to describe the quality and fairness of a specific aspect of the education system. The matter one should consider here is the diversity of indicators as each country or nation develops its distinct framework of indicators for quality measurement. For instance, in the United States of America as per the statistical analysis report published in (2000), 13 school quality indicators were classified into

three discrete categories: the characteristics of teachers, characteristics of the class, and characteristics of school as an organization. Similarly, the National Council of Educational Research and Training of India (2014) identified three categories of school quality indicators in the form of three major questions: How good is the provision of our school? How good is the governance of our school? How good are the outcomes of our school?

Afghanistan has not developed such a framework of indicators for quality assessment yet. But there are some certain standards and goals for quality school education and teacher performance in the relevant official policy documents like National Education Strategic Plan (NESP, 2017-2021), National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2003), and Education Law (EL, 2008), will be discussed in the succeeding sections of this chapter.

As previously mentioned, quality in education and its indicators are mostly determined and defined variously in different contexts and systems of education in various countries according to their diverse political, cultural and economic situations. Therefore, policymakers and authorized organizations may set some of the standards with slight modifications in line with their settings and education systems, but still as highlighted by The Commonwealth (2017), any single set of standards for quality in education should be developed in compliance with cross-cultural values and education systems around the globe. Especially those can affect teaching-learning approaches and curriculum in every single education system in any context. Thus, some prototypical benchmarks or standards adopted by authorized international organizations such as the United Nations, European Commission (EC), OECD, and The Commonwealth of Nations. Particularly, the United Nations' approach to quality education is the main source of inspiration for many other local quality assurance frameworks all over the world.

However, given the above explanations, while discussing *quality,* one can hardly find a consensus of opinions on this concept. Nevertheless, it is a definite fact now that 'quality' and 'quality education' are matters of importance for both people and governments in all countries. The concept of quality in education is an umbrella term on which a large number of discussions can be found in related literature. In other words, it is a multidimensional concept that cannot be defined from a single point of view. Hence, in most of the definitions instead of 'quality in education', different

scopes of the quality education are discussed reluctantly as most of these negotiations describe the indicators of quality not quality education as a concept itself. According to Commonwealth (2017) *"quality education refers to a system or product that has passed a certain set of criteria or principles… Quality in education across the education system consists of the application of the principles of Effective, Empowering, Equity, Sustainable, Appropriate, and Wellbeing & Safety (EEESAW)."*

Basically, quality in education is acknowledged as how much and how well students learn and to what extent they can translate their knowledge into the real action in their social life. (Grima, 2008) In other words, quality education usually refers to the quality of learning conditions and the safety of the emotional/physical environment where students learn.

To find out more about quality, let us first take a quick look at the term 'quality' as a sole concept out of the educational context. The term 'quality' is primarily derived from the Latin word 'quails' meaning *what kind of* and seems to be an indefinite word. Therefore, quality is believed to be a much usable but less understandable term. Quality as a concept was initially used in the 20th century for industrial products. According to Deming (1986), a good quality product tends to fulfill the client's requirements and needs. A highly valued definition of quality coined by Philip Crosby (1960s) in management, suggests that quality should be a state of zero defects. In simple language, a quality product tends to be totally error-free, the state which more critics believe cannot exist at all. In response to Crosby's concept, the criticizers propose that it can be assured to what degree a product meets or is of the highest quality standard, but not zero defect. Harvey & Green (1993), explained that quality is a relative concept. First, it is relative to the users of this term that how they perceive it in their context. For instance, for a vacancy of liaison officer, the recruiting department of an organization may seek after the graduates who have good communicative skills and friendly appearance. Hence, in this particular case, how this recruiter defines the quality into his/her situation and according to his/her requirements, might be unlike that of somewhere else. Second is the benchmark relativity of quality. In other words an absolute quality without any concession. That is to say, quality is a high ideal standard, if a product is supposed to be with that high standard, then it tends to be labeled as a

quality one. Harvey and Green (1993) identified five approaches to defining quality as follows:

Approach 1: Quality as an exceptional

It is then described into three different variations. First, the traditional notion of quality, for instance, a product with distinctive features. In other words, something special and unique, which can be characterized as a high-level product in comparison with others. Second, quality as a high-level standard or excellence. Excellence in conformity with standards and zero defects. Third, quality to be assessed to pass minimum required standards. It is worth mentioning that quality and standard, as described by Harvey (2006), are two distinct terms. Standards are usually specific and outcomes measurable indicators, based on what one can differentiate or compare a product with others.

Approach 2: Quality as perfection or excellence

This approach encloses two interrelated parts. First, quality as a process which sets specific requirements to be met perfectly (zero defects). The process ensures that everything is correct and free of flaws and perfection is delivered consistently. Second, quality as a culture that needs to become a common responsibility in an organization. Everybody working in an organization is expected to be a controller of quality and takes his/her accountability for it. The notion of quality culture is perceived as things that are done already right. It does not to be only a single output checking activity, instead, quality culture assures that already a well working process is there inside the organization through which the product needs to be passed and get checked for quality control.

Approach 3: Quality as fitness for purpose

This perspective observes quality with respect to the purpose of a product or service. Thus it is to be assured whether the service or product meets the expected purpose or not. The ultimate purpose can be described as a zero defects product, so fitness to this purpose is a doorstep for quality perfection. It also relates to customer satisfaction that to what extent the product can fulfill the specifications based on what the customers measure a quality product.

Approach 4: Quality as Value for Money (VFM)

To put it simply, a customer pays for quality. Therefore, if the quality of a product meets the user's requirements and satisfaction then it is considered valuable produce. But then again, specifications and requirements for the quality product are to be at diverse levels, therefore, different prices can be applied to see the quality of the items. It disregards the brand name competition which is commonly believed that brand guarantees quality. In management, the concept of quality as value for money refers to the balance between the three E's: Economy, Efficiency, and Effectiveness. (Burger & Hawkesworth, 2011)

Approach 5: Quality as a transformation

Quality as transformation is considered as a process of change or continuous improvement, particularly the qualitative change from one state to another. This change can be in the quality of an individual, in the services of an organization or it might be in the quality of any product. Put differently, the quality changes from one state compared to a better one as per the customers' specifications or satisfactory requirements. Specifically in the context of education, quality as a transformation refers to the progress or change occurs in students' learning as they gradually become more empowered and knowledgeable.
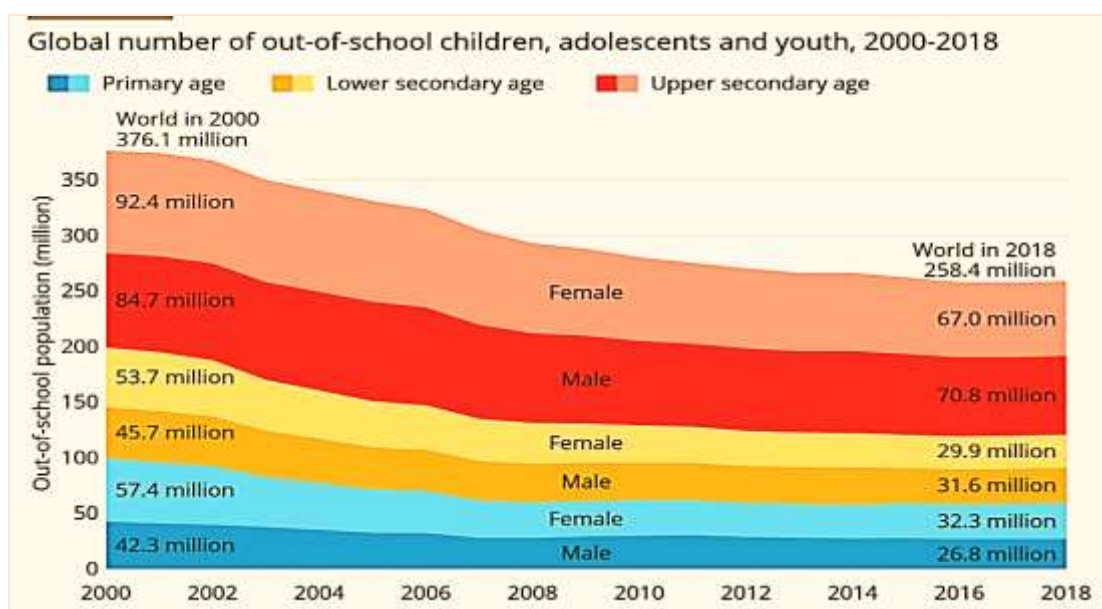
1.1.1 UNICEF's Approach to Quality Education

It is noteworthy first that the World Declaration on Education led by United Nations (Education for All, 2000) introduced an operational plan known as the Dakar Framework for Action. This action plan urged that the member countries should make substantial efforts for achieving all its goals including the improvement of education quality by 2015. Particularly, this declaration highlighted the issue of poor quality education across the world and emphasized a fair deal in this regard. Dakar Framework for Action (2000) 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. Hence, this framework wants governments to make effective efforts to provide quality education for their citizens. According to this framework, quality is at the heart of education and all activities that happen in connection with the teaching-learning process inside the classroom or inside a learning environment are crucial for the future

well-being of children, young people and adults. [United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), 2000)]

However, as the quality education still remained a serious question, the United Nations reaffirmed the commitment of the world to this important issue by adopting a new declaration in 2015, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This new declaration emphasized that only quality education can help with the world's sustainable development in every sector. The declaration contains all 17 interrelated and indivisible goals. In this collection of goals, the goal fourth is allotted to education and asks the world to ensure the inclusive and equitable quality education for the populations everywhere. On this subject, the latest fact sheet published on the Sustainable Development Goals by the Institute for Statistic (UIS, 2019), indicates that the out-of-school rate across the world is still too high as it says 258.4 million children, adolescents, and youth were out of school in 2018. Particularly, the number of upper secondary school-age youth is four times greater than the primary school-age children. While 103 million youth worldwide still lack basic literacy skills and more than 60 percent of them are women. Yet, 6 out of 10 children and adolescents are recorded that they do not achieve the lowest proficiency level in math and reading.

Figure 1.1   Out-of-School Rate from 2000-2018

(*Source:* http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/new-methodology-shows-258-million-children-adolescents-and-youth-are-out-school.pdf)

This report also argued that despite the opportunities created by the quick technological changes, the quality of teacher capacity building programs, learning environment and quality of education is less satisfactory than the expected level. Therefore, this report calls for further concrete efforts to be made by member countries for the sake of quality improvement. Subsequently, according to the United Nations, quality education is a major contributory factor in the overall sustainable development of the world. Thus, SDGs urge governments to ensure all children boys and girls have free access to quality primary and secondary education by 2030 across the globe. The operational framework of this declaration recommended 10 targets and 11 indicators for achieving Goal 4 (i.e. quality education), presented in the following section.

1.2 INDICATORS OF QUALITY EDUCATION

There are a different number of quality indicators developed by some international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and Commonwealth. The following section presents the indicators established by the UN, followed by OECD and Commonwealth.

1.2.1 UN's Indicators for Quality Education

The United Nation urged all its member countries to make significant efforts for achieving all 17 goals to enhance an all-round sustainable development in social, economic and environmental sectors. Accordingly, the Goal 4 of this set of goals is 'Quality Education', which asks all member countries to provide a quality education for all of their citizens that no child should stay behind by 2030. Hence, the working agenda for achieving this goal contains 10 targets and 11 relevant indicators, which are as follows:

Target - (i) By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

Indicator: Proportion of children and young people: (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex.

Target - (ii) By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

Indicator: Proportion of children under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning, and psychosocial well-being, by sex.

Indicator: Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex.

Target - (iii) By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

Indicator: Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex.

Previous Indicator: Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the last 12 months, by sex

Target - (iv) By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

Indicator: Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill.

Target - (v) By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

Indicator: Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated.

Target - (vi) By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men, and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

Indicator: Proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex.

Previous Indicator: Percentage of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex.

Target - (vii) By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Indicator: Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment.

Target - (viii) Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

Indicator: Proportion of schools with access to (a) electricity; (b) the Internet for pedagogical purposes; (c.) computers for pedagogical purposes; (d) adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities; (e) basic drinking water;(f) single-sex basic sanitation facilities; (g) basic hand washing facilities (as per the WASH indicator definitions).

Target - (ix) By 2030, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular, least developed countries, Small Island Developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programs, in developed countries and other developing countries.

Indicator: Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships by sector and type of study.

Target - (x) By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially the least developed countries and Small Island Developing States.

Indicator: Percentage of teachers in (a) pre-primary; (b) primary; (c.) lower secondary; and (d) upper secondary education who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training (i.e. pedagogical training) pre-service or in-service required for teaching at the relevant level in a given country.

1.2.2   OECD's Indicators for Quality Education

The latest official document published by OECD introduces a number of quality indicators into three main categories alongside a framework for the measurement of quality education internationally. This framework states that any education system should be assessed only through the understanding of its outcomes in connection with its input at the individual and institutional levels.

- **Indicators on the output/outcomes and impact**

These indicators are supposed to evaluate the educational attainments of graduates in relation to the expected objectives and their recruitment in the market. It should examine the all-inclusive improvement in terms of knowledge, skills, contribution to economic development and social character.

- **Indicators on the participation and progression within education entities**

These indicators assess students' enrolment rate, accessing and completing different educational programs. Passing from one educational level to another across the education system.

- **Indicators on the input**

These indicators are mostly related to the resources (human, financial, machinery). Besides, these indicators assess the policies and procedures established for directing and managing all these resources and regulating the participation of students at all levels into the education system.

1.2.3 Commonwealth's Standards for Quality in Education

In a similar manner, the education Policy Framework of Commonwealth published in (2017), recommended six major standards for quality in education. These quality standards are as under:

- **Effective:** The education should be evidence-based, cost-effective and that can achieve the intended outcomes.

- **Empowering:** The education that empowers communities. Enables learners to contribute to the economic development of their community and nation.

- **Equitable:** The education should be all-inclusive and free of discrimination.

- **Sustainable:** The education can really help the sustainable overall growth in terms of social, economic and environmental development.

- **Appropriate:** The education which is relevant and appropriate to the needs of learners and the community.

- **Wellbeing & Safety:** The education that can protect the health, promote safety and enhance resilience.

Likewise, Grisay & Mahlck (1991) emphasized that the concept of quality education should not be limited only to the learners' learning results, but it should also include all those means that can affect the learning results such as preparation of the teachers, learning environment, materials, curriculum, and classroom teaching-learning practices. Consequently, quality education should guarantee everyone completes a basic learning of adequate quality, acquires fundamental literacy, numeracy, requisite reasoning and social skills such as teamwork and has further opportunities to learn advanced skills throughout life, especially in post basic education settings. (Human Development Network, 2002)

As a result, after having this detailed explanations on quality education and its indicators, a deduction can be easily made now that promoting a quality education that can contribute an inclusive sustainable development, mostly relies on quality teaching. Because, as it is generally acknowledged that teachers and their classroom pedagogical

practices are one of the most influential factors in education. Therefore, adopting a carefully designed and appropriate pedagogy can profoundly affect the quality of instruction and students' learning. It should be pointed out that numerous pedagogical approaches are there that can be categorized as Teacher-centered, Student-centered, or it can be a combination of both these forms which is named learning-centered pedagogy. (UNESCO, 2018) But before going to the different forms of pedagogical approaches it is desirable to understand the term pedagogy.

1.3 PEDAGOGY

However the pedagogy is an encompassing term and generally refers to the art and science of teaching, but this term cannot be defined as easily as it seems. Murphy (2009) defines pedagogy as the give and take processes. It is *"interactions between teachers, students, and the learning environment and the learning tasks".* Alexander (2004) goes further and provides an inclusive definition of pedagogy. He has tried to suggest an alternate definition to the one through which pedagogy is commonly perceived as the act of teaching only. According to him, through pedagogy a teacher engages, as an imperative element, with a set of several different but interrelated ideas and values which are as follows:

(a) Children (their characteristics, their growth and nurturing)

(b) Learning (that how best it should be motivated, assessed, achieved, identified and constructed)

(c) Teaching (planning, implementation, and assessment)

(d) Curriculum (which includes different ways of knowing, understanding, doing, creating and investigating suitable and based on the learning needs of children and then how well it is delivered and tailored to teaching)

Hence, with all the above in mind, the term pedagogy implies that it is rather an overarching concept that may not be defined indisputably. According to Chapuis (2003), pedagogy is essentially a combination of the knowledge and skills required for effective teaching. But still again there is a lot of controversy about what has to be effective teaching in a particular context and environment. Watkins and Mortimer

(1999) believe that pedagogy refers to all those activities which are designed consciously to educate other people. Alexander (2003) believes that pedagogy is not only the practice of teaching, but it also includes the skills that a teacher needs to adopt to make different decisions related to his/her professional career. Leach and Moon (1999) described pedagogy as a joint effort activity, both teacher and learners make together to achieve the learning goals.

Accordingly, looking at the definitions above, pedagogy encompasses all essential parts of the instructional process; namely teaching, learning, and curriculum. Teaching itself as a solo term can be considered as a set of multiple tasks in different contexts. According to Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, 2000), teaching includes: *"establishing relationships with children and their parents, planning the learning environment and curriculum, supporting and extending children's play, learning and development, and assessing children's achievements and planning their next steps."*

Since effective teaching can guarantee successful learning by creating a dynamic learning environment in the classroom, the use of appropriate pedagogical approaches is crucial in education. For this reason, generally, it is recommended that a qualified teacher needs to have mastery of subject knowledge, general and subject-related pedagogical knowledge and skills. Especially, teachers need to know effective teaching approaches, strategies, and procedures that help them to foster skills of deep understanding, critical thinking, and innovation in students. Give them the ability to apply knowledge in real-life situations. (McNamara et. al. as cited in Cogill, 2008) National Research Council (2000) emphasized the importance of alignment in an effective teaching-learning process. According to this council, it should be ensured that learning goals are well aligned in compliance with what is taught, how is taught and then how it is assessed (summative and formative). However, it has to be mentioned that designing and developing an educational program is a process, not a product. Therefore, only through a comprehensive assessment of the outcomes, it can be decided whether the applied teaching-learning process is effective and successful or not. Meanwhile, all teachers may not be able to employ and adapt appropriate pedagogical approaches and practical teaching strategies suitable for their special contexts. Particularly in a context like Afghanistan where half of the teachers hold the minimum required academic and professional qualifications.

Diverse pedagogical modes based on various theories are available. But generally, different pedagogical approaches are usually classified into two separate groups on the basis of two major parameters: teacher-centered and student-centered pedagogy. In addition to this, the third form of pedagogy suggested by UNESCO (2018) is a mixture of both mentioned pedagogical approaches which is entitled learning-centered pedagogy. Many different names can be found in the literature used for each of these pedagogical approaches. For instance, learner-centered pedagogy can be termed as student-centered, child-centered, child-friendly, activity-based learning, and inquiry-based pedagogy. (Westbrook et al., 2013) In the same way, for teacher-centered pedagogy, many other names can be used, such as traditional teaching, rote-learning, memorization, whole-class teaching, direct-instruction, banking approach, lecturing, etc...

From another perspective, the decision about the pedagogical approach is key in the classroom instructional process which can be affected by several different factors. Teachers have to choose pedagogy that can meet the learning needs of their students, suits well his/her particular teaching context and general teaching-learning objectives expected in the curriculum. In the first place, teachers and their attitudes, beliefs, pedagogical knowledge and professional competence directly influence their pedagogical decision-making. Further, the outside setting, teaching-learning environment, classroom size, students' background, school governance, and social structure of the relevant community all are the other teacher decision affecting factors. (Burridge, 2016)

The three main pedagogical approaches classified by UNESCO (2018), are simply described below regardless of the discussion that which pedagogy is more effective and appropriate than another one.
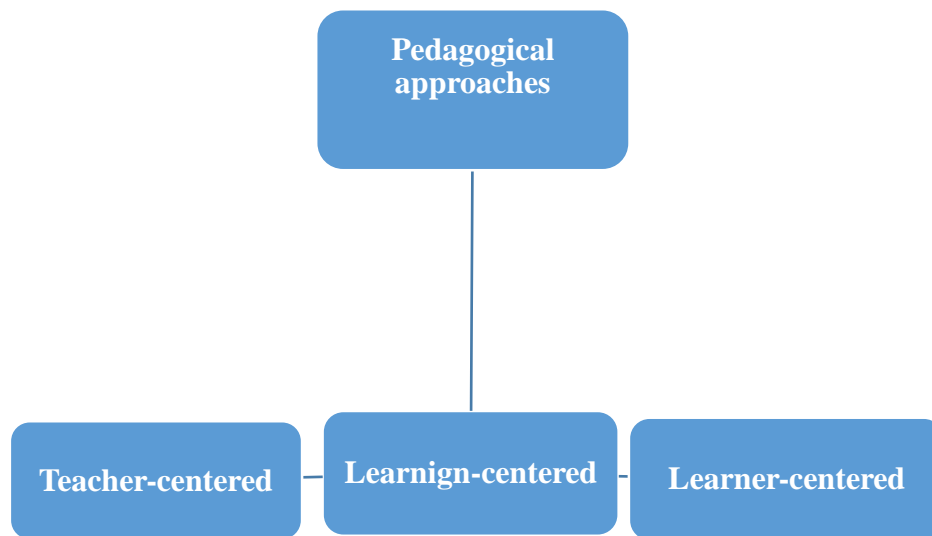
Figure 1.2   Three Main Pedagogical Approaches

1.3.1   Teacher-Centred Pedagogical Approach

In a teacher-centered class, learning tends to take place in a traditional way where teacher pedagogy is designed and employed based on the instructor's needs, rather than learners. Traditional teaching mostly relies on an already planned curriculum (textbook) and the teacher is the only source of information and learning for the students. Traditional teaching commonly emphasizes on basic learning skills (Essays-UK, 2018). In the teacher-centered classroom, the teacher has to be the center of the learning process who normally uses the whole-class lecture method which encourages rote memorization and asking questions and answering type communication in the class. (UNESCO, 2018)

While discussing teacher-centered pedagogy, the concept of the 'Banking' method has to be elaborated with reference to Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire's theory of 'pedagogy of oppressed'. According to Freire (1970) in banking education teacher which he named 'narrator' is supposed to control the whole learning environment where the students should only listen and memorize the information imparted by their teacher. Teachers attempt to control the thinking and action of students and students are considered empty containers to be filled. Therefore, the students have to absorb information unconsciously. Freire argued that the banking approach does not encourage adults to think critically about reality and understand it. Students tend to memorize information without reflecting on that. Instead, they have to repeat the recorded

information again and again. In the banking education environment, students are supposed to be always dependent on their teacher because they believe a teacher is the only one who can teach them. Students do not have freedom of action in relation to their learning in the classroom.

1.3.2 Lerner-Centred Pedagogical Approach

This approach is also termed as constructivist, student-centered, activity-based, and participatory teaching method which places the learner at the center of the teaching-learning process. In this pedagogical approach, students tend to create new knowledge by using their pre-existing information and connecting that with the new learning experience. (UNESCO, 2018) Learner-centered pedagogy stems from the mainstream of the constructivism theory, which emphasizes on learners' personal efforts to bring new knowledge into existence. This theory says that learners construct new knowledge by understanding and reflecting on their own learning experiences. As stated by Ambrose et al. (2010), learning should not be merely a transfer of information (knowledge) from teacher to student, but learners themselves should make it happen with the help of already existing knowledge and learning experience they have. According to Ambrose et al (2010), students come to the classes with prior knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes they have already acquired from other different places and resources like school, family and senior knowledgeable people. Now it is up to a teacher how appropriately he/she can reactivate it in a suitable time for constructing new knowledge. Nowadays, learner-centered pedagogy is preferably adopted worldwide as the teaching-learning processes are designed based on the needs of learners, community and market. The student-based pedagogical approach places learners in the center of teaching-learning activities and they are encouraged to be responsible for their learning. Roger (1983) has explained that the learner-centered approach provides opportunities for the students not only to choose *what* they should learn but also to know *why* and *how* they need to learn a subject. Answering these questions requires students not only to have a deep understanding of the content but also a robust analytical mind and critical thinking ability.

Weimer (2002) identified five key changes that should occur when a teacher shifts from a traditional teaching style to a learner-centered approach.

1) The balance of power

It is not transferring an absolute power of decisions making to students, but rather it is making decisions together with them. In a student-centered learning environment, the teacher should let students express their ideas in establishing rules of ground, coursework policy, assignments' strategy, assessment procedures, choosing teaching-learning materials, and other class-based pedagogical practices. By doing this, a teacher encourages students to get more involved and connected with their course. Students become more responsible for their learning and work harder on their own.

2) The function of content

The content of the course should serve two main purposes: learning of needed knowledge and skills and also learning about knowledge (metacognitive awareness). In other words, the content should first teach students the body of the knowledge and skills on how to apply the acquired knowledge intended for a course. Besides, it should also equip students with all key learning approaches, strategies, and techniques that can help them how to learn discipline-related materials. This may include study skills, essential learning techniques, communicative skills, sophisticated cognitive skills and all other required strategies for the learning of the course-related content and that can foster self-regulated learning ability in students. The content should enhance students' self-awareness to evaluate their learning pace in terms of strengths and weaknesses and how to improve themselves by using alternative strategies.

3) The role of the teacher

In a learner-centered class, the teacher is supposed to play his/her role as a guide who shows travelers the way and then it is up to travelers to walk on their own. Similarly, a teacher in a student-centered class has not to generate the examples him/herself only, describe concepts, ask and answer the questions, solve problems and provide feedback, draw the tables and diagrams and others. As an alternative, the teacher should talk less, instead, encourage students to talk, discuss and share their ideas by putting them in groups/pairs. In a learner-centered classroom, students should be provided with plenty of opportunities to learn from one another.

4) The responsibility for learning

In a learner-centered classroom, students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning by engaging in different teaching-learning activities. Particularly, the role of the teacher is crucial in creating a conducive classroom environment, where students can perform free of fear and autonomously. Boosting students' autonomy is one of the key characteristics of learner-centered pedagogy. Therefore, it is stressed that the teacher should take his/her students to the stage of self-governing by providing an appropriate learning environment and conditions that support students to become more autonomous learners.

5) The purpose and process of evaluation

The evaluation in a learner-centered classroom enhances already existing potential to develop new learning. It should also provide opportunities for students to promote their self and peer assessment abilities. Both summative and formative assessments should help students to realize their progress and further improve their learning. It should not increase stress and anxiety in students, therefore, formative assessment techniques should be preferably employed. It should be ensured that the students make an accurate self-assessment through which they can identify their strengths and weaknesses and how can they improve themselves.

1.3.3 Learning-Centered Pedagogical Approach

Conforming to the notion that pedagogy should be relevant and appropriate to a particular context, this approach says either teacher-centered or learner-centered pedagogy can be effective in accordance with the local setting. The conditions like the number of students, physical space, and availability of essential teaching-learning materials may require a teacher to use one of these mentioned teaching-learning methods or he/she may adopt a combined form of pedagogy suitable to the school situation. (UNESCO, 2018) Regardless of what pedagogical approach a teacher adopts, the matter of vital importance is quality education which should take place as a result. The education which enables learners to use the acquired knowledge successfully in their life and contribute to their community's development. As explained by National Research Council (2000), learning theories do not provide a uniform and single set of principles that fit all types of learning environments; instead, several different

approaches might be adapted in a particular situation. For instance, knowledge-centered and learner-centered approaches work well together in an environment where the instruction should begin with a pre-introduction of the topic for the sake of communicating the initial information. It is for this reason that with the help of a comprehensive input, students would be able to understand the new concept and build new knowledge.

In conformity with OECD's (2018) clarification that pedagogies can provide a framework for the set of multiple numbers of decisions, a teacher should make how to teach. Therefore, a teacher may come up with some innovations in his/her pedagogical approaches to accommodate the students' learning needs and the teaching-learning environment. Particularly at the school level, a teacher is supposed to use a variety of pedagogical practices and approaches to achieve multiple learning goals. Thus, the OECD suggests two separate ways for the process of combination. One that different practices are clubbed together within an enclosing pedagogical approach. Second, the combination of distinct already established pedagogical approaches, particularly for a continuing teaching-learning strategy to meet long-term educational aims. As highlighted by OECD, the central point in the combination of pedagogies is maintaining the balance of time that students should spend on acquiring knowledge and then put that into practice. What should the teacher do to students? How every individual student can do? How students should work and learn as a group? How they should be given feedback and some other similar questions should be considered in the combination of discrete pedagogies. But still, deciding how and which pedagogical approaches should be combined, needs intellectual curiosity. The teacher has to have a good pedagogical knowledge and competencies to form an appropriate pedagogical approach as per his/her teaching-learning environment and school design. On the other hand, all established pedagogies, as stated by OECD, cannot be integrated because some of them are designed for the teaching of some particular subjects or courses. For example, language teaching approaches may not be applicable to science or mathematics teaching.

Besides, over the past recent years, a set of principles have been created by the educational experts and practitioners that are typically known as Effective Pedagogical Principles or Standards for Effective Pedagogy. James and Pollard (2011) synthesized

10 essential principles, which are also recommended by the National Center for Research Method (NCRM). These ten major principles are listed below:

Principle -1: Effective pedagogy should prepare the learner for life in its broadest sense. An active person is one, who can contribute to the economic development and prosperity of his/her society. Therefore, the learning process goes beyond discipline-related knowledge and skills but a person should be improved overall.

Principle -2: Effective pedagogy should engage learners in value-based knowledge. Learners should be equipped with big valuable ideas, key skills, and processes, modes of discourse, ways of critical thinking, attitudes, and relationships related to a particular context.

Principle -3: Effective pedagogy emphasizes the importance of learners' prior knowledge and learning experiences. The teacher should consider it and encourage students to build new knowledge based on their pre-existing knowledge.

Principle - 4: Effective pedagogy develops a skeleton of learning. The learners should get support from various resources to move forward in their learning. These information resources can be interaction with more knowledgeable others, using online resources, face to face teaching, etc.

Principle -5: Effective pedagogy needs assessment to be well-matched with learning needs. Assessment should achieve the maximum validity of both the learning process and outcomes. It should also help students to improve and promote the self-assessment abilities that they become aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

Principle -6: Effective pedagogy should encourage the active engagement of the learners. Students should become autonomous learners and they should be actively engaged in all teaching-learning activities.

Principle -7: Effective pedagogy also promotes both individual and social learning and outcomes. Therefore, learners should be encouraged to interact with each other for the purpose of learning.

Principle -8: Effective pedagogy focuses attention on the importance of informal learning. Therefore, students are encouraged to search out information out of the formal classroom context and bring their personal learning experiences back to the classroom.

Principle -9: Effective pedagogy depends on the learning of all those who support the learning of others. Hence, a teacher at the same time is considered to be a learner. The teacher should continuously learn from others in order to be able to help others, effectively promote their knowledge and skills.

Principle -10: Effective pedagogy needs a continuous systematic policy framework to support learning as their primary focus. Therefore, school administrations and other authorized bodies should provide consistent academic and professional support, for example, an effective teachers' capacity building framework.

To sum up, bearing the above definitions and the dimensions of different pedagogies in mind, pedagogy does not cover simply teaching but learning too. Accordingly, teachers need to know current teaching methods and effective pedagogical 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) Consequently, based on the above fundamental knowledge it can be revealed that pedagogy has to be considered as a key influential factor in quality education. The adopting of an appropriate pedagogy for a classroom and match the particular learning environment should be decided by the teacher him/herself. Therefore, a teacher has to have knowledge of a variety of pedagogical approaches to decide which approach is the best fitting one for his/her situation and course model. Or, as it was pointed out earlier, a self-made integrated approach of pedagogy can be developed by a teacher. But, in a country like Afghanistan where quality teachers are still the most challenging problem, expecting teachers to determine appropriate pedagogy for their classrooms can be more challenging. In view of this, now let's take a look first at the scenario of the secondary school education system in Afghanistan as per the government policies.

1.4 PEDAGOGY AS A QUALITY INDICATOR

According to Kaagan and Smith (1985), educational quality indicators can be grouped into two categories: Inputs and Outputs/Outcomes. Similarly, RAND Corporation (2011) classified educational indicators into three distinct categories: Inputs, Process,

and Outcomes. Particularly, according to this categorization, teacher quality in the category of Inputs and teacher teaching quality in the Process category, are the core influential indicators of a school system. As it is described by Kagan and Smith (1985), indicators are the statistics, provide information that to what extent an educational system is healthy. The statistic can be considered as an indicator when it meets two different conditions: first when it measures the aspects of a system related to its health. Second, to have meaningful policy implications and consequences. For example, a considerable improvement in student academic performance can be a result of a particular teaching-learning strategy adopted by a teacher. Thus, an indicator can be assessed in relation to the health and effectiveness of a system as well as its relationship with other indicators. For instance, a quality teacher can be assessed in consideration of his/her contribution to the success and quality of a school system. At the same time, the significant impact of his/her instructional quality on students' achievement should be also considered. Alexander (2007) has introduced four fundamental sources for defining educational quality and quality indicators:

- The national educational policy of a country and the history and culture to which this policy belongs to.
- National pedagogical research
- International quality indicators literature
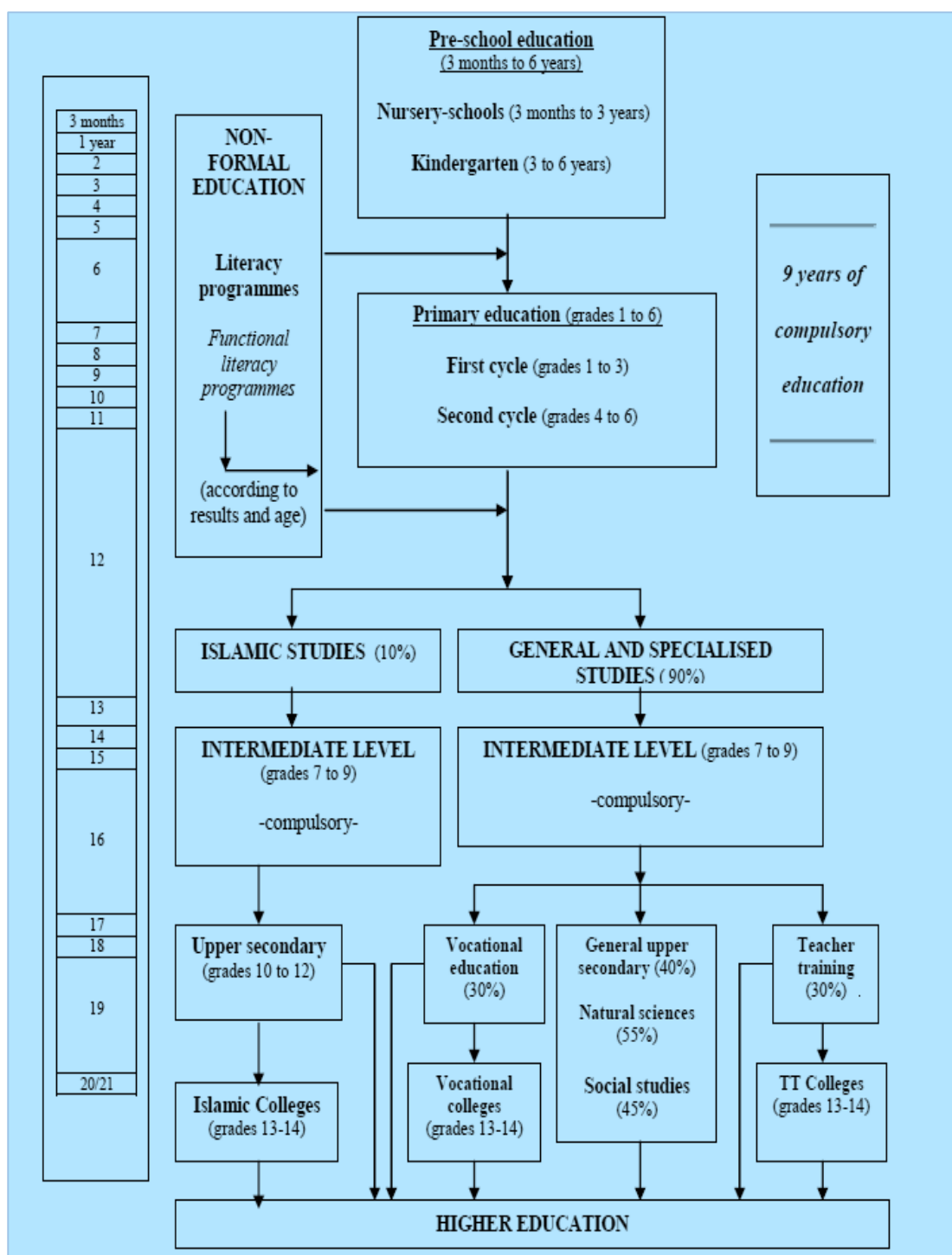- International pedagogical research

Because of the above, the role of pedagogy as an essential quality indicator is quite significant. According to Alexander (2007), pedagogy has recently become a central element for quality education as it was not recognized in earlier times. For this reason, he criticized the Education for All Report published by UNESCO in 2005 for the lack of information on contextual variances of pedagogy. He argues that before considering the quality of education, we should consider the way we treat the quality of pedagogy. At present, there is a large proportion of literature on the significant impact of teacher pedagogical competency on the academic achievement of students. The literature reviewed by the researcher of this study (Bird, 2017; Sirait, 2016; Duruji, Azuh, Oviasogie, 2014; Ganyaupfu, 2013; Sisilya, 2012; Marikoviz, Bjekic, Zlatic, 2012; Suwan, 2011; Lata, 2011; Dilshad, 2010 and Heck, 2009), indicate that teacher quality and professional competency overwhelmingly affect students' academic performance

and quality of education as a whole. Particularly, teacher competence in the subject, profession, creativity as well as students' motivation has a significant positive influence on the quality of education.

Ultimately, the quality of the education system is typically assessed in terms of context, inputs, process and outputs/outcomes. (UNESCO, 2019) Teacher and his/her teaching quality is the central indicator of the education system and quality of education. (RAND Cooperation, 2011; Alexander, 2007; OECD, 2018) There is a consensus that the high performance of an education system is due to quality teaching. (Pearce & Husbands, 2012) Therefore, the adoption of an appropriate pedagogy should yield maximum outputs and the high level expected learning outcomes. According to Whelan (2009), many factors affect school performance and should be taken into accounts such as relevant and flexible curriculum, school buildings and others, but none of these is as much important as quality teaching is. Finally, based on the above considerations, pedagogy is not only a central education system indicator but a core quality education indicator too. Hence, to examine the quality of any education system, pedagogy has to be considered first.

1.5 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 of primary education (3 years lower primary and 3 years upper primary education), 6 years of 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 the age group 12/13 to 15/16. The upper secondary school education is of grades 10 to12 (for the age group 15/16 to 18/19). It is worth mentioning that the education cycles in a 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 (from pre-school to post-school education). The subjects taught in secondary schools are Mathematics, Science, Languages, Islamic Studies, Life Skills, Arts (practical work and technological education), Physical Education and Sociology. The number of subjects is 16 to18 in each grade both in lower and upper secondary schools. The structure of the School Education system in Afghanistan can be seen from the given figure below.

Pre-school education
(3 months to 6 years)

Nursery-schools (3 months to 3 years)

Kindergarten (3 to 6 years)

| 3 months |
| 1 year |
| 2 |
| 3 |
| 4 |
| 5 |
| 6 |
| 7 |
| 8 |
| 9 |
| 10 |
| 11 |
| 12 |
| 13 |
| 14 |
| 15 |
| 16 |
| 17 |
| 18 |
| 19 |
| 20/21 |

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Literacy programmes

Functional literacy programmes

(according to results and age)

9 years of compulsory education

Primary education (grades 1 to 6)

First cycle (grades 1 to 3)

Second cycle (grades 4 to 6)

ISLAMIC STUDIES (10%)

GENERAL AND SPECIALISED STUDIES (90%)

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL (grades 7 to 9) -compulsory-

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL (grades 7 to 9) -compulsory-

Upper secondary (grades 10 to 12)

Vocational education (30%)

General upper secondary (40%)

Natural sciences (55%)

Teacher training (30%)

Islamic Colleges (grades 13-14)

Vocational colleges (grades 13-14)

Social studies (45%)

TT Colleges (grades 13-14)

HIGHER EDUCATION

Figure 1. 3   Structure of School Education System in Afghanistan

(***Source:*** National Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education, 2003)

A new curriculum for secondary schools was developed in 2009-10, as mentioned in NESP (2010). The new secondary school textbooks were also developed based on the recommended principles and objectives of the National Curriculum Framework (2003).

Article 20th of Afghan Educational Law (2008) specified the main objectives for secondary school education mentioned as follows:

1) Develop and strengthen understanding and solidify the Islamic beliefs and values of the students. Non-Muslim students are exempted from this provision.

2) Develop and strengthen the spirit of loyalty to the homeland, the system of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, preservation of independence, defending the territorial integrity and national values, protecting properties and public assets, consolidating democracy in conformity with Islamic values and nationally accepted traditions.

3) Develop and expand the culture of peace and equality.

4) Aware students about the harms of tobacco, drugs, intoxication, the danger of AIDS, terrorism, war, violence, discrimination and every kind 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 analyzing academic researches and self-evaluation.

9) Prepare students for continuing and higher education, trade, and occupation.

1.6 PRESENT SCENARIO AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT POLICIES

The latest figures published by the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan in 2019, there were a total of 14,888 government schools in all 34 provinces, out of this 4,821 are Secondary Schools (10-12 grades). Also, all 1,644 private schools are there, out of this 367 are Secondary Schools. The total number of students in both government and private Secondary Schools is 59, 58, 248. The number of teachers both in government

and private Secondary Schools is 1,45,048. At the same time, there is a total of 268 government and 81 private Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) across the country.

Over the past 19 years despite significant achievements in education, poor quality is still widely criticized. All official documents published by the Afghan government reported a significant increase in school enrollment and the number of schools along with dissatisfaction mainly about the quality of education. One of the major achievements that have been made so far is the establishing of a new National Curriculum Framework in 2003. The goals of NCF highlighted major competencies students should gain at each school level by acquiring relevant and updated knowledge that includes factual information, concepts, relationships and structures between concepts, between concepts and facts, and between concepts, facts, and values. Further, education is supposed to develop students' higher-level intellectual skills, emotional and social skills and a positive attitude. (NCF, 2003) Besides, a new Education Law was formulated and passed in 2008 for better regulation of educational services in the country. Some of the main objectives of this law have highlighted the issues related to quality improvement in terms of applying modern effective pedagogies, teacher professional development, and a more relevant unified curriculum. Moreover, new school textbooks were printed and distributed to the students. Also, teacher's handbooks were printed and distributed to the school teachers including secondary school teachers. At the same time, plenty of opportunities have been provided for the Afghan teachers to promote their knowledge of subject-matter as well as contemporary pedagogical skills. (NESP, 2015; EFA Review Report, 2015)

Yet, the lack of qualified teachers is still one of the serious challenges faced by Afghan school education. As reported by the Ministry of Education (2015), about half of the Afghan school teachers have the minimum required qualifications of teaching. Especially, the nonexistence of qualified female teachers in the majority of the schools located in rural areas and districts are believed to be a substantial barrier to quality education. There are more international organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, Care International, Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA), British Council and more others have been working with the Afghan government, especially in cooperation with the Ministry of Education to enhance the professional qualifications of Afghan school teachers. On the other hand, the school-age population is rapidly growing in this

country which makes the responsibility of providing quality education for the citizens more challenging.

1.6.1 Afghan Government Policy on Quality in Education

Despite the efforts made by the Afghan government for the quality improvement of school education, quality is still a matter of national concern in this country. The absence of qualified and professional staff, lack of textbooks and school buildings, teaching-learning materials and security problems in some areas are the considerable barriers to the process of quality improvement. The president of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani himself in the inaugural ceremony of the new educational year (2019) announced the construction of 6,000 new school buildings across the country with a motto "better education, better future". Besides, the president also informed the citizens about some further steps to be taken for quality enhancement such as 100 thousand teachers will be educated till bachelor degree education, 57 thousand other till 14 grades, textbooks tend to be distributed, 11 thousand new teachers will be recruited and 1300 schools will also be connected with Noori Fiber internet services. (Center for Strategic and Regional Studies, 2019)

Another highly-regarded official document that describes the policy of the Afghan government on quality in education is the National Curriculum Framework (2003). As stated in this document, quality education should equip students with high-level knowledge, skills, and emotional abilities. More precisely, the students are required to have strong critical thinking and communicative skills, a deep understanding of subjects' content and can apply their knowledge into real action and learners should be creative in problem-solving. This framework placed greater emphasis on the adoption of appropriate and effective pedagogical approaches and practices teachers should use in the classrooms. Hence, teachers should be creative in providing a positive and helpful learning environment. Teachers are required to employ such pedagogical approaches that encourage integrated and life-long learning in the classroom. Further, the NCF also pointed out the importance of quality curriculum and teaching-leaning materials relevant and suitable to the needs of learners, job market and society in general. (NCF, 2003)

The major outcomes for school education expected in NCF, 2003 are as follows:

a) Children and youngsters in Afghanistan will be educated in compliance with moderate Islamic values and spiritual beliefs, as opposed to extremist and fundamentalist attitudes.

b) The Afghan identity will be fostered and promoted.

c) Students will develop as civilized human beings, provided with the knowledge and skills to respect the other, promote participative democracy and human rights for all, reject violence while understanding and appreciating differences.

d) Students will acquire and develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes for engaging successfully in today's technological world.

e) Students will develop adequate competencies, knowledge, skills, and attitudes for entering successfully the labor market.

f) Education will help children and youngsters to find their ways on the journey to welfare and living in a moral and cultivated society.

Lack of proficient teachers, as one of the essential factors for quality education, is a big challenge in Afghanistan. The minimum required qualification for a primary school teacher (grades 1-9) is the Certificate of Teacher Training College (TTC). Secondary school teacher is required to possess a Four-year Bachelor Degree from higher education institutions. Dozens of government and private TTCs train teachers in Afghanistan, but there is a lot of criticism on the performance of these colleges. The main issue with these TTCs is their old-fashioned curriculum and traditional teaching-learning methods. Thus, these training colleges are generally believed not to be capable of educating teachers with up-to-date pedagogical knowledge and skills. The majority of the students in these colleges are those who fail to pass the national exam (Kankor) for higher education and then they join TTCs as the last option. (Mansory, 2012; Farah, et al., 2014) On the other hand, there is widespread dissatisfaction and doubts about the effectiveness of in-service teacher training programs in improving daily basis classroom teaching. Most of these in-service teacher training programs have been carried out by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in general pedagogical knowledge and skills. Three main acknowledged general drawbacks of these programs are: (i) Most of these programs did not focus on the specific subject content. (ii) The

training did not include particular pedagogical approaches that can help teachers how to teach specific subjects, especially mathematics and science. (iii) Not having follow-up monitoring activities and durable classroom support. Teachers are supposed to face difficulties while practicing the new teaching techniques they acquire in these short-term training courses. In describing a reform-oriented professional development process, Garet et al. (2001) emphasized that such programs should include mentor-mentee, coaching and internship activities.

In respect of legislation and policies, the Afghan government has made some achievements that were discussed earlier in the previous sections. Yet, a comprehensive and transparent policy, standards and teacher-training procedures for teacher education have to be established. Most significantly, the successful enactment of these policies can bring changes, not just the passing of policies. In policy documents dealing with teacher education, one is Afghan Education Law (2008), which sets some specific objectives for teacher education as follows:

- Train pious teachers, lecturers with knowledge in highly professional standards skills, in order to acquire intermediate (basic), and secondary education objectives, stated in this law, in accordance with educational necessity and educational and training system.
- Increase the number of professional teachers and lecturers.
- Promote knowledge and professional skills of teachers and lecturers.
- Provide grounds for taking the national skills exam of teachers and lecturers while in service.

The latest National Education Strategic Plan (NESP, 2017-2021) has laid a remarkable emphasis on the quality of education. This plan mainly focuses on three major areas: quality and relevance, equitable access and efficient and transparent management. According to this document, quality education at all levels should equip learners with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values; that they as the active and responsible citizens of the country contribute to the prosperity of the society and match the needs of the national and international job market. The two other connected areas also immensely influence the quality of education as the second one (equitable access) says: "*Increased equitable and inclusive access to relevant, safe, and quality learning opportunities for children, youth, and adults in Afghanistan, especially women and girls*." Similarly, the

third focus area of this plan, (transparent management) then emphasizes the delivery of effective quality educational services both at national and local levels. Particularly about quality improvement, the following six focus areas are underlined in this strategic plan:

(a) Develop the relevance of the curriculum, to provide learners with appropriate social values and the skills needed to put knowledge to practical personal use as well as for the community, society and the nation.

(b) Preparation and deployment of professional teachers through a competency-based training program, a system for support with quality assurance, and flexible deployment models.

(c) Preparation and deployment of school administrators including principals trained in leadership roles in management, administration, school improvement and supervision of teachers.

(d) Creation of a school and classroom environment that is safe (physically and psychologically), healthy, non-discriminatory, inclusive and child friendly.

(e) Teacher professional development to ensure continuous improvement in instruction quality in government, private and community schools.

(f) Routine objective assessment of student learning outcomes in the country.

However, when it comes to the successful implementation of policies on quality education, some considerable barriers and challenges have to be taken into account. At present, in addition to the shortage of quality teachers and quality classroom teaching, more other serious challenges are there that can affect the quality of education in Afghan secondary schools. One of these challenges is political unrest which affects the educational service in Afghanistan, at large. In some remote districts, still, the schools are remained closed and students have to stay at home. The poor-performing school administration is another barrier to the improvement of quality and successful policy implementation. Lack of qualified and competent trainers both at pre and in-service teacher education levels is also a matter of serious concern. (Mansory, 2012; Farah, et al., 2014, World Education News Review, 2016; CIC, 2016)

1.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a brief overview of the history of school education in Afghanistan. Accordingly, the system of Afghan school education and the current scenario was also presented in more detail. Later on, the concepts of quality and quality education were discussed. The indicators of quality education were also described in depth. Further, the term pedagogy and its different types were also discussed. It was explained why pedagogy is an influential quality indicator. This chapter also explained the policy of the Afghan government on quality education. Some very important official policy documents like the Afghan National Curriculum Framework, Afghan Education Law, and the National Education Strategic Plan were reviewed which define the objectives and standards for quality education in Afghanistan. The next chapter will elaborate more on related literature of quality education and its indicators.