



**THE INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN AID DELIVERED
FOR AFGHANISTAN ON PRIMARY AND SECONDARY
EDUCATION AFTER 2001**

**2001 YILI SONRASI AFGANİSTAN'A EĞİTİM ALANINDA
YAPILAN ULUSLARARASI YARDIMLAR**

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Abstract

This study aims to scrutinize historical development, current situation, and main problems of the Afghanistan Education System and the political, social, and economic dimensions of international aid to the country that are made to solve these problems. Following a brief analysis of the historical progress of the Afghanistan education system; the current state of the system and primary, secondary, and community based educational activities in the country in the period ensuing the 2001 US intervention and lasting until 2020 and the place of the foreign aid in the education system and its effects on this system are explained. The resources of this study encompass books; articles; media broadcasts; direct observations in the field and the information obtained through interviews with students, teachers, bureaucrats, politicians, relief workers, and project beneficiaries; and websites, reports and periodical publications of the United Nations, international organizations, state-run institutions of the donor countries, Afghanistan Ministry of Education and Ministry of Economy, which carries out non-governmental organizations affairs in Afghanistan.

Through the analysis of the data gathered from accessible sources, it has been revealed that the decades' lasting wars, internal conflicts, poverty, and disasters have destroyed the Afghan Education Sector and unfortunately, no

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permanent and sustainable solutions could be developed yet despite the significant gains accomplished thanks to intense efforts for nearly two decades. Lacking enough resources and means to solve these problems, Afghanistan remains dependent on aid. Hence, international aid should continue in the field of education as in the other fields more systematically and comprehensively for Afghanistan which is regrettably does not seem to be able to disentangle from this deadlock in the short or medium run and geographical imbalances in the distribution of both public services and international aid should be eliminated.

Keywords: Afghanistan, education system, international aid, humanitarian aid, United Nations, Non-governmental Organization (NGO)

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı Afganistan eğitim sisteminin tarihi gelişimi, bugünkü durumu, temel sorunları ve bu sorunları çözmek için ülkeye yapılan uluslararası yardımların siyasal, toplumsal ve ekonomik boyutlarını araştırmaktır. Afganistan eğitim sisteminin tarihsel gelişimi özet bir şekilde irdelendikten sonra sistemin bugünkü durumu ve 2001 yılı ABD müdahalesi sonrası dönemden başlanarak 2020 yılına kadar ülkede yapılan ilk ve orta öğretim ve toplum merkezli eğitim faaliyetleri incelenmiş ve Afganistan'a bahsedilen dönemde yapılan dış yardımların eğitim sistemi içindeki yeri ve sistem üzerindeki etkileri izah edilmeye çalışılmıştır. Genelde kronolojik sıraya uyulmaya gayret gösterilen bu çalışmanın kaynaklarını kitaplar; makaleler; medya yayınları; yazarın alanda yaptığı kişisel gözlemleri ve öğrenci, öğretmen, bürokrat, politikacı, yardım görevlileri ve proje faydalancıları gibi kişilerle doğrudan doğruya yaptığı görüşmeler sonucu elde ettiği bilgiler ve Birleşmiş Milletler, uluslararası kuruluşlar, yardım yapan devletlere ait kurumların, Afganistan Eğitim Bakanlığı ve Afganistan'da sivil toplum örgütleri ile ilgili işleriyürüten Ekonomi Bakanlığı'nın internet siteleri, yayımları ve raporları oluşturmaktadır.

Ulaşılabilen kaynaklardan toplanan bilgilerin sayısal ve niteliksel analizleri sonucunda; on yıllardır süren savaşlar, iç çatışmalar, fakirlik ve afetlerin Afgan eğitim sektörünü yıkıma uğrattığı ve yaklaşık yirmi yıldır gösterilmekte olan yoğun gayretlerle çok önemli kazanımlar elde edilmesine rağmen, halen kalıcı ve sürdürülebilir çözümlerin bulunmadığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu sorunları çözmek için yeterli imkân ve kabiliyeti bulunmayan Afganistan bu yardımlara bağımlı kalmaya devam etmektedir. Bu çıkmazdan kısa veya orta vadede kurtulması maalesef mümkün görülmeyen Afganistan'a diğer alanlarda olduğu gibi eğitim alanında da uluslararası yardımlar devam etmeli fakat daha sistemli, daha kapsamlı yapılmalı ve hem devlet hizmetlerin hem de uluslararası yardımların dağıtılmasındaki coğrafi dengesizlikler giderilmelidir.

Anahtar sözcükler:Afganistan, eğitim, eğitim sistemi, insani kriz, uluslararası yardımlar, insani yardımlar, kalkınma yardımları, Birleşmiş Milletler, hükümet dışı kuruluş, sivil toplum örgütleri (STÖ)

Introduction

This study scrutinizes the humanitarian aid provided for Afghanistan in the field of education post-2001 U.S. intervention. Despite some accomplishments gained thanks to the struggle of the national government under international support, the unsafe climate makes the Afghan Education System weak and dependent on international aid due to the grandeur of the damage inflicted on the education system and lack of technical and economic capacity.

Since 2001, some strategic arrangements have been implemented by the Ministry of Education and many foreign countries have entered the process of improving and restructuring the Afghanistan Education System. These arrangements have continued to date with the economic, systemic, strategic and operational support of international aid organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). However, serious economic, technical and administrative deficiencies continue to hinder the development of education.

Afghanistan's Education System is crushed under several defects such as inadequate school buildings, poor educational institutions, lack of educational equipment, inadequate teacher salaries, millions of children unable to attend school and families without the power to cover stationery costs, and closure of schools due to security incidents. The Afghan community and the government, which do not have the economic power and operational capabilities to solve these problems, certainly need help. What is more, there are extremely large imbalances, especially in the distribution and development of education services. While there are improvements in education in some of the regions; the development of education in some regions has completely stopped.

Buildings, equipment, education materials and personnel are inadequate in both number and quality across the country. Basic education services are of low quality and are disrupted from time to time due to widespread security threats. Although the capital and the major cities have relatively better facilities than the rest of the country, it is still possible to see many educational activities in ruined buildings or tents with primitive educational tools and undertrained low-income

teachers, even in these areas. Similarly, the educational environment in the capital Kabul and some major cities is more suitable for schoolgirls but in many other regions —especially in the south of the country —highly conservative families do not want to send their daughters to school (Yahya, 2017: 96 as cited in Andeshmend, 2011). In Taliban-controlled areas, girls are still not allowed to study except basic religious education while primary and secondary education is given in primitive methods in madrasas.

Methodology

Aiming to reveal information on international humanitarian aid in the field of education, the actors who help, the purposes of the aid, the way the aid implemented and the results obtained, the study collects data through direct on-site observations and meetings with senior officials and project beneficiaries in Kabul and several provinces and analyzes this data qualitatively and quantitatively in line with the information gathered from academic resources such as books, articles and journals published in the field and open source means such as websites, reports and periodic publications of Afghan and foreign government agencies and international organizations.

Primary and Secondary Education System in Afghanistan

Since 1990, Afghanistan implements 6+3+3 system. The new education law passed in 2008 made it mandatory for all children aged 6-14 years to attend school for nine years. However, only around 10% of the 7 million children were able to continue their education until the 12th grade as of 2010 (EFA, 2015). In 2019, the number of school-aged children reached 12 million and the attendance rate reached 58 per cent. Of these, 42 per cent, or 5 million children, were not able to attend school (NSIA, 2019: 3). As of 2018, there were 16,352 primary and secondary schools across the country, including 6,901 primary schools and 9,631 secondary institutions (Hamid, 2019). Of these, 14,888 belong to the state and 1,644 to the private sector.

According to MoE, as of June 2020, the buildings of more than 5,000 schools are not suitable for education (2020). 31 per cent of these schools do not have a drinking water system and 60 per cent do not have toilets (HRW, 2017). 453 schools that were severely damaged in 2018 and 2019 have not yet been reopened (MoE, 2020). The 300,000 students who attend these schools are still not able to

return to school. Schools are usually able to teach for several hours a day in three shifts a day in very crowded classrooms or tents with incomplete educational material and textbooks (HRW, 2017).

In cooperation with MoE, aid agencies in the country provide community-based education services (CBE) to millions of people free of charge. These applications are composed of the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) and Basic General Literacy (BGL) Courses (Pajhwok, 2017). ALP courses provide two years of education in one year for children separated from school to close the gap with their peers and restore them to the education system by starting the fourth grade of primary school. Basic literacy courses provide writing, reading, basic mathematics and Quran education for illiterate youth and adults. This model, which was previously adapted from a national program for both sexes in mosques as a model of homeschooling, does not disturb the conservative segments of the country, or even the Taliban. Within the scope of these programs, rapid and practical granting of basic literacy and primary school education up to third grade fills a very important gap in areas not reached by official and private institutions.

Although the Community Based Education Programmes are mainly owned by MoE, the main roles in the implementation are undertaken by UNICEF and foreign NGOs such as CARE, BRAC, Save the Children, SCA, GIZ and RET. However, as in other key areas of service, community-based education services do not show a balanced distribution on the territory of the country. Located in 32 of the country's 34 provinces and 292 of the 408 districts, the number of courses is very limited in high-risk areas such as rural and remote parts of Zabul and Helmand Provinces (Nicholson, 2013: 74).

Children who complete primary education in Afghanistan or accelerated primary courses are subjected to a test during the transition to secondary education (MoE, 2019). In secondary schools, 7th to 9th grades are usually taught for children between the ages of 12 and 14. After this level is completed, students take an exam again. High school education between 10th and 12th grades continues between the ages of 14 and 17 and take a test called "Kankoor" to enter universities. After secondary school, it is also possible for students in Afghanistan to participate in vocational training institutions (NUFFIC, 2013: 6).

Overview of International Aid to Afghanistan

By 2020, social development in Afghanistan has still not been completed, economic development has not been achieved and a stable system of a community order and administration has not been set up. According to World Bank data (2020a), annual public revenues in the country have been increased to approximately \$2.5 billion with foreign aid since 2002, but this figure is far from meeting public spending, which averages 11 billion annually (Mashal, 2019).

After 2001, foreign aid began to flow into the country and reached \$6.3 billion annually between 2011 and 2013, excluding military aid (OECD, 2009: 1). Between 2013 and 2019, the World Bank allocated \$4.7 billion to provide sustainable resources for Afghanistan's development and growth and has found \$12.27 billion from other sources for its self-run Afghanistan Restructuring Assurance Fund (ARTF) (World Bank, 2020b).

According to the Ministry of Economy reports (MoEc, 2016: 4-5 and 2018: 19), the majority of NGO spending is concentrated in the capital, major cities and provinces which are considered relatively safer. But the number of organizations and the amount of aid to remote, hard-to-go and more dangerous areas remained very low despite the big demand for humanitarian aid. Kabul Province alone received about \$295 million in 2016 and \$264 million in 2018, while Paktika Province received only \$2.77 million 2016 and \$4.2 million in 2018 (MoEc, 2017: 12; 2018: 17). In 2018, 1039 relief projects were implemented in Kabul, while 31 projects were implemented in Zabul.

Overview of Aid to Afghanistan in the Field of Education

Between 2011 and 2014, \$1 billion was funded by foreign aid on education, making 41 per cent of the Department of Education budget of about \$2.5 billion (Global Partnership, 2016: 14). These assistances are funded by the US, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey. In 2016, 424 organizations implemented 909 education projects and spent \$136 million on school and library construction, building and equipment repair, literacy courses, basic educational activities, activities that enable girls to participate in the education system, teacher training and training capacity building activities, and foreign language education (MoEc, 2016: 7). In 2017,

the number of projects in the field of education dropped to 560, but the total amount of educational assistance increased to \$149.71 million (MoEc, 2017: 23).

Although it has been one of the most foreign aid receiving countries in the world in recent years, Afghanistan can only use 2-6 per cent of this aid and an average of 15 per cent of the overall budget for education (HRW, 2019). What is worse, heavy bureaucracy, low capacity, corruption and security problems prevent even this amount from being used effectively.

After the US. Intervention, the Afghan Education System entered a new path of progress. A large amount of foreign aid was made to the new government to solve the problems of the education system. According to a 1999 UNESCO report, in 1999 there were a total of 3,100 official and private schools available in the country, including 466 girls' schools (Yahya, 2017: 59 as cited in Andeshmend, 2011). This number was increased to 13,363 by 2010, to 14,000 by 2013 and 16,352 by 2018 thanks to foreign aid. It is also certain that these schools were in much better conditions than pre-2001 years, although building, furniture and appliance situations were not ideal. In 1999, the total number of students which was 875,000, including 64,100 schoolgirls, increased to approximately 9 million by 2019, with 3.5 million girls. The proportion of children enrolled in primary schools increased from 24.4 per cent to 58 per cent between 2001 and 2019 (MoE, 2020),

Similarly, the literacy rate across the country tends to rise. A total of 250,000 adults, including 62 per cent women, have graduated in basic literacy courses since 2012. Literacy level increased to approximately 68 per cent by 2018, which was around 21 per cent on average, 40 per cent in men and 12 per cent in women in 1999 (Samady, 2013: 4). Almost all literacy courses were funded by foreign aid and run by NGOs. But despite more than half a century of struggle in the country to improve literacy, Afghanistan is still one of the lowest among underdeveloped countries.

According to the UNESCO report, in 1999, there were a total of 26,383 male teachers and 9,774 female teachers (EFA, 2015: 21, 25). Only 18 per cent of these teachers had practical and vocational training. By 2004, the number had increased to 187,000 and in 2018 to 216,940. Besides, teachers' professional equipment and knowledge

have been improved, and as of 2015, the proportion of teachers with an adequate diploma and vocational-technical training requirements has been increased to 42 per cent. Between 2002 and 2010, 87 million textbooks were printed and distributed. In 2008, the first Education Management Information System (EMIS) was developed and the management and planning capacity of the MoE was improved (OECD, 2012: 33).

Discussion and Conclusions

Even though Afghan Education Sector made some progress thanks to the international aid, it is still far from being a healthy and sustainable structure. The number of students has increased and the rates of male and female students have been slightly balanced since 2001 but the participation rates of the country's young population in education remain very low. Currently, 5 million children out of 12 million school-aged children (42 per cent) are not able to attend school. The number of drop-outs is also very large. Of the ten children who start primary school, only six can finish primary school and two can finish high school. About 400,000 students leave school each year. To solve this problem, the community should be made aware and projects that encourage parents to send their children to school should be supported.

Although projects have made a big difference, the literacy rates in the population are still very low. As of 2018, there are a total of 12,053,875 illiterate people over the age of 15 (4,848,681 men and 7,205,193 women) equal to 38 per cent of the country's population. In women over the age of 18, this rate is 81 per cent and in men, it is 51 per cent. To solve this problem, community-based educational activities, especially basic literacy courses, must continue increasingly.

While international aid has not yet reached the desired level, significant progress has been made in the Afghan Education System both operationally and structurally. Tens of thousands of schools have been repaired, thousands of new schools have been built, curriculums have been renewed, education plans have set targets, teacher numbers and their technical qualifications have been increased, millions of books have been distributed, millions of school-deprived children have been registered, gender disparities against girls have been reduced, and the illiteracy rate in the country has been reduced.

On one hand, foreign aid produces solutions as mentioned above, but on the other hand, it leads to other problems. Despite all efforts, the country's dependence on foreign aid harms the independence and free will of the society. Naturally, there is a sense of gratitude towards the helpers and the danger of cessation of aid is always sensed. It is quite natural that leaders who are aware of the risks that may occur with the cessation of aid will avoid taking any decision that may be against the political interests of the donor countries and that they will have to accept conditions these countries may dictate. To reduce this dependence, the country must progress in education, technology, agriculture, industry and mining towards a self-sufficient level. To do this, education activities in the country should continue to be more scientific, more systematic and of better quality; the national potentials in areas of agriculture, livestock, mining, oil and natural gas should be activated to strengthen the country's economy; and the corruption should be exterminated with a transparent and democratic management approach.

Besides, the failure to ensure national unity in the country, which was established as a buffer zone in the late 19th century and has been manipulated since then by global and regional powers due to the geopolitical position between civilizations, underground-rich regions and trade areas, also increases the fragility mentioned above. In the name of a more robust state and society, social leaders and religious leaders in all ethnic and cultural segments must learn the history of the country soundly and assume more rational and ethical approaches within a national consciousness by giving up small accounts that revolve around ethnic micro nationalism. To pass this value on to future generations, school-aged children must be taught the country's history realistically and effectively.

Although teacher numbers have been raised, the desired level of technical proficiency has still not been reached. Despite the fact teachers are selected from the graduates of relevant fields with a bachelor's degree in most countries, Afghanistan sets the bar lower at the associate degree, but cannot even provide it. Today, 73 per cent of teachers in the country still do not have an undergraduate degree. It is indeed thought-provoking that the vast majority of teachers who take trials for students to fail. It will be very difficult for these teachers to raise a vigorous generation. A large number of students per teacher at 46 per cent also makes it difficult to provide educational services in

overcrowded classes. Very low teacher salaries also continue to cause problems both in terms of making the teaching profession unattractive and breaking motivations of the teachers who cannot spare time for academic studies as they are forced to do additional jobs. Projects aimed at improving the academic quality of teachers should be continued and the teaching profession should be made attractive by increasing the salaries and promoting labour rights of all education personnel.

Religious education also remains a problematic area. Hundreds of thousands of students are currently studying in madrasas and mosque courses instead of schools. Students who grow up in this area, which is far from state control, receive no rational or scientific training except entrance-level math classes and are exposed to the influence of violent groups. These activities carried out with an understanding that has lagging behind the age continue to harm young minds knowingly or unknowingly with rhetoric filled with violence and intolerance. This endangers the future of society and peace in society. The demands for religious education in Afghan society will continue to be intense, as the level of conservatism among the Sunni majority remains very high. The Afghan government should strive to make the religious education more planned, systematic and controlled. In this context, Imam Hatip Schools, which have been successfully implemented in the Republic of Turkey for decades and teach social and natural science along with religious courses, can be proposed as a good model for conservative Afghan families who do not want to send their children to regular schools. By examining these schools and developing a similar model in the Afghan education system, interest in education in madrasas and mosques can be channelled towards this direction. Thus, some social benefits can be earned in means of cultivating more enlightened clerics, highlighting religious regulations against violence and reducing participation in violent groups.

There is no geographical symmetry in both international aid activities and public education services. Most of the aid is concentrated in the capital, major cities and provinces considered relatively safe. Although they need humanitarian assistance and basic services the most; the number of organizations that provide assistance to remote, hard-to-go and more dangerous areas, and especially rural areas, remains very low. A similar situation is seen in the distribution of teachers in the country. 90 per cent of the country's already low

number of female teachers are in the country's major cities. The ratio of female teachers to the total number of teachers is still around 34 per cent. There are still no female teachers in more than half of the country's 412 districts, no matter the community do not like the idea of educating girls by male teachers. To address these imbalances, the State and International Powers should ensure stability and trust in the country as soon as possible, essential resources should be allocated, comprehensive planning should be made and implemented as soon as possible and teachers that are assigned to remote and deprived areas should be given additional benefits to make these areas attractive.

Moreover, individuals who have a hard time meeting their basic needs due to poverty will not be able to lead successful and happy lives even though they have received a very good education. For trained individuals to work and produce technology; factories, mining plants, powerful companies, laboratories, libraries, air, land and railway infrastructure, a healthy communication network and a safe and fair community structure are needed in the country. Along with the education system, reforms and improvements should be made in these areas and permanent and sustainable solutions should be produced. However, the fragile Afghan community and state will continue to need support from the international community because it does not have the strength and means to make these breakthroughs on its own.

It is also sure that dependence on foreign aid in the education system will not end until peace and stability arrive in the country. It is undoubtedly a fact that people who are constantly concerned about their safety will not be able to establish a healthy social order and live a happy and successful life, no matter how well trained they are. Therefore, the current government and Taliban Leadership should continue peace talks and cooperate very seriously with international humanitarian actors. Given the other problems caused by lack of education, and in particular, the fact that terrorism and criminal organizations are taking advantage of these problems; international actors should not seek for political interests and adhere to the core values of humanitarian aid and increase their assistance to Afghanistan.

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