



A Review of Afghanistan's National Education Strategic Plan (2017-2021)

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Abstract: The Afghanistan National Education Strategic Plan (2017-2021) is the third strategic plan for education development issued by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan since its establishment. The Ministry of Education of Afghanistan, in accordance with the Constitution of Afghanistan and the provisions of various sectors, provides an in-depth analysis of the current situation of education in Afghanistan and sets the direction for the development of education in Afghanistan from 2017 to 2021. The Afghanistan National Education Strategic Plan (2017-2021) is divided into three main parts: quality and relevance, equitable access, and efficient and transparent management. The goal of Afghanistan's National Education Strategic Plan (2017-2021) is to develop skilled and capable Afghan citizens through the Afghan education system to sustain Afghanistan's socio-economic development and social cohesion.

Keywords: Afghanistan; National Education Strategic Plan (2017-2021); Quality of Education; Equitable Access; Efficient Management

Introduction

As of August 15, 2021, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has issued three strategic plans for education development since its establishment. Each strategic development plan for education is in a different context, with different tasks and issues to be addressed. The Education Development Strategic Plan 2017-2021 was developed against the backdrop of Afghanistan's economic downturn and the declining international troop presence in the country. At this time, on the economic front, Afghanistan's gross domestic product has been declining for years since 2013 and is not making ends meet. The Afghan government relies heavily on assistance from the international community. At the same time, with the gradual withdrawal of international forces in Afghanistan and the gradual increase in the Taliban's security threat to the Afghan government, the Afghan government has been forced to spend more on security. This has led to a decrease in the Afghan government's financial investment in education. In terms of security, the growth and improvement of education services in Afghanistan depends on a secure and stable social environment. Therefore, to address the scarcity and vulnerability of education, Afghanistan must achieve prosperity and stability on the economic front and make great strides in security. The Afghan Ministry of Education also recognizes the necessity of the security situation for educational development. However, security and stability in Afghanistan is a long-term issue, and only a full understanding of the current situation and targeting the current situation is the long-term plan for the development of the education sector.

Research on educational planning in Afghanistan has been covered by scholars at home and abroad, such as Wang Baofeng and Cai Wenbo published in the journal paper "Review of Strategic Planning of Education Development from 2006 to 2010 in Afghanistan" in *Meitan Higher Education*, is the first edition to analyze the development of education strategies in Afghanistan. Liu Dalu's journal paper "Strategic Planning for Education in Afghanistan under the Guidance of UNESCO" published in *World Education*, analyzes the second edition of Education Strategy Development in Afghanistan. And there is no research result yet for the third edition of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Education Strategic Development Plan. Therefore, it is of pedagogical significance to study the Afghanistan National Education Strategic Plan (2017-2021)



(hereafter referred to as the Plan). Moreover, Afghanistan's population is inclined to be young with a large number of school-age people, with 44.88% of the total population of Afghanistan aged 0-14 years in 2015. Therefore, education in Afghanistan is crucial to the development of the country as a whole. Studying the educational strategy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is beneficial to understand the ideological tendencies of Afghan nationals and facilitate our country's engagement with them.

I Background of the Plan

Afghanistan has a very young demographic with a large school-age population. 44% of Afghans are under the age of 15 and the school-age population is large, with 7.8 million students requiring basic education (ages 6 to 15, grades 1 to 9).

(Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.19) Having such a large school-age population makes education services particularly important. The Afghanistan National Education Strategic Plan was developed by the Afghan government based on an analysis of the country's educational reality. The Ministry of Education of Afghanistan summarizes the current situation and shortcoming based on Afghanistan's demographic background, linguistic and religious background, macroeconomic and public finance, and the current status of education, and develops the Afghanistan National Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 based on the existing situation.

A. Demographic Background

The majority of Afghanistan's population lives in rural areas where the education sector is underdeveloped, making access to education difficult. According to the Afghanistan Central Statistical Organization (CSO), the total population of Afghanistan in 2015 was about 28.6 million, of which 14.7 million were male and 13.9 million were female. The settled population was about 27.1 million, of which 49% were female and 51% were male. About 75.3% of the settled population lives in rural areas. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.17) In other words, the difference between the male and female populations in the composition of the Afghan population is relatively small and balanced. But there is a serious imbalance in the ratio of educated males to educated females. Afghanistan has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world. The male literacy rate (over 15 years old) is 62% and the female literacy rate is only 18%. Only one in five females in Afghanistan is literate. Combined with widespread and persistent poverty in Afghanistan, about 36% of the Afghan population is below the poverty line and is concentrated in rural areas. (Ibid) Due to the constraints of economic development in rural area, the illiteracy rate among women in rural areas is three times higher than in urban area. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.18)

The large refugee population makes the education sector in Afghanistan more difficult due to war and disaster. The Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees estimates that approximately 20 percent of Afghans are returning refugees. As of March 2016, there were approximately 1.2 million displaced persons in Afghanistan. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.17) The transfer and increase in the number of refugees has made education more difficult for Afghan children. In February 2014, a policy on internally displaced persons (IDPs) was developed under the auspices of the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation. The policy provides Afghan IDPs with the same livelihood opportunities, access to education, housing, land, property, and services as other Afghan citizens. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.18) Chapter VII of the regulation also states, "Ensure that all internally displaced children, girls and boys, have access to free and compulsory primary and secondary education." (National IDP Policy) It also states that: educational officials will take measures to allow refugee children to receive an education, even if the child does not have documentation such as school records; and fund teachers who serve as refugees in Afghanistan, expand class sizes, provide teaching and educational materials in refugee areas, etc. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.18)

B. The Language and Religious Background

Afghanistan has a large number of ethnic groups and large linguistic differences. The right of ethnic minorities to receive education in their own languages should be respected and guaranteed. Dari and Pushto are the official languages of the Afghan state. In the areas where majority of the people speak in any one of Uzbeki, Turkmani, Pachaie, Nuristani, Baluchi or Pamiri languages, any of the aforementioned language, in addition to Pashto and Dari, are the third official languages. The state is obligated by the article 16 of the constitution to design and apply effective programs to foster and develop all languages of Afghanistan. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.18) The medium of instruction in schools is one of the state official languages of Dari or Pushto depending on the mother tongue of majority of residents of the area. Some schools offer classes with Dari and Pushto medium of instruction where resident of the area are close mix of Dari and Pashto speakers. All students learn the second official language as part of the curriculum. As part of school curriculum, language textbooks are also developed and printed in third official languages with the aim of promoting other local languages in the areas where majority of people speak in those languages. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.18)

C. The Macroeconomic and Public Finance Contexts

From 2003-2013, Afghanistan's economy experienced a decade of high growth. Since 2013, the growth rate has been

declining. Economic growth in 2014 and 2015 was 2.1% and 2.6%. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.19) The slowdown in economic growth has caused government funds to be stretched to invest in education. Afghanistan's economic growth has benefited from international assistance, and international assistance to Afghanistan's service sector (education and health) has been a key factor in its growth. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.19) This has also led to difficulties for the Afghan government in providing quality education services in the face of declining international aid.

In 2015, education accounted for 14.1% of total government expenditure (excluding debt service), 15.5% of recurrent government expenditure, 10.3% of development expenditure and 3.7% of GDP, due to rising security costs combined with an increase in the number of civil servants, particularly in the areas of education and health, and increased public infrastructure spending. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.19) Combined with the reduction in discretionary grants available to the Afghan government after 2014, limiting the government's ability to provide funding, resulting in a weakening of the government's education function.

D. Education

The Afghan Constitution enshrines the right of citizens to free education “up to the bachelor’s level in the state educational institutes”. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.24) The education law and its related by-laws and legislative documents provide the legal framework for the development and implementation of education programmes by the government and other providers. The education sector policies are developed for the different focus areas in response to the arising needs i.e. policy for the community based education, teacher education, etc. The by-law for private schools has paved the way for increased private investment and operation of private schools. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.24)

Afghanistan’s international commitments to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to Education for All (EFA), signed in 2005, have been integrated into its strategic plans for education and development. The target date for achievement of these goals is 2020. Afghanistan will commit to the internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the target date of 2030. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.24)

The Afghan constitution and other legislative documents developed recently, to a large extent provide a good framework for the development of education in the country, although the need for revision of selected legislative documents has become clearer with the statement of new policy directions from the new government administration. Major legislation/regulation areas under consideration for revision include: Financing and the share of education in the national budget; Addressing the overlaps and coordination issues between the education sector ministries; Fine-tuning MoE core mandates and transferring non-core functions to other institutions; Creation of a more enabling environment for private sector investment in education; Teacher recruitment, accreditation and performance evaluation, and Support to apprentices and private skills providers. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.25) Moreover, the separate elements of education policy developed in recent years need to be combined through a consultative process into a comprehensive national education policy. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.25)

II The Basic Framework and Main Contents of the Plan

A. Clarify National Education Development Goals

The education development goals of Afghanistan's National Education Strategic Plan (2017-2021) consist mainly of quality and relevance, equitable access, and efficient and transparent management. The common Goal of the Strategic Plan is to prepare skilled and competent citizens through the education system to sustain Afghanistan’s socioeconomic development and social cohesion. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.2) Afghanistan is a fragile, post conflict society. The education system has to provide the country’s children and youth with a mind-set that shows the future of the country belongs to them. Education must satisfy the material and psychological needs of individuals and create a sense of shared social responsibility. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.2)

a. Quality and Relevance

The top priority of the Ministry of Education and its partners is to improve the quality and relevance of education. Therefore, strategies to develop more relevant curricula are first proposed, followed by strategies to ensure better implementation and evaluation of the curricula. NESP III will improve curriculum quality and relevance and develop assessment systems to ensure learning is focused on results. Following the functional review of MoE operations, planned as an early Management strategy, coordinated curriculum development will address, in an integrated manner, the various education subsectors General Education, Literacy, TVET and Islamic Education. This will ensure more efficient and user-friendly pathways for learners. To improve the labour market skills and capacity, the education sector will strengthen linkages with industry, employers and SMEs, to ensure skilled graduates meet market demands. This will require review of the formal TVET system and expansion of carefully targeted support for the informal and formal private sectors, which are training the majority of TVET learners (at least 10 times as many learners as the public TVET schools). (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.2)

Quality and Relevance: Learners at all levels acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to be productive, healthy, and responsible citizens prepared to contribute to the welfare of society and equipped for viable employment in the

national and international labour market.(Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.2)

Quality and Relevance of Long-term outcome: The capacity of the education system to develop and monitor student attainment relevant to individual and social needs is improved. Intermediate Outcomes: 1.1 Reformed curriculum for education at all levels; 1.2 Teacher training, and student textbooks and materials based on new curriculum are developed; 1.3 Student learning assessment system developed and implemented.(Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.4)

b. Equitable Access

The second major component is the improvement of Equitable Access to learning. Equity is an essential element in NESP III and is addressed in many sections and strategic aspects of the Plan. Disaggregation of access by gender will allow MoE to track equitable access by girls and women. The policies governing equitable provision of education opportunity for disadvantaged sections of society are highlighted. NESP III will seek to implement a strategy of inclusiveness and mainstreaming of specific groups, ensuring equal access for all concerned, while monitoring performance to allow targeted strategic responses to identified needs. There are two approaches to this policy priority: Supply Side Strategies, and Demand Side Strategies.(Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.6)

Overall Objective: Increased equitable and inclusive access to relevant, safe, and quality learning opportunities for children, youth, and adults in Afghanistan, especially women and girls. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.2)

Long-term outcome: Increased equitable availability of responsive, safe and conducive learning and skills training opportunities

Intermediate outcome: 1.1 Provincial/district plans for schools/ learning centers/TVET centers drafted based on local needs; 1.2 Establish and support CBE and ALP programs; 1.3 Increased deployment of female teachers in all areas, especially rural; 1.4 TVET training and support meeting private sector need; 1.5 Literacy programs contribute to lower national illiteracy rates.(Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.4)

Equitable Access to Educational Opportunities Supply Side Strategies:National Education Strategic Plan IIIhas key supply-side strategies will address: first, geography - including the disparity between the situation in urban and rural areas; second, gender - including girls' enrollment and retention in other learning programs; and third, inclusion - including students with special needs, internally displaced persons, returnees and other vulnerable groups.Access will involve the different pathways through which learning opportunities can be offered including mainstream Primary and Lower Secondary (Basic) education, Secondary education, Community-Based Education (CBE), Islamic education, TVET and Pre-school centres. Alternative pathways will also include Accelerated Learning Centres (ALC), Community Learning Centres (CLC), literacy and adult learning programmes, Mosque-based learning, distance and home-based learning. Programmes will seek to expand availability, making use of existing facilities in new ways, opening informal centres or exploiting information technology solutions to overcome the challenges of geography and restrictions on access.(Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.6)

Demand Side Strategies: Some of the key demand side barriers are poverty, social norms and practices (early marriages) and these are exacerbated by supply related issues such as lack of schools within walking distance, lack of female teachers, etc. To facilitate equitable access linking both supply and demand will be critical to ensuring children complete basic education and learners in general make full use of learning opportunities.(Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.6)

Community participation and commitment is a key strategy and sustained community participation will be encouraged and monitored. The GoIRA has established a process to extend the Citizen's Charter initiative to guarantee a minimum set of core services to all citizens, using CDCs as the primary vehicle for service delivery, linked to local capacity development and grants for school development planning. Ongoing discussions between line Ministries, especially MoF, MoE and MoRRD are elaborating the mechanisms for funding these local activities. Under NESP III CDCs will work with school shuras (School Management Committees) to extend planning and monitoring of education services to local communities.(Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.6)

c. Efficient and Transparent Management

Overall Objective: Transparent, cost-effective and efficient delivery of equitable quality education services at national and sub-national levels.(Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.5)

NESP III will improve administrative and management support for both better quality and access to learning. Many strategies are cross-cutting and directly or indirectly impact programmes at all levels. A review of the functional organisation of MoE and associated human resource planning are the first steps to be taken in improving coordination and efficiency within MoE management. The functional review will define core and non-core operations and clarify the Terms of Reference of MoE institutions. Improved recruitment, training, mentoring and professional development systems for tashkil staff will be introduced. This will target especially decentralised capacity development and will ensure equitable and needs-based staff development in all provinces.(Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.7)

Decentralisation is a priority for the education system. In NESP III provincial and district education departments and schools will have greater input in the planning and control of their budgets. Capacity weaknesses and the level of authority will be addressed and monitored under the Human Resource Development (HRD) strategies with links to the CBR programme, which has already begun. MoE staff recruitment will match the functional restructuring and National Technical Assistants will be

accountable for results under NESP III and for the development of tashkil capacity. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.7)

The MoE plans to bring up-to-date existing agreements with DPs and other partners (e.g. line Ministries) and to review and define partnership agreements between MoE and communities, civil society, DPs and private sector stakeholders. Integral to these agreements MoE will develop minimum delivery packages for resources in schools and learning centres to ensure harmonised and sustainable funding and support. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.7)

B. Current status of national education development

a. Low enrollment rate and poor educational environment

Afghanistan has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world. The male literacy rate (age 15+) is 62% the female rate is 18%, compared to the median value for low-income countries of 70% and 57% respectively. Only one in five women in Afghanistan is literate and the literacy rate for women in rural areas is three times lower than in urban areas. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.18)

School enrolment rose from below 1 million in 2001 to 9.2 million in 2015. Gross enrolment (mainly overage) is high for males at all grade levels, which suggests boys are enrolling late. Challenges for MoE are to reduce dropout and repetition, and to ensure graduates leave school with the skills to make them employable. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.20)

A major challenge is to increase the low overall primary attendance (only 55% children aged 7-12 are attending⁸). This figure conceals large disparities: 78% in urban areas, 50% in rural areas; 79% for the wealthiest households, 40% for the poorest (often Kuchi). MoE estimates there are over 3.5 million children out of school (OOS). In addition, 1,681,250 students, 18.3% of the total number in 2014, were permanently absent but still registered as enrolled. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.20) The primary school completion rate is currently 31%, that for girls' (21%) about half that for boys (40%). It is lower in rural areas. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.20)

In 2015, poor educational environment, approximately 49% of schools lacked adequate buildings¹³; 62% lacked surrounding walls, 31% lacked drinking water, 33% lacked functional sanitation facilities and 76% lacked electricity. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.21) Infrastructure improvements will be a priority for NESP III to provide better learning facilities and improved student/class ratios. Demand for education remains high and most students who currently begin primary school eventually do complete. The challenge lies in raising attendance rates beyond current levels, and in ensuring a greater proportion of primary graduates go on to start and complete secondary or, more importantly, acquire sufficient skills during their education to enter the job market when they graduate. These challenges are especially daunting for girls. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.21)

b. Quality and Relevance

There is acceptance that education quality and relevance have not received as much attention to date as access issues. In particular there is an urgent need to address dangerously widening differentials between education quality and relevance at central and rural levels. Factors include: school construction and facilities; curriculum reform based on results and market/social demand; teacher preparation and qualifications, appropriate and available textbooks and learning materials and assessment. These are often seriously weaker at subnational levels. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.22)

Using Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) findings in 2013 the ESA points out¹⁴ that of all children who enter grade 1 of primary school, 4 out of 5 (84%) will eventually graduate (Survival rate). Encouragingly, boys and girls, rural and urban children perform comparably on this measure. On the other hand, the ESA also drew attention to the worryingly low levels of primary school completion. The CSO's ALCS report for 2013/14 gives completion as 58.1% for boys but only 40.3% for girls. Completion (a different measurement from survival to grade 6) is the total number of new entrants to grade 6 (i.e. not repeaters) regardless of their age, expressed as percentage of the total population of 13 year olds, the age children should be in that grade. This is not a measure of correct age graduation, but of coverage and progression. On this measure the serious differences between genders are also shown when comparing urban and rural areas (in 2011 the rates were 42% in urban, 28% in rural) and between regions (Central 45.7%, South 17%). NESP III should monitor these measures to track how strategies of greater relevance and improved quality, as well as local capacity development are reducing these differences. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.22)

Improving the quality of teaching must be a priority for NESP III. Currently almost half of teachers have acceptable formal qualifications. MoE needs to improve the skills of all teachers despite salary limitations, by increasing professional support and opportunities for measured professional growth through credentialing. A key strategy in NESP III to increase female teacher numbers in rural areas should be to accept the "best available" candidates, with highest formal education attainment, and to provide support, mentoring and opportunities to become fully credentialed. Teacher attendance should be monitored and schools be accountable for performance. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.22)

ESA notes the need to improve curriculum quality and relevance and develop assessment systems to ensure learning is focused on results. Learning assessment for grade 6 students was conducted by a foreign university commissioned under EQUIP. Afghanistan does not yet have standardized performance tests or national examinations at primary or secondary school, which makes assessing learning outcomes a major challenge for parents, students, employers and for the education system. GIZ,

UNESCO, USAID studies suggest reform of the curriculum and assessment system for TVET, general education and early grade reading. The new government policy vision calls for the curriculum reform to become relevant, resultbased, applied and the education should prepare the youth for the job market, so they can have employment, earning and able to have a better life. The parents and communities are also demanding more relevant and quality education. This should be a focus of NESP III. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.23)

A further priority should be to increase the percentage of textbooks schools receive and to improve the pedagogical and physical quality of materials. Strategies involving private sector printers should be piloted with payment on delivery to schools. ICT based textbooks and learning materials should be piloted also. (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.23)

c. Management

The MoE structure and capacity is not responsive for effective delivery of quality education services. MoE leadership has already shown concerted efforts to address this. Coordination and efficiency in MoE will be improved by a clearer functional mandate of departments and offices with reduced duplication and fragmentation. The Capacity Building for Results (CBR) programme will address the unsustainable dependence on donor-funded technical assistance (TA) which has been coupled at central and provincial levels with inefficient and capacitydraining “projectisation”, duplication of effort and lack of clear agreement on outcomes.(Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.23)

Asia Foundation 2019 Poll: 81.5% of Respondents Say Corruption is the Main Problem Facing Afghanistan.(Tabasum Akseer and Khadija Hayat, 2019, P.142) Afghanistan ranks 173 out of 180 countries in 2019, according to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index rankings.(Transparency International, 2019)Afghanistan is ranked 165 out of 180 countries in 2020.(Transparency International, 2020) Although corruption has improved slightly, it has eroded the daily lives of Afghans, leading them to have a negative perception of the government and expect it to improve.The population perceives corruption as the second major problem facing Afghanistan. MoE has identified the elimination of corruption from education offices/institutions at all levels as a high priority. Action elements include teacher recruitment and complaints management, as well as transparent identification of eligible contractors and suppliers.(Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.23)

Monitoring of education performance has significantly improved over the last few years with two dedicated units in MoE, the Monitoring and Reporting unit under the EMIS Directorate and the Research and Evaluation Unit under the Directorate of Strategic and Operational Planning responsible for M&E. Improved data collection will increase the ability of the MoE to undertake efficient planning, assessment, and prioritization.(Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.23)

III Characteristics of Strategic Planning

The National Education Strategic Plan (2017-2021) proposes a targeted education development plan based on the current situation of education in Afghanistan. However, at this time, the Afghan government is heavily dependent on the international community economically, resulting in a lack of funding for education while being heavily influenced by the international community in education, so that some education regulations are severely detached from the reality of Afghanistan and opposed by local people. On the other hand, the Afghan government did not control the whole country, and most of the rural areas were under the control of the Taliban, so the impact of the plan was limited. The implementation of this plan is also challenging due to the security situation in the contested zone between the two sides. The top priority of education in Afghanistan is literacy. Therefore, the plan focus on basic education. In order to alleviate the unemployment of young people, the Afghan government focuses on vocational education to align with the employment needs of the society and improve the employment opportunities of students to develop talents for the development of Afghan economy.

A. Education Funding Fluctuates with External Aid

The Afghan government's heavy reliance on external aid as a source of education funding has resulted in Afghan education funding being affected by fluctuations in external aid. With the significant withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, international aid funding has declined as a result. International funding for aid to Afghanistan declined from \$6.5 billion in 2010 to \$4.3 billion in 2015 and has continued to decline since 2015. With reduced international aid funding to the Afghan government and increased security funding from the Afghan government, the more vulnerable education sector is at risk of budgetary constraints. This, coupled with the continued reduction in international aid funding, has a direct impact on the quality of education in Afghanistan. Therefore, a stable source of education funding could help reduce the risk of disruption to education services in Afghanistan.

B. Security Situation Jeopardizes Strategy Execution

Afghanistan faces serious safety and security risks that affect education planning implementation on the one hand, and monitoring and evaluation on the other. In the "Post-withdrawal era" in Afghanistan, the Afghan government is facing internal and external problems. The internal power struggle between Ghani and Abdullah and the new armed offensive by the Afghan Taliban have put the security situation under great pressure. The plan analyzes the overall risks that each strategy may face, but does not analyze the specific political, geographic, and security constraints on education in Afghanistan, and therefore does not provide a specific and detailed strategy to address them. (Li Shijun, 2015) The Ghani government expects to use the

plan as a source of educational change and a catalyst for educational reform in Afghanistan that will lead to social change and economic prosperity. However, there are many threats to the implementation and evaluation process of the plan that seriously affect the effectiveness of the strategy.

C. Emphasis on Basic and Vocational Education

On January 29, 2017, against the backdrop of the developments already taking place in education in Afghanistan, the Afghan Minister of Education Assadullah Hanif Balkhi: “We must improve the relevance and quality of learning so that children are better prepared for employment with skills as well as knowledge. A major curriculum and training reform will be at the heart of this strategy. Enhancing the competencies of teachers will be a priority in our reform agenda. We will increase alternative learning opportunities, making better use of our existing resources (human and infrastructure).”(Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.k)That is, the program, while focusing on continuing to reduce illiteracy in Afghanistan, is aligned with the employment needs of society to improve the employment opportunities of students and to develop human resources for the development of the Afghan economy.The Ministry of Education will use NESP III to evolve into a student and teacher-centredorganisation, facilitating implementation and monitoring the results of this most important national contribution to Afghanistan’s development.(Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2016, p.k)

IV Conclusion

The National Education Strategic Plan (2017-2021) is the third education plan presented by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan since its inception. The plan proposes solutions based on an analysis of the achievements and shortcomings of the education sector in Afghanistan from 2002-2016.The achievements and problems of Afghanistan's education sector are well represented in this plan. The challenges to the development of education in Afghanistan are many, and the plan addresses only some of them. Based on the ongoing offensive of the Afghan Taliban, the Ghani government in Afghanistan is in an existential crisis and has no time to focus on the education sector. The Afghan Taliban, as well as other anti-government militants, have been deepening the intensity of their attacks on Afghan government forces since the successive withdrawal of international forces. Security pressure is gradually shifting from the NATO company forces to the Afghan National Army.Coupled with dwindling international aid, the Afghan education sector faces both security and economic pressures.The development of the Afghan government's education sector requires an improvement in the overall situation in Afghanistan. on August 15, 2021, with President Ghani fleeing Afghanistan, the Afghan Taliban entered Kabul and returned to power. As Afghanistan enters another era of Taliban rule, Afghan education faces a crossroads decision to move up or sink down.Although the Afghan Taliban government does not have an advantage over the Ghani government in terms of education philosophy and education funding, the Afghan Taliban government is expected to achieve educational autonomy and try to develop an educational path that is in line with Afghanistan's national conditions after being free from foreign influence. It is worthwhile for the Afghan Taliban government to wake up to the fact that the educational development plan left behind by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the current situation of educational development spawned by it is a fait accompli that the Afghan Taliban government cannot ignore when implementing educational changes.Whether the Taliban government in Afghanistan will build on the existing educational foundation and fully implement its own ideas, as it did in its first administration, and realize its own educational ideas regardless of the current situation in the education sector, or whether it will respect the existing educational development and gradually and gently infiltrate its own ideas into the education sector in succession, is a question that deserves the attention of the academic community, and the outcome of which will deeply affect the success or failure of the Taliban government in Afghanistan The outcome will also profoundly affect the success or failure of the Taliban in power and the future of Afghanistan.

Funding: This article is the phase result of the 2019 Western Project of Philosophy and Social Science Foundation of China (Project No. 19XGJ020): “Pakistan Language Problem and its Influence on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Countermeasures”; This paper is the result of “The Indian Pacific Strategic Direction of International Relations Discipline of Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences, China (Kunming) Institute of South and Southeast Asian Studies”; This paper was supported by the Southwest Minzu University Research Startup Funds “The Impact of the Change in Afghanistan on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Countermeasures” (Grant No. RQD2022010). This paper was supported by the key project of Pakistan Studies Center of China West Normal University in 2022 “The progress, Resistance and Countermeasures of the Belt and Road Initiative in South Asia” (Project No. PSC22ZD01).

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