United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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International Institute
for Educational Planning

On the road to resilience

Capacity development with the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan

Edited by
Morten Sigsgaard

Education in emergencies and reconstruction

On the road to resilience:

Capacity development with the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan

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This book is titled *On the Road to Resilience*, in tribute to Afghanistan's educational administrators and planners, teachers, students, parents, and communities, who work hard to make their education system function under great pressure and subject to many contradictions. They deserve credit – and they deserve continued support.

Many individuals contributed to creating this book. Not least among these are the eight case-study authors who contributed to the publication.

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Presentation of the IIEP series

UNESCO is often requested to provide an educational response in emergency and reconstruction settings. The Organization continues to develop expertise in this field in order to be able to offer prompt and relevant assistance. IIEP has been working most recently with the Global Education Cluster to offer guidance, practical tools, and specific training for education policy-makers, officials, and planners.

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on the 'Right to education in emergency situations'. It recognizes that both natural disasters and conflict present a serious challenge to the fulfilment of international education goals, and acknowledges that protecting schools and providing education in emergencies should remain a key priority for the international community and Member States. The Dakar World Education Forum in 2000 explicitly focused on the rights of children in emergencies in the fifth of the eleven objectives adopted. Governments, particularly education ministries, have an important role to play in an area that has often been dominated by non-governmental organizations and UN agencies.

In this regard, the field of educational planning in emergencies and reconstruction is still developing, and requires increased documentation and analysis. Accumulated institutional memories and knowledge in governments, agencies, and NGOs on education in emergencies are in danger of being lost due to high staff turnover in both national and international institutions. Most of the expertise is still in the heads of practitioners and needs to be collected while memories are fresh.

The IIEP series on *Education in Emergencies and Reconstruction* aims to document such information, and includes country-specific analyses of the planning and management of education in emergencies and reconstruction. These studies focus on efforts made to restore and transform education systems in countries and territories as diverse as Pakistan, Burundi, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Sudan, Kosovo, Timor-Leste, and Rwanda.

This book, *On the Road to Resilience: Capacity development with the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan*, is the latest of IIEP's

publications that seeks to broaden the body of literature and knowledge in this field. These include a series of global, thematic, policy-related studies, on topics including certification for pupils and teachers, donor engagement in financing, and alternative education programmes. In addition, IIEP has published a *Guidebook for Planning Education in Emergencies and Reconstruction* for ministry of education officials and the agencies assisting them. In collaboration with UNICEF and the Global Education Cluster, IIEP is also developing specific guidance on formulating education sector plans in situations affected by crisis, for a similar audience. Through this programme, IIEP will make a modest but significant contribution to the field of education in emergencies and reconstruction, in the hope of enriching the quality of educational planning processes in situations affected by crisis.

Khalil Mahshi
Director, IIEP

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List of abbreviations

AAB	Afghan National Association of the Blind
AAN	Afghanistan Analysts Network
AFMIS	Afghanistan Financial Management System
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
ALAS	Afghanistan Literacy Assessment Survey
ALC	accelerated learning class
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
ARM	Afghanistan Rights Monitor
ARTF	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CBE	community-based education
CBS	community-based school
CD	capacity development
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSO	Central Statistics Organization
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
DLC	district literacy centre
DM-TVET	Deputy Ministry for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
DoPE	Department of Planning and Evaluation
EDB	Education Development Board
EDF	Education Development Forum
EEPCT	Education in Emergencies and Post Crisis Transitions programme
EFA	Education for All
ELA	Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPDF	Education Programme Development Fund
EQUIP	Education Quality Improvement Program

FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GIS	geographic information system
GMU	Grant Management Unit
GoA	Government of Afghanistan
GoN	Government of the Netherlands
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
HRD	Human Resource Development or Department
HRDB	Human Resource Development Board
I-ANDS	Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ICE	International Conference on Education
IE	Inclusive Education
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IECWG	Inclusive Education Coordination Working Group
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
ILFE	inclusive learning-friendly environment
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
INGO	International non-governmental organization
INSET	In-Service Teacher Training
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
LAND Afghan	Literacy and Non-Formal Education Development in Afghanistan
LD	Literacy Department
LIFE	Literacy Initiative for Empowerment
Lit/NFE-MIS	Literacy and Non-Formal Education Management Information System
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MACCA	Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NAEC	National Agriculture Education Center
NAR	Needs Assessment Report

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NESP	National Education Strategic Plan
NESP-II	National Education Strategic Plan – II
NICD	National Institute for Capacity Development
NICHE	Netherlands Initiative for Capacity Development in Higher Education
NGO	non-governmental organization
NLAP	National Literacy Action Plan
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD-DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
P&G	Pay and Grade scheme
PACE-A	Partnership for Advancing Community Education in Afghanistan
PAR	Public Administration Reform
PEO	Provincial Education Office
PLC	provincial literacy centre
QPEP	Quality Primary Education Programme
SCA	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
SMC	school management committee
TA	Technical Assistant or Advisor
ToR	terms of reference
TTC	teacher training college
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UEE	University Entrance Examination
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Executive Summary

States affected by conflict are among the farthest from achieving Education for All (EFA) goals, and many lack human and financial capacity. 'Capacity development' (CD) is frequently proposed as the solution to their problems. What challenges does a country like Afghanistan face in rebuilding an education sector after 30 years of conflict? That is what this book investigates.

The efforts at state formation in a period of continuing civil war in Afghanistan provide the parameters for this book. The authority of the central government is contested, and the state controls perhaps less than 50 per cent of the country. The scale of attacks on schools, teachers, and students (especially girls) means that the Ministry of Education (MoE) and its supporting partners need to manoeuvre carefully in a veritable minefield. If education is to be an instrument for peace and nation-building, then CD must be geared to these challenges.

One opinion expressed in the emerging literature is that the current nation-building efforts are not decisive enough, and that the state needs to indoctrinate students with an Afghan identity, or the nation will remain divided. However, this book argues that nation-building is a long-term goal, requiring vastly increased capacity to develop an education system that avoids indoctrination by any party or organization. Meanwhile, the state needs to rely on community-based education (CBE) and support it.

Theoretically, CD is about organizational performance, but must take into account public service management and contextual factors such as armed conflict. Capacity is defined as not only service delivery capability, but also the capabilities to commit and engage in development activities; to attract support; to adapt and self-renew; and to balance diversity and coherence, among others. Political will can also be developed and requires a political economy analysis.

The challenge is therefore a practical one: how to develop these capacities. The MoE's chances of success depend on its partnerships with the many CD partners that also control large parts of the education budget. This book draws on four case studies of such partnerships with international organizations and one case study by the MoE itself.

The International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) has partnered with the MoE's Department of Planning and Evaluation (DoPE) since 2002. The main CD driver was a collaboration on Afghanistan's first National Education Strategic Plan (NESP-I, 2006–2010), and its revision (NESP-II, 2010–2014). IIEP employed a range of CD methods, including mentoring MoE staff while they wrote the plan. A key aim was to inspire national leadership and self-confidence. IIEP's approach relies on advocacy to secure policy support from the MoE leadership and like-minded partners, and on dialogue with donors to gain flexibility regarding timing, implementation, and funding. IIEP's next task is to help the MoE develop training programmes for further domestic CD, including at provincial level.

The MoE counterpart of the IIEP project reflects on CD achievements and challenges from a MoE insider's vantage point. Achievements include Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), Public Administration Reform (PAR), a staffing incentive scheme called Pay and Grade (P&G), coordination mechanisms such as the Human Resource Development Board (HRDB), and planning processes and plan documents (NESP-I and -II). Challenges include procurement reform, donor coordination, serious gender imbalances, and the security situation. Future questions include how to make the civil servant job category attractive again, professionally as well as financially, and how to decentralize management beyond the capital. If the MoE is to develop, public sector regulations and structures need to change, which is why advocacy with foreign aid agencies plays a central role.

PACE-A is a NGO coalition comprising CARE, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), and Catholic Relief Services, which has mainstreamed CBE into official education policy. PACE-A has used a mix of advocacy, policy work, and technical assistance at MoE offices from central to district levels. While time-consuming, this was more effective in building MoE staff capacity than 'buying capacity' from foreign staff. Systems created a platform of stability in an unstable context. For example, PACE-A got CBE teachers on the MoE payroll and had CBE schools included in the MoE's EMIS, leading to increased sustainability of CBE in Afghanistan.

The Netherlands is a major education donor which carefully reflects on international policy commitments in its support for Afghanistan. Its policy principles include following local priorities, being multilateral

where possible and bilateral where needed, and taking 'responsible risks'. The Netherlands supports a wide range of aid instruments, bilaterally through (for example) Save the Children and multilaterally through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Fast Track Initiative (FTI). Dutch civil society organizations and higher education institutions also play a role, and networking and research is supported, for instance in the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). A challenge for the Netherlands as a donor agency is to give priority to long-term CD when the Dutch parliament and taxpayers increasingly call for quick results.

UNESCO Kabul's literacy programme had to build its enabling structures with the MoE from scratch. A challenge is the incentive culture, in which allowances are requested for almost all normal work. UNESCO hopes that its infrastructural investments in the MoE's Literacy Department (LD) will increase staff motivation, and the chance that donors will invest in literacy. UNESCO Kabul's Inclusive Education (IE) programme has mainstreamed IE into national planning, and a nationwide movement of teachers, students, and parents now works for IE. An IE unit has been set up in the Ministry, and joint advocacy and policy work is undertaken with UNICEF and NGOs. These two directions – the high policy level and the grassroots backing – were crucial to the sustainability of CD efforts for IE.

A number of lessons are to be drawn from the book's chapters:

1. **Building trusting partnerships takes time and is required for high-level political backing.** Decade-long engagements in Afghanistan allowed agencies to gain credibility and develop trusting partnerships with the MoE.
2. **People come and go, but systems remain.** Service delivery and implementation of MoE policy hinges on systems. They enable planning based on facts, and can reduce corruption and reliance on individuals.
3. **Put processes before products.** Agency collaboration with MoE on policy documents such as the NESP, the 'Afghanized' INEE Minimum Standards for CBE, and national policies for CBE, IE, and Literacy gave impetus to CD and enabled donor coordination. In the process, the MoE gained self-confidence, a prerequisite for the ability to commit and engage.

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4. **Donor flexibility and long-term commitment is helpful.** Donor support for CD activities in this book adhered to the Paris principles on aid effectiveness by engaging over several years, showing flexibility, and taking 'responsible risks', e.g. by permitting sudden project changes and accepting participatory design instead of long-term plans.
5. **Donor coordination is needed for salary harmonization.** Coordination mechanisms such as the HRDB could be instrumental in solving a major staffing challenge – the salary disparity between the parallel systems of civil servants, funded by the MoE, and national technical assistants (TAs), funded by donors. Agencies could improve aid effectiveness by collaborating with the MoE to map and harmonize TA salaries.
6. **Choose pragmatic and basic solutions.** The CD partnerships often began with the basic infrastructure, such as supplying office space or teaching generic skills like English and computer literacy. Pragmatic compromises were necessary.
7. **Gender is also a human resource issue.** Only 26 per cent of all MoE employees are female. Many women refrain from competing with men for high managerial positions because of internalized stereotypes of female inferiority. Agencies need to scan all activities for opportunities to increase gender participation.
8. **Nation-building should be based on decent, non-ideological education.** Through equitable, non-ideological education provision, the state might one day make itself relevant to its citizens and become less dependent on foreign aid. Decentralization of education – how much, what responsibilities – is a key question in the larger scheme of building an Afghan nation and state.
9. **A plan is a statement of will and self-confidence.** The policy documents mentioned have been criticized for being unrealistic. However, in Afghanistan's political process, ambitious national plans signal a will for drastic change, and may create hope and self-confidence – invaluable resources when everything is a priority and everything a challenge.
10. **Sustained financial support is a must for achieving national development objectives.** Investing in developing MoE capacity is an investment in national capacity at large, which is a precondition for nation-building and socio-economic growth. Adequate financial resources are needed to absorb the remaining 42 per cent of out-of-school children, as outlined in the ambitious NESP-II.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Morten Sigsgaard

1.1 Rationale

In the field of humanitarian and development aid, large sums are spent on capacity development (CD). But there is a need for documentation of what actually works in CD in the education sector in conflict-affected situations. Afghanistan is a case in point, as its education sector had to be completely rebuilt after the fall of the Taliban in 2001–2002. Many activities have been termed CD, but it would be interesting to explore how successful these interventions have really been, and why. As a leading technical institute concerned with CD in developed as well as developing countries, IIEP-UNESCO has a vested interest in a critical analysis of what form of CD works, or not, in all contexts. One might surmise that if CD has been even minimally successful in Afghanistan, it can be achieved anywhere.

IIEP has been involved in long-term CD through its ongoing technical support to the MoE's DoPE. The first NESP was developed by the Afghan MoE with the help of IIEP and other partners, and launched in May 2007. Between 2008 and 2009, the MoE drafted the second education strategic plan for the years 2010–2014, mainly under the leadership of the current Minister of Education, Farooq Wardak. This second NESP (NESP-II) was due to be launched in 2010, but was delayed because Afghanistan applied for membership of the Education for All–Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI), a process that led the MoE to produce an Interim Plan 2011–2013, aligned with the NESP-II. As of early 2011, this process, led by Minister Wardak, is still ongoing.

IIEP is one among many agencies to have helped develop the capacity of the MoE, in units other than the DoPE. This book aims to document the process that led to this result, collecting lessons learned and firsthand accounts from those involved in building resilience into the education sector in Afghanistan.

1.2 Research partnership with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

This book is one of a series of thematic studies on education in emergencies, within the framework of a research partnership between IIEP and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The partnership's purpose is to contribute to EFA goals through research on education in areas of conflict, emergency, and reconstruction, aiming to develop knowledge about interventions, strategies, and methods that will improve access to quality education for all.

The research partnership so far has yielded two publications and accompanying policy briefs: *Certification Counts: Recognizing the learning attainments of displaced and refugee students,* edited by the late Jackie Kirk (2009), and *Opportunities for Change: Education innovation and reform during and after conflict,* edited by Susan Nicolai (2009).

The Netherlands has been actively contributing to Afghanistan's development for more than 20 years through the UN, the Red Cross, and other aid organizations. It has been a partner country to Afghanistan since 2001.

Education is one of the priority themes of Dutch development policy, and in 2005 14 per cent (approximately 600 million Euros) of the Dutch development cooperation budget was devoted to education. Along with the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), and others, the Dutch as donors give priority to working in states affected by fragility, which is viewed as a phenomenon in need of sustained and substantial aid. The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also represented in the INEE Working Group on Education and Fragility, which serves as a discussion forum for, and carries out research on, education in fragile situations.

1.3 Scope of the book

The research for this book has consisted of a review of the existing literature, plus semi-structured interviews where relevant. For security reasons, the editor was unable to travel to Kabul. The case studies, however, are written by contributors with extensive experience of working and living in Afghanistan, including Afghan nationals.

Among the many agencies in Afghanistan's education sector, this book focuses on the MoE.[1] One reason for this is that the Ministry is the rightful duty-bearer of the EFA commitment. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005, para. 15) emphasizes country ownership over the development process; the third of the OECD–Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States & Situations (2007) is 'Focus on state-building as the central objective'. OECD donor countries, UN agencies, and major international NGOs in the education sector are obligated by these policy principles to work with the MoE.

Another reason to focus on the MoE is the impressive development it has gone through. In 2002, after 30 years of war, everything needed to be rebuilt almost from scratch (see *Box 3*, *Chapter 4*). In 2010, eight years and many millions of dollars worth of CD later, the Ministry has been transformed. In this period, the minister of education has changed no less than six times. Yet in spite of the general chaos and continuing war in the country, the Ministry has made significant headway towards becoming technically autonomous from international agencies in terms of planning at the central level.

To reach this stage, actors within the MoE itself, as well as numerous non-state actors such as donor agencies, consultants, UN agencies, and NGOs, have contributed to developing its capacity. Some of their experiences are described in *Chapters 5–9*.

This remarkable turnaround is worth investigating. How did it come about? Are there lessons to be learned for education agencies in other difficult contexts? The first OECD-DAC principle is to take context as the starting point, but given the continuing crisis in Afghanistan, one is tempted to believe that if it can be done in Afghanistan, then perhaps it can be done anywhere.

1.4 Challenges to education in Afghanistan

Several documents (MoE, 2010*b*; Adam Smith International, 2010*a*; Sigsgaard, 2009), drawn upon below, have analysed the education sector and its challenges in depth. What follows is a brief indication of the magnitude of the challenges facing the MoE and its partners.

1. Other state actors in the education sector, such as the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, will thus not be discussed in this study.

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Afghanistan's recent history and 30 years of war have left the country among the poorest in the world. It is ranked third-last in the UNDP's Human Development Index. Life expectancy is 44 years; the infant mortality rate is 154/1,000, and the unemployment rate is 40 per cent. Only half of the provinces are considered 'secure' by the MoE – the rest are 'insecure' – although many citizens experience lawlessness as pervasive in most of the country.

Afghanistan is still at the state formation stage, meaning that the state is not yet a reality in the sense of having a monopoly on the means of violence, control over all aspects of the economy (much of it opium-driven), or, importantly, the predictable ability to deliver social services such as education.

Despite the conflict, major achievements have been made since the fall of the Taliban (2001):

- Between 2001 and 2009, primary school enrolment rose from 0.9 million to nearly 7 million (a sevenfold increase in eight years) and the proportion of girls from virtually zero to 37 per cent. Yet 42 per cent of the population of schoolchildren is still estimated to be out of school.
- The number of teachers in general education has risen sevenfold, but their qualifications are low and only 31 per cent are women.
- Since 2003, over 5,000 school buildings have been rehabilitated or newly constructed, but still only just over 50 per cent of schools have usable buildings. Thousands of communities have no access to schools due to distance or security. In the period between October 2005 and March 2007, 6 per cent of schools were burned down or closed down by the insurgents.
- A particular issue of concern is ongoing direct attacks on education. In 2008, the number of attacks on schools, teachers, and pupils had almost tripled to 670 – almost two attacks every day! – compared with the two previous years (O'Malley, 2010: 173; Glad, 2009: 21). This relation between education, the state, and insurgents, and the proposed mitigation measures, is treated in more detail in *Chapters 3, 4*, and *5*.

1.5 Flow and structure of the book

The book does not attempt to analyse all the MoE's organizational and institutional capacity gaps (including management, financing,

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procurement, human resource management, monitoring and evaluation [M&E], and more, as described in *Chapter 5*) and the appropriate CD solutions to each of these gaps. Instead, its chapters offer different entry points to a discussion of CD. The main focus is on planning as a driver of CD.

Chapter 2 defines the concept of CD used in the book. A holistic view of capacity is emphasized: it is more than just training individuals and enhancing the ability to deliver services, and it takes the organizational culture and the broader political context seriously. It is argued that a solution to the much discussed 'lack of political will' can be developed as a set of skills.

Chapter 3 discusses education in Afghanistan as part of a larger state-building and nation-building project, which has a contested history and still raises questions for education agencies and the MoE. It is argued that the education sector would gain by remaining politically neutral. Planning can help: good planning means that the curriculum is not hijacked by political extremists, and it also provides a framework for community initiatives.

Chapter 4 is the first of five case studies of CD partnerships with the MoE, presenting an in-depth reflection on IIEP's eight-year partnership with the MoE's DoPE. Among other points, it shows that strategic planning can be a driver of CD. Planning, data, and EMIS are key elements in CD. EMIS is needed to gather and to monitor data; it enables planning to be evidence-based and allows MoE planners and CD agencies to monitor their CD results.

The remaining five case studies in *Chapters 5–9* feature rich detail on how UNESCO Kabul, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the CBE consortium PACE-A (including the IRC and CARE) have worked with the MoE, as well as relating the experience of the MoE itself. These five chapters substantiate and complement *Chapter 4*'s focus on strategic planning. They validate IIEP's findings, since they come from the different perspectives of the MoE, an NGO coalition, a donor, and a UN agency. The case studies also complement each other: for example, the general overview of the MoE's experience with CD in *Chapter 5* is grounded on the example of PACE-A's initiatives in the CBE programme detailed in *Chapter 6*.

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Finally, *Chapter 10* distils the six case studies into lessons learned. *Chapter 11* concludes and points out future directions for CD agencies in Afghanistan's education sector.

Chapter 2

An analytical approach to capacity development

Morten Sigsgaard

This chapter reviews literature on capacity development (CD) for educational planning in fragile situations, and discusses them in relation to the context of Afghanistan.

There has been a wealth of research on CD in recent years, and international policy documents such as the Accra Agenda for Action underline the importance of CD: 'We agreed in the Paris Declaration that capacity development is the responsibility of developing countries, with donors playing a supportive role, and that technical cooperation is one means among others to develop capacity' (Accra Agenda for Action, 2008: 2).

2.1 Definition of capacity development

This book uses Anton De Grauwe's definition:

Capacity development: Any activity which aims explicitly at strengthening a country so that it can better achieve its development objectives by having a positive and sustainable impact on any of the following:

- individual officers with the necessary capacities and incentives;
- organizations that have a clear mandate and are run effectively;
- a supportive public service;
- a motivating, stable and structured context;

without having negative effects on any of these levels (De Grauwe, 2009: 53).

In the case of Afghanistan's education system, this definition implies that:

- Capacity can be developed through a broad variety of activities.
- CD contributes to state-building, as it works to develop the public service and the state – in this case, primarily the MoE and

secondarily the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), but also other government institutions that support the education sector, such as the Ministry of Finance (MoF) or the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled. This is further discussed in *Chapter 3*.

- A holistic and multi-layered understanding of the context is essential. All four levels (individuals, their organizations, the public service, and the broader context) should be considered to try to ensure that a positive impact at one level does not lead to negative impacts at other levels. Short-term training used in isolation, without consideration of the surrounding context, seem to have little impact.
- 'Without capacity, there is no development' (De Grauwe, 2009). For instance, it is not enough to focus aid only on building physical infrastructure (such as school buildings) without ensuring the human resource capacity to use such infrastructure.
- CD should be a participatory process, owned by the MoE. CD is not just a means to achieve results, but also a goal in itself: CD is freedom; it is about individuals, organizations, and countries becoming free to choose their own development paths (following Amartya Sen, 1999, quoted in Baser and Morgan, 2008: 25).

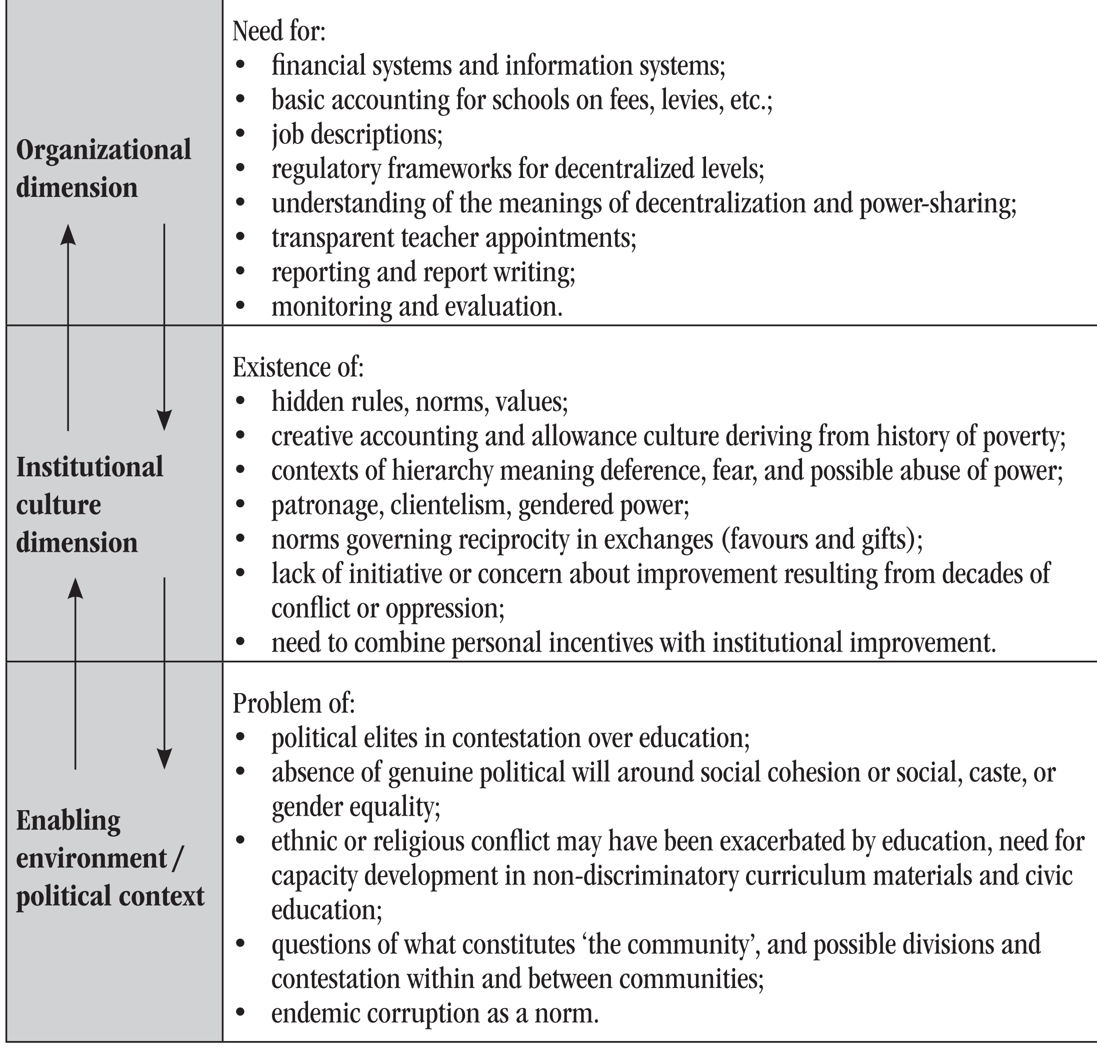
2.2 A multi-layered context

As mentioned above, CD needs to take into account a multi-layered context, which can be conceptualized in different ways.[2] The present book takes its point of departure from Davies' model (2009: 23; see *Figure 1*).

Davies' model does not include the individual level, as it is argued that working solely at the individual level would be pointless: for example, individuals with increased capacity may leave the organization for better jobs elsewhere, or they may have little power to implement their new skills in their organization. Systems are ultimately composed of individuals: it is important to ensure that individual officers have the right qualifications, training, and experience, and that the right incentives are in place for them. But CD needs to go beyond individuals to address the organizations they work within.

2. Examples of three slightly different models are De Grauwe (2009: 33–35, 151); Brinkerhoff (2007: 13); Davies (2009: 23).

Figure 1. Organizational, institutional culture, and political context dimensions of capacity development



Dimension	
Organizational dimension	Need for: • financial systems and information systems; • basic accounting for schools on fees, levies, etc.; • job descriptions; • regulatory frameworks for decentralized levels; • understanding of the meanings of decentralization and power-sharing; • transparent teacher appointments; • reporting and report writing; • monitoring and evaluation.
Institutional culture dimension	Existence of: • hidden rules, norms, values; • creative accounting and allowance culture deriving from history of poverty; • contexts of hierarchy meaning deference, fear, and possible abuse of power; • patronage, clientelism, gendered power; • norms governing reciprocity in exchanges (favours and gifts); • lack of initiative or concern about improvement resulting from decades of conflict or oppression; • need to combine personal incentives with institutional improvement.
Enabling environment / political context	Problem of: • political elites in contestation over education; • absence of genuine political will around social cohesion or social, caste, or gender equality; • ethnic or religious conflict may have been exacerbated by education, need for capacity development in non-discriminatory curriculum materials and civic education; • questions of what constitutes 'the community', and possible divisions and contestation within and between communities; • endemic corruption as a norm.

CD at the organizational level is therefore not just about training individuals, but also about developing roles, positions, responsibilities, systems, and policies – a formal structure that enables people to work. This includes developing financial and information systems, job descriptions, regulatory frameworks and policies, reporting, and M&E. The administrative reform and P&G scheme described in *Chapter 5, Section 6* presents many examples of this.

To affect the organizational level of the public administration, it is necessary to understand and work on the level of institutional culture. The institutional culture level is a set of often informal practices that permeate and alter the functioning of the formal structure. It may include hidden rules, norms, and values ('how we do things here'), various kinds of 'corruption' (such as the allowance culture mentioned by UNESCO

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Kabul in *Chapter 8*, the creative accounting, patronage, and clientelism practices that PACE-A alludes to in *Section 6.5*, and the gendered power mentioned by the MoE in *Section 5.3*), hierarchies (status, rank, authority), and incentive structures. CD agencies must decide whether to challenge or try to change these cultures, accept and work with them, or work around them. Taking the institutional culture level seriously means acknowledging that these often informal practices will compete with, or make obsolete, systems, structures, and procedures at the organizational level.

Moreover, the organization exists in a socio-economic-political context, also termed the enabling (or disabling) environment or 'fragile context', where most of the 'drivers of fragility' or 'root causes of conflict' are located.[3] This poses a number of problems for CD agencies, including: political elites contesting the nature of education; an absence of political will around social cohesion and gender or ethnic equality;[4] or endemic corruption being an accepted norm.[5] Clearly, CD agencies cannot afford to ignore these contextual factors. We note again how actors and events in the socio-economic-political context may counteract even those CD strategies that take institutional cultures into account.

2.3 Five core capabilities

Davies' CD model is a useful reminder of the need to take context, as well as institutional culture and organizational development, as a starting point. However, the model still leaves open the question of how to define 'capacity'.

Baser and Morgan (2008: 34) answer this question by distinguishing between competencies, which are individual attributes; capabilities, which are collective ones; and capacity as the 'combination of the two that enables an organization to create value'. Such a definition implies that the specific competency of an individual staff member (in a supportive organizational framework with clear job descriptions, satisfactory salary, sufficient training), or the collective capability of a department (able

3. Sigsgaard (2009) analyses a variety of examples of how education interventions in Afghanistan relate to the broader 'fragile context'.
4. For example, some have feared the impact on girls' education if the Taliban gets into government following peace negotiations.
5. A 2010 UNODC survey of corruption in Afghanistan showed that 25 per cent of Afghanistan's adult population had paid at least one bribe during the last 12 months to police officers and to municipal and provincial officers. For teachers, however, the figure was a much lower 4 per cent (UNODC, 2010: 25).

to adapt to the constraints of non-formal processes of the institutional culture and to the instability of the socio-economic-political context), can only be considered capacity when they are part of a creative and collaborative process (De Grauwe, 2009: 55).

Baser and Morgan's 'unpacking' of capacity into five collective core capabilities is outlined in *Figure 2* (adapted from Baser and Morgan, 2008: 26) and below.

The five core collective capabilities are as follows:[6]

1. The core capability to commit and engage (in development activities)

The core capability to commit and engage is the driving energy for the other four capabilities, and Baser and Morgan (2008) strongly emphasize its importance:

> Organizations must be able to have volition, to choose, to empower and to create space for themselves. This is about the capability of ... a living system – to be conscious and aware of its place in the world, to configure itself, to develop its own motivation and commitment and then to act ... despite the opposition or resistance or noncooperation of others. This ... goes beyond conventional notions of ownership. It has a lot to do with attitude and self-perception. ... Actors that developed it could overcome enormous constraints. When it was absent or weakened, they produced little of value. (Baser and Morgan, 2008: 27)

Yet this is also the capability least understood by external actors, who often automatically assume that their partner has the capability to commit and that the only thing missing is 'technical gaps'.[7] Actors without this capability may be characterized as lacking 'commitment' or 'political will' (Baser and Morgan, 2008: 27–28). Lack of political will is often viewed as intrinsic to a civil servant or leader, but it is also incumbent on agencies supporting governments to understand how to develop commitment and engagement effectively and sensitively.

6. Key examples are drawn from Sigsgaard (2009).
7. Perhaps this capability is often overlooked because the deeper (political, cultural, psychological, social) explanations of why a ministry is (in)capable of committing and engaging elude conventional 'needs assessments', which focus on capacity gaps without explaining why they have emerged.

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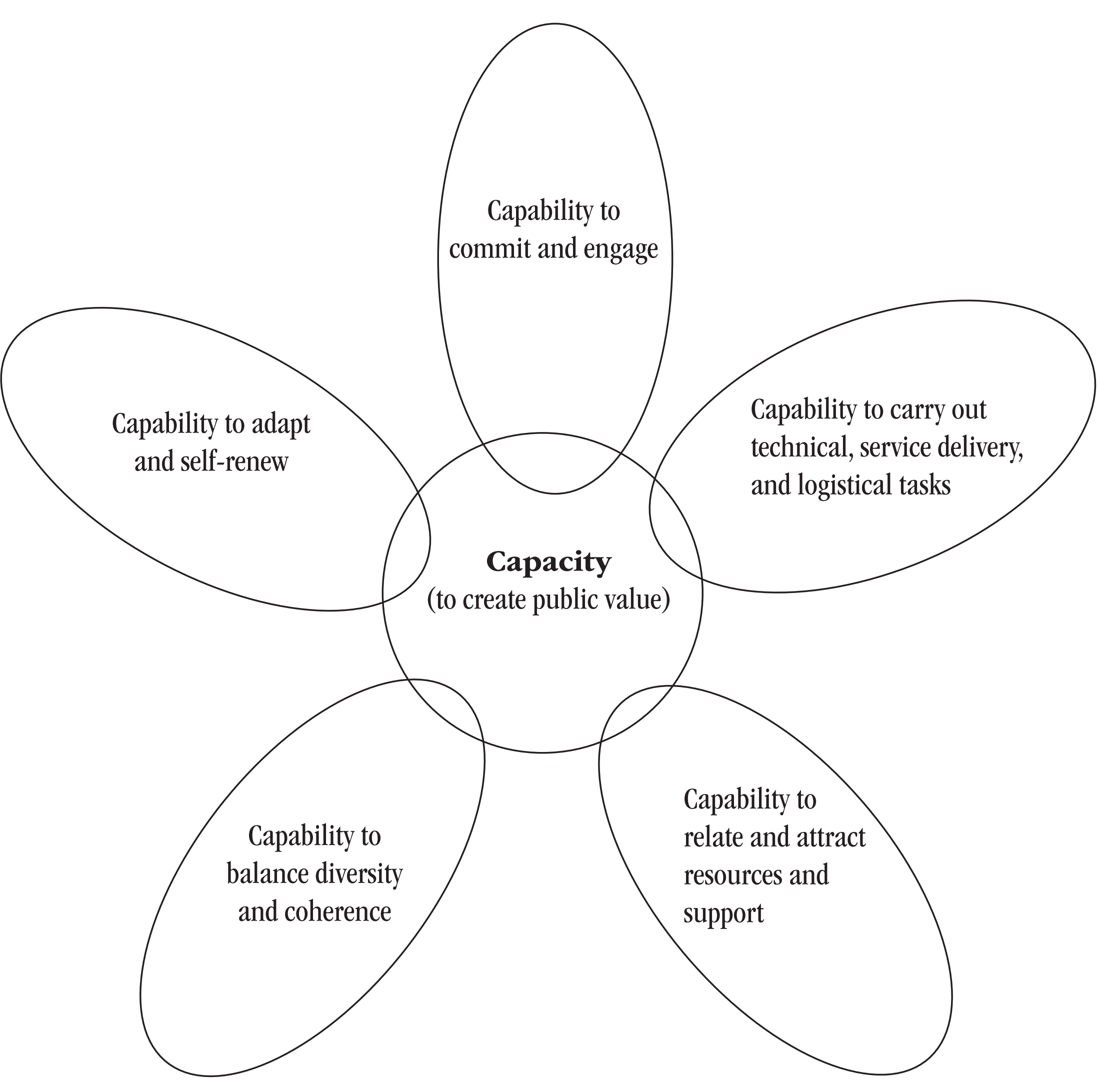
Figure 2. Capacity and five collective capabilities



In Afghanistan, those who try to develop and encourage capabilities like conviction, perseverance, aspiration, and determination need to build on the existing resilience, hope, faith, pride, dignity, or even defiance of the difficult circumstances. These seem to be core 'Afghan' qualities – without them, Afghan communities would long ago have disintegrated. Moreover, no nation has ever defeated the Afghans; and rebuilding the education system after 30 years of war is a matter of national pride.

IIEP took this into account when it helped the MoE to produce the first NESP: having a tangible plan resulted in much pride and hope, even though the challenges described in it were colossal, and the data it was built on had limitations.

Essentially, this capability is primarily about leadership, as a quality of both individuals and organizations, and about working with the elite groups who form the educational leadership. Working with these groups is 'about understanding the incentive and interest structures that motivate and shape the behaviour and interaction of elite groups' (ODI, 2009: 7).

Of course, the leadership of the Minister of Education himself[8] and his close advisors is of great importance. Political turmoil has produced no fewer than six ministers of education in the period 2002–2010 (Bethke, 2009: 9). Ensuring that education policy remains consistent under such conditions is a challenge. Another challenge is securing Afghan ownership of a ministry with a high degree of foreign consultants and TAs, with many donors making individual demands, and with internal politics in Afghanistan divided across ethnic lines. The national plan helped in this regard, as it was a symbol of a united, national, ministry effort for education for all across political and social divides.

2. The core capability to carry out technical, service delivery, and logistical tasks

This core capability underlies the most common way of thinking about capacity.[9] It includes strategic planning and management, fiduciary management, and delivery of services. From this perspective, organizations are in the performance and results business. The emphasis is on functional, instrumental ways of meeting a set of objectives and fulfilling a mandate (in *Section 4.7* this is referred to as 'the nuts and bolts of planning'), not on politics and power. This capability is of course a crucial element of 'the capacity puzzle', but needs to be combined with the four other capabilities to create sustainable capacity (Baser and Morgan, 2008: 29–30).

Developing this core capability within an entire system is difficult in fragile contexts because capacity gaps anywhere in the delivery

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8. Since 2001 (and probably also over the last several decades), all six ministers of education have been males (Wikipedia, 2010*a*). There are currently few Afghan women at ministerial level. In December 2010, out of 25 cabinet members only 3 were women – the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled plus the acting Minister of Women's Affairs and the acting Minister of Public Health (Wikipedia, 2010*b*).
9. For example, as Boesen and Therkildsen (2005: 3) put it,'Capacity is the ability of an organization to produce appropriate outputs'.

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chain will jeopardize efforts elsewhere. For instance, IIEP built up capabilities for strategic planning in the central level MoE in Kabul, but the effectiveness of these plans still depends on financial reform in the MoE (and the public sector as a whole) and on gaps at the sub-national level, including a host of obstacles to service delivery related to attacks on education, environmental hazards, dire poverty, and more.

3. The core capability to relate and to attract resources and support

This core capability is about relating and surviving by securing support and protection, often in competition or cooperation with other actors (Baser and Morgan, 2008: 30–31). It includes the capabilities of earning credibility and legitimacy, buffering the organization or system from intrusions and political capture, earning the trust of others, such as donors and clients, and combining political neutrality and assertive advocacy. It is also about diplomacy and communication.

The capability to survive is highly important in a conflict-ridden context with its political instability and resulting trust gaps. The frequent change in ministerial leadership is a good example of the disruptions the education system needs to be buffered from. The priorities of foreign aid agencies who have funded most of the MoE's development budget may not always be in line with MoE priorities, and can therefore be experienced as intrusions in the MoE system.

A national education sector plan, with an appropriate EMIS and simulation and projection model, is a good tool for enabling policy dialogue in a way that will appear politically more neutral and legitimate than if there was no official plan. Another example of this capability to relate and attract support comes from 2010, when Afghanistan began the process of seeking endorsement for the FTI, which requires a credible education sector plan. Opinions differ as to whether Afghanistan's education sector really needs more funding.[10] It is also not clear that the FTI was intended for countries like Afghanistan which already receive relatively high funding volumes. Moreover, should the FTI ultimately choose to support Afghanistan's NESP-II, then the FTI support would

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10. In 2009, the MoE was able to spend only 44 per cent of the development budget (as shown in *Table 1, Chapter 5*). This could be taken as an indication that it is not funding that the MoE is lacking. On the other hand, the MoE argues in *Chapter 5* that its 'budget expenditure capacity has seen constant growth over the last five years ... [indicating] that investment in capacity development during previous years create results in the years that follow'.

probably be a very small part of the requested budget.[11] Nevertheless, going through the process of FTI endorsement will most probably improve the MoE's relations with FTI staff and increase its profile; these informal and intangible factors may be valuable for the MoE and help it to attract other resources, for example from donors who may find it easier to buy into an FTI approved plan, even if it does not receive funds from the FTI (personal communication with UN education staff, September 2009).

The establishment of the Education Development Board (EDB) and its follow-up, the HRDB, provided a stable forum for coordination, alignment, and communication between donors and the MoE. As pointed out by Shah (2010), such a relationship is not power-free – relations between donors and aid recipients never were. But establishing such a forum increases transparency and allows for establishing procedures and policies that enable longer-term planning. The process of formulating, negotiating, and monitoring these policies is an opportunity for all parties involved to develop trust, credibility, and legitimacy. This in turn can improve the MoE's chances of raising the needed funds for the plan.

4. The core capability to adapt and self-renew

This core capability is needed because Afghanistan's MoE is operating in a time of rapid change, with a potential for destabilization, not least because the changes are largely funded by outside agencies with their own agendas. Many agencies committed to aid harmonization and alignment in the Paris Declaration (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008). Yet for various reasons these agencies are also obliged to report and heed the interests of their own constituencies (as described by the Netherlands in *Chapter 7*) before the interests of the national governments in the countries where they are working. Hence, agencies may not always be in a position to live up to good donor agendas such as promoting national ownership and letting the Afghan MoE lead the process and control funds.

Beyond the donor agendas, there are many other destabilizing factors in Afghanistan – the rapid growth of the education system, the armed

11. The draft NESP-II budget is US$8 billion over four years (US$2 billion per year), while the largest FTI disbursement to date was a mere US$150 million over three years to Kenya (US$50 million per year, or a mere 2.5 per cent of the requested NESP-II budget), according to an FTI assessment team member in Kabul, April 2010 (quoted in Shah, 2010: 27, 35).

insurgency, the brain drain, and so on. In such a situation, adaptability and self-renewal become essential (Baser and Morgan, 2008: 32).

Yet change can also be an opportunity to grow, mature, and improve, and the core capability to adapt and self-renew is also necessary to seize the many positive opportunities for change that present themselves in Afghanistan.[12]

Among the most obvious intrusions on the school system are the attacks on education. One MoE strategy has been to pay civil servant support staff as night watchmen, and to support the formation of local school protection councils (Glad, 2009). Yet it has also chosen a strategy of negotiating with the Taliban and other insurgent groups through local elders. The MoE has chosen to relate to these groups and has made compromises around, for instance, allowing teachers to be called Mullahs and ensuring that schools symbolically appear as 'true Muslim schools'; girls wear headscarves (in alignment with deep cultural norms in Afghanistan), and girls and boys are separated in classrooms (IRIN, 2009*a*). A less reported compromise measure is the MoE's permitting of local adaptations to the state curriculum, and often overlooked situations where pages are torn out of textbooks. These measures have not caused all the attacks on education to stop – in October 2009, about 27 per cent of the closed schools (220 of 800 closed ones) had re-opened, while the remaining 73 per cent remained closed (interview with Ataullah Wahidyar, chief of staff, MoE, quoted in Giustozzi, 2010: 18, footnote 19).

The core capability to adapt and self-renew encompasses the capability to improve individual and organizational learning, to foster internal dialogue, to reposition and reconfigure the organization, to incorporate new ideas, and to map out a growth path. It relates to the MoE's ability to strategize, prioritize, and restructure itself accordingly. The NESP-I was one such attempt at strategizing, which also resulted in a MoE departmental restructuring from eight down to five departments and deputy ministers at time of writing in October 2010, following the NESP's new priority programmes. Later the NESP-I had to be revised for a number of reasons, including an improved statistical base but also the fact that the Paris conference on Afghanistan in June 2008 modified

12. See Nicolai (2009) for examples of education innovation and reform potential during and after conflict, with 10 country case studies, of which Afghanistan is one.

the national education time-frames.[13] These processes are described in *Chapters 4* and *5*.

The capability to adapt and self-renew is connected to the capability to relate. It is easier to improve organizational learning and map out a growth path for the MoE when it can relate to other organizations and learn from them. Such learning can take place through staff training, mentoring, accompaniment, and transfer of knowledge from national TAs and international advisors to civil servant staff, as described in *Chapters 4–9*, and through cooperation mechanisms such as the HRDB or working groups.

5. The core capability to balance diversity and coherence

This includes the capability to manage diversity and to manage paradox and tension.

It is about encouraging both stability and innovation, and balancing the other four core capabilities. It also has to do with the necessary trade-offs, for example between being technocratic and political at once, having 'hard' and 'soft' capabilities, focusing externally as well as internally, focusing on the short versus the long term, emphasizing performance versus CD, and being centralized or decentralized (Baser and Morgan, 2008: 33).

One example of this capability was former Minister of Education Hanif Atmar's initial wish to push for a quickly produced NESP-I written by English-speaking advisors rather than civil servants, versus IIEP's advice to take a longer and more participatory route to plan preparation. To a great extent the Minister adopted the participatory approach advocated by IIEP (see *Chapter 4* for details), but he also needed to be directive:

> While IIEP might have suggested, based on its previous experience, the structural content for these specified processes, interviewees uniformly characterized Minister Atmar's leadership style as providing an enabling environment that meant that the structure was operational. 'The moment Atmar entered into the ring, he said: "Everybody will listen to my command." There was a hierarchical system of decision making for NESP I. At the bottom were the

13. The Paris conference on Afghanistan agreed on going from the Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy (I-ANDS) to a non-interim version (the ANDS). This resulted in changed time-frames for the plans of all sectors, including education.

> Working Groups and then there was the Steering Committee. The results of the Working Groups would be presented to the board,' said one interviewee. In terms of capacity, MoE leadership's strong expression of ownership for and focus on the strategic planning process meant that the larger MoE system was engaged and responsive. (Interview with a donor agency representative, November 2009, quoted in Holland, 2010: 9)

This balancing act between direction and participation was probably necessary for getting things done.

Through these processes, which went on over years, IIEP helped develop the MoE's capability to balance diversity and coherence by remaining available for policy advice. This was appreciated by the MoE, particularly the Department of Planning and Evaluation (DoPE), as described in *Chapter 4*.

Managing paradox and tension is something most Afghan individuals are forced to live with, including those in the ministries, given the ongoing security threats and the unclear future prospects for the state and its citizens. The MoE Director General for Teacher Education, Susan Wardak, asked: 'How to prioritize when everything is priority?' (Wardak and Firth, 2009), suggesting why this capability needs to be strengthened. The fact that schools and the education administration keep working regardless of these paradoxical, tense conditions testifies to a remarkable resilience among communities and in the MoE.

These five core capabilities will be further analysed in *Chapter 10*.

2.4 Capacity vs. will

A good reason for using Baser and Morgan's model of five capabilities is that the first of the capabilities – the core capability to commit and engage[14] – provides an entry point for understanding and discussing the classic definition of a fragile state as one in which 'state structures lack political will and/or capacity' (OECD-DAC, 2007: 7). This assumed 'lack of will' is problematic because it is hard to measure and is perceived as undiplomatic (Engberg-Pedersen, Andersen, and Stepputat, 2008: 21–22) .

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14. The core capability includes the capabilities to encourage mindfulness, to persevere, to aspire, to embed conviction, to take ownership, and to be determined. It energizes the other four core capabilities.

The OECD definition implies that fragility cannot always be mitigated through technical assistance alone. Fragile states also need changes in political will, which may require agencies to rethink their approaches and focus on activities that impact on political will. Yet this is rarely discussed in aid agency documents, perhaps because it is too controversial. The DFID White Paper, which laid out British development strategy as of 2009, was one of the first donor documents to discuss this as an issue (*Box 1*). DFID is an advocate of political economy analyses, and its report, *DFID Understanding Afghanistan* (Barakat, 2008), commissioned from a mixed group of analysts, diplomats, the military, aid field staff, and academics, is a credible analysis of what donors can and cannot do in Afghanistan.

Box 1. The DFID White Paper 2009

The July 2009 DFID White Paper, *Building our Common Future*, pledged to allocate 'at least 50 per cent of all new bilateral country aid to fragile and conflict-affected countries', and made it clear that 'Conflict and fragility are inherently political. They are about how power and resources are shared in society, between ethnic groups, social classes or men and women. Their solutions must be rooted in politics. ... This will change ... how we spend our aid budget ... and who we want to work with' (DFID, 2009: 70, 73, paras. 4.9, 4.16, 4.19).

The White Paper proposes a variety of interventions to improve political will. Some are about strengthening demand for political change from outside the state, for instance strengthening media and civil society, and supporting free and fair elections. However, it said little about how to increase political will from within the state. The reasons for this were not made explicit.

Afghan policy documents, such as the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the NESP, although they do mention the need for CD, rarely if ever mention political will. No government has much to gain from criticizing itself, and in a situation in which self-confidence is sorely needed, it may be more helpful to look upward rather than inward. However, foreign agencies have their coordination issues to deal with, too, as the MoE describes in *Chapter 5*. Lack of will can also be due to structural factors.

Nevertheless, the literature on CD in fragile states (Bethke, 2009; Davies, 2009) is clear that power and politics matter in CD: for example, informal systems of patronage may lead to political rather than merit-based appointments. So what can CD agencies do to strengthen political will within the MoE?

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One approach is to assume good faith on the part of the Afghan state officials – or other 'unwilling' agencies – and simply reframe the apparent lack of will as another set of capabilities that can be developed, that is, 'the core capability to commit and engage'. The analysis in *Chapter 10* will show how this has indeed been done at various levels. Nils Boesen has termed this approach 'functional-rational' (EuropeAid, 2005). The functional-rational approach underlies much programme design. For instance, using the Logical Framework Approach, the programme logic may be that if capacity is developed sufficiently, then the involved actors will work in accordance with the higher purpose of the system, and results will be achieved.

This functional-rational approach needs to be balanced with a 'political economy' approach to CD (EuropeAid, 2005: 21; see also OECD-DAC, 2008: 15–16).[15] The political economy approach assumes that Afghan state officials as well as other agency representatives will act according to their own best interests, which are not necessarily those of the system. In this scenario, people will try to maximize the power and money they can get from the system, not with malign intentions, but simply because of strong incentives and pressures.

In Afghanistan, actors within the state apparatus need to deal with the reality of clan-based rivalries extending into politics, the need for protection, having to support extended families, and other similar factors. International agencies, for their part, sometimes need to deal with lack of personnel, but also with the incentives generated by international corporate consultant salaries and allowances of as much as US$250,000–500,000 a year, as critics of aid ineffectiveness have pointed out (Waldman, 2008: 3).

Understanding and accommodating power and interests, and managing the use of sanctions and incentives, become key issues for CD agencies, not just in relation to their Afghan counterparts but also on the international aid scene. *Figure 3* (adapted from EuropeAid, 2005: 21–22) spells out this difference between the functional-rational and the political economy dimensions, expanding it to the organization and its surrounding context.

15. The functional-rational and the political economy dimensions are, of course, theoretical constructs, and should be seen as complementary, both analytically and strategically.

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Figure 3. Functional-rational vs. political economy approaches to capacity development

	Focus on the functional-rational dimension	Focus on the political economy dimension
Focus on factors within the organization(s)	• Getting the job done. Most support has been here – training, restructuring, technical assistance. • Developing the capability to carry out technical, service delivery, and logistical tasks (and other capabilities). Setting up systems. • MoE example: IIEP trains and mentors the MoE's DoPE in using simulation and projection models, or counsels the Director of the DoPE on ministry restructuring plans. • The Netherlands as well as IIEP have supported, or plan to support, national programmes for CD, teacher training, etc.	• Understanding and accommodating power and interests. • Interventions focus on changing sanctions and rewards, removing or sidelining opponents to change, moving towards merit-based hiring, and building internal coalitions for change. • MoE example: The P&G reform – the attempt to replace a cadre of older civil servants with younger staff.
Focus on factors in the external environment	• Creating an 'enabling environment' for doing the job. • Examples: budget reforms to ensure predictability of flows of funds to organizations, change in legal mandates, civil service reform, strengthening of supervisory agencies. • MoE examples: The Netherlands' support of the FTI or the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (a fund that aims to increase aid predictability). • UNESCO Kabul builds a grassroots movement of teacher and parents to support and develop IE.	• Forcing change in the internal power relations from outside. • Examples: strengthening of civil-society organizations or of political or client accountability, building external coalitions for change, strengthening the media's role as a watchdog. • MoE examples: Unable to influence MoE policy of using schools as voting stations for elections, CARE in Kabul worked with the advocacy NGO Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, and the UN Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict to influence the Government of Afghanistan. After sustained international pressure including a UN debate in New York, CARE's strategy paid off and the Government changed its policy.

2.5 Implications of CD theory for this book

This chapter shows that agencies seeking to engage in CD with a MoE must be sensitive to the wider political country context.[16] They also need to consider the impact of informal institutional cultures when organizational structures are set up. Capacity, in this chapter, has been defined not just as a matter of the ability to deliver services, but also as the capabilities to commit and engage, to relate and attract resources and support, to adapt and self-renew, and to balance diversity and coherence. Finally, CD agencies need to combine functional-rational intervention approaches that see political will as yet another capability to be developed with political economy approaches that take into account power and its role in creating organizational change. Examples of this are drawn from this book's case studies (*Chapters 4–9*).

This chapter serves to outline the concepts of capacity and CD. The models of CD above are not going to be translated point by point into a distinct analytic framework to be strictly applied in each case study. Rather, this chapter functions as a reference point for the analysis in the following chapters, including the case studies, to be used flexibly and according to need.

16. Risks and vulnerabilities to the education system are increasingly recognized by the MoE, as demonstrated by the inclusion of a risk analysis section in the NESP-II/Interim Plan, which covers key issues affecting the sector related to security, governance, economy, and chronic poverty (MoE, 2010*b*).

Chapter 3

Education's role in nation-building in Afghanistan

Morten Sigsgaard

Afghanistan is undergoing a process of state formation and state-building. The preceding chapter argued that actors involved in capacity development (CD) need to understand, adapt to, and contribute to the overall stabilization of the Afghan context and the public service sector. As the former Minister of Education Hanif Atmar expressed it in his foreword to the NESP-I:

> It is the strong belief of our country's top leadership that a revitalized education system that is guided by the tenets of Islam is at the core of the *State Building* exercise. Therefore, one of the top priorities of government is to rebuild an education system that will act as a fundamental cornerstone in shaping the future of the country... (MoE, 2007: 9, emphasis in original).

A clear understanding of the role of education in contributing to the formation and development of the Afghan state and nation is critical. Without it, CD may run the risk of exacerbating conflict.

This chapter will therefore discuss education's pivotal role in nation- and state-building, in line with the third OECD-DAC (2007) principle: 'Focus on state-building as the central objective.' Education-focused agencies including educational planners need to ask these questions: What kind of state is envisioned, and what is the role of the education system in building the state and its corresponding nation or peoples? How can capacity developers 'do no harm'? How can education contribute to peace and stability? These questions must be front and centre in CD interventions, given that education in Afghanistan historically has contributed to stability as well as indirectly to conflict, as shown in the examples given below.

This discussion will take its point of departure from a controversial paper, *Nation-building Is Not for All: The politics of education in Afghanistan* (2010), by the political historian Antonio Giustozzi, a prolific scholar and expert on Afghanistan. Giustozzi argues that nation-building

is necessarily a top-down and inherently oppressive enterprise whereby a state elite uses education to impose a national ideology on otherwise disparate communities: Force must be used, or a unified people will not emerge.

This top-down approach is only possible when the education system is already strong. But before this can happen, the system first needs to be developed step by step. The real challenge is identifying the right long-term strategy: How to build a robust system? The case studies (*Chapters 4–9*) are concrete attempts at answering this challenge.

According to Ruttig (2009), it is a myth that Afghanistan has never been properly governed: a de facto decentralized mode of community governance existed in the 1970s, where the central state let the community councils solve their own problems. The human rights watchdog Afghanistan Rights Monitor (ARM) claims that current anti-education sentiments exist only because education has been hijacked for political ends. This can change: schools were used as voting stations in the 2009 presidential elections, but thanks to concerted advocacy efforts this practice was more limited during the 2010 parliamentary elections. Community-embedded 'good enough' governance is proposed as a potential solution.

The chapter concludes in disagreement with Giustozzi: rather than trying to use education as a 'key tool of nation-building', education should remain as non-ideological as possible and be based in communities, with the Ministry playing a supporting and coordinating role. The humble ambition should be an education system that is somewhat conflict-sensitive and resilient and at least does not exacerbate conflict. This in turn might allow communities to develop trust in the state.

3.1 Definition of concepts

Nation-building is defined here as the project of forging one overarching national identity out of separate non-nation identities (such as tribe, ethnic group, or religion) and hence creating allegiance to one nation. As such, the national identity can either encompass or suppress (some of) these other identities. The strategy hinges on the state's ability to deliver public goods and services that out-perform or incorporate those offered by non-state entities. The nation-building project needs state institutions for its realization; the education system is one of these. Hence, nation-building and state-building both depend on and reinforce each

other. Education can contribute to nation-building by using curriculum and teacher training to unite separate identities into one national identity, when all social groups have equitable access to quality education.

State-building is defined here as creating the institutions and hence administrative and service delivery capacity of a state.[17] In the education sector, this roughly translates into a MoE at the central level, a sub-national administration, schools, and connections between these levels. Education can contribute to state-building, for example by creating an economically productive population that can be taxed and, as a function of their education, buys into the social contract the state offers (thus rejecting opportunities to join anti-government groups). Education is also needed to create a cadre of bureaucrats to administrate and reproduce the state.

Conversely, education can also work against nation-building and state-building efforts, for instance when the state does not hold effective governance over the education system, when the curriculum strengthens anti-state identities, or when the quality, access, and equity of the education system is so poor that the population loses faith in the state. In these cases, the population may experience the state as distant, oppressive. or simply irrelevant.

3.2 The politics of education and nation-building

Giustozzi points out that historically, most nation- and state-building processes have been top-down and have used force to form nations and states out of disparate communities. Education has been pivotal in the processes of 'coercion and manipulation' that nation-building consists of (Giustozzi, 2010: 3–4).

A historical overview of education's role in nation-building in Afghanistan through the twentieth century shows that the monarchy, communism, and Islam have been powerful and contested ideologies (Giustozzi, 2010: 2–14) claiming allegiance from the population and often meeting violent resistance. The main conflicts have been between predominantly secular state schools (*maktabs*) and religious schools

17. Outside the education sector, state-building is concerned with, for instance, the state's monopoly on the means of violence, the creation of a national justice system, holding democratic elections, the ability to tax its population, provision of a functional infrastructure, delivery of other welfare services such as health, and more. But these are not tasks of the education sector.

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(*madrassas*), and between various governments' wishes to impose a national ideology on the population, versus community views on education focusing on local needs (Giustozzi, 2010: 1). Since 2001, the education system's attempts at nation-building have consisted of two main components. The first is the curriculum. Its nation-building messages have been inconsistent[18] and compromises with insurgent groups after the wave of attacks on education in 2007 have watered the nation-building content down even more. For instance, the MoE permitted some parts of the curriculum to be left out, and some pages to be torn out of the schoolbooks (Giustozzi, 2010: 1–20).

The second component is the system's service delivery capacity. As mentioned earlier, almost every aspect of the system faces serious challenges. Teachers are poorly trained, compensated, and monitored, and the political mobilization of the 1970s, when teachers had a personal investment in the nation-building project, is gone. As elsewhere in Afghanistan, corruption is perceived to be widespread, and the Ministry – having a large payroll, as in 2007/8 it employed about 190,000 staff including teachers – has been seen as 'a huge reservoir of patronage', according to Giustozzi. The often-recommended strategy of community-based education (CBE) has its merits, but community councils rarely get the support from principals that they need (Giustozzi, 2010: 19–24).

The MoE nonetheless claims success, but this success is based on easily quantifiable indicators such as schools built and student enrolment, rather than factors that are harder to determine, such as education quality (Giustozzi, 2010: 19–25). The UN-promoted EFA agenda with its focus on universal primary education has led to a situation where higher education in 2010 received a historically small proportion of 11 per cent of the national education budget,[19] which gives Afghanistan's state bureaucracy little opportunity to reproduce 'its own loyal middle class of professionals and cadres' (Giustozzi, 2010: 15–16).

In sum, Afghanistan's education system as of 2010 faces profound problems and is unable to instil faith in the benefits of backing a central government. Giustozzi argues that both the Government of Afghanistan

18. The 2002 'Back to School' curriculum reinforced divisions between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims, portraying Afghanistan's history as the history of the Sunnis only; although this was later revised, it could take years before the revised textbooks reach the schools (Giustozzi, 2010: 20).
19. This compares with 44 per cent in 1969, or India and Pakistan's 20 per cent allocations in 2006/2007.

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and the international community can be held responsible for this (Giustozzi, 2010: 22). He therefore proposes that Afghanistan needs to choose between two alternatives: either a more community-based system, or a stronger centrally managed top-down system.

> The flexible, community-friendly approach would soften opposition, but at the price of weakening 'nation-building', as each community would receive a different educational mix. The top-down approach, with its unified set of values, national heroes and interpretation of Afghan history, to be successful, needs to be crafted in a carefully balanced way and, most importantly, needs a more effective state machinery to drive it. Short term considerations would favour the flexible approach; long term ones the top-down one. (Giustozzi, 2010: 2)

Giustozzi's historical analysis of education's role in nation-building is a significant contribution to the body of research on education in Afghanistan, written from a particular entry point:

> [This is not] a report written by an education specialist for other specialists. The author's preoccupation is to discuss educational policies in Afghanistan in the context of nation-building because in my view this offers a prism through which all other aspects of the educational debate in Afghanistan can be interpreted more easily. ... It should be pointed out once again that the author of this paper is not an educational specialist, but rather a political historian who is trying to understand the sources of the crisis of the Afghan state. (Giustozzi, 2010: 3–4)

Giustozzi's focus on nation-building may explain the lack of consideration of the more strategic challenges in developing the needed ministerial capacity – although his analysis recognizes that system strengthening will be a long-term project. The paper has no practical advice about what the MoE can or should do. It seems to assume that changes in political will among the top leadership would move the rest of the system to change too, but does not account for the practicalities of how the political will is to be extended beyond Kabul through the state apparatus. That is a question of concrete, administrative state-building, not just of a lack of will.

CD agencies in Afghanistan's education sector therefore must go beyond these dilemmas. The progressive forces in the Ministry at central level and elsewhere need first of all to take control of their own system;

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this requires development and mastery of administrative structures and tools, which is where CD agencies and education specialists can play a practical role. Over time, as MoE's capacity develops, the service delivery issues should gradually improve.

3.3 Should Afghanistan aspire to become an OECD type of nation-state?

Some other authors criticize the very notion that centralist state-building is a desirable objective. Based on fieldwork in the Somalian territories, Hagmann and Hoehne (2009: 43–46) assert that it is a 'dogmatic assumption and wishful thinking [that] all states in the long run will converge towards a model of Western liberal democracy ... European history indicates that violence, war, military expansion, social exclusion and economic exploitation lie at the heart of the processes of state formation'; yet it is sometimes assumed in the discourse on state-building that state formation can be achieved through a seamless 'fix', as the title of Ghani and Lockhart's *Fixing Failed States* (2008) would suggest. This is both a practical and intellectual problem:

> This model [of western liberal democracy] serves both as the institutional guideline for external state-building and reconstruction efforts, and as the intellectual benchmark against which all existing forms of statehood are evaluated .... Before proposing solutions, prevailing political orders and ... degrees of statehood have to be understood as they are, and not as they are wished to be. (Hagmann and Hoehne, 2009: 43)

A prominent civil society voice in debates on the future of Afghanistan is the co-director of Afghanistan Analysts Network, Thomas Ruttig (2009). He has argued that it is the OECD's stable nation-states that are historical exceptions:

> [One] of the oldest but nevertheless insurmountable myths about Afghanistan ... [is that] it has never been properly governed. Indeed, it has been, but just not in our Western way. We often forget that our kinds of nation-states are historical exceptions. Indeed, if you compare today's Afghanistan or that of the Taleban with the Afghanistan of before 1973, those days of a weak central government ruling the provinces by proxy (i.e. maliks and a few policemen with wooden rifles) but mainly [leaving] them in peace and [letting] the jirgas [community councils] solve

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> most of their own small problems, sounds like a model to pursue (Ruttig, 2009).

However, the governance model Ruttig outlines is complicated by the fact that the recent 30 years of civil war have eroded some of the traditional authority of community elders, which now has to compete with an armed insurgency and the war-aid economy. Ruttig admits that there are many dilemmas and few neat solutions, and that a time horizon of several decades is necessary.

Ruttig speaks warmly of Afghanistan before 1973, and Saif Samady, a former UNESCO official and former Deputy Minister of Education in Afghanistan (1969–1971), identifies six reasons why the 1956–1978 period was significant in terms of the expansion of education: (1) peace and stability, (2) public demand for education; (3) a national policy for development planning; (4) a positive climate for international cooperation on education; (5) support of UN agencies such as UNESCO in promoting education as a human right; (6) dedicated Afghan educators and specialists in positions of responsibility who contributed to the development of education in the country (Samady, 2001: 18).

Samady clearly has a more positive view of the successes of centralized educational planning than Ruttig, who was not writing about the education sector but governance in general. Samady shows that there was a certain level of capacity in educational planning in the 'golden' period leading up to 1978. Foreign states and UN agencies played a decisive role in developing the education system in this period.

This was ruined by the successive wars of the following 30 years, when education was 'taken hostage' and used for highly ideological purposes by various parties to the conflicts. The human rights watchdog Afghanistan Rights Monitor puts it sharply:

> Over the past three decades, schools, students, and the entire education sector have been widely and systematically abused by the ruling regimes for their own political and strategic ends. This has not only been a cruel disservice to young people and educators, but it has provoked deep anti-education sentiments, particularly in rural communities (Samadi, 2009*b*[20]).

20. Two persons with similar sounding names are quoted here, but (Ajmal) Samadi of the human rights watchdog Afghanistan Rights Monitor should not be confused with (Saif) Samady, Afghanistan's former Deputy Minister of Education and ambassador to UNESCO.

3.4 Indoctrination in the curriculum and schools as voting stations

One fairly recent example of education being hijacked for political ends was the distribution of textbooks during the late 1980s and early 1990s in Afghan refugee camp madrassas in Pakistan. These schoolbooks were explicitly violent. A fourth-grade mathematics text stated: 'The speed of a Kalashnikov bullet is 800 meters per second' and then asked students, 'If a Russian is at a distance of 3,200 meters from a Mujahid, and that Mujahid aims at the Russian's head, calculate how many seconds it will take for the bullet to strike the Russian in the forehead.' This curriculum was designed by the mujahideen-controlled Education Center for Afghanistan (Nolan, 2006: 38–39, citing Davis, 2002: 90, 92–93). However, cultural violence in the curriculum was not a new phenomenon: a poem in a first-grade textbook from 1970 under King Zahir Shah's rule spoke of 'cutting off the feet and plucking out the eyes of the enemy', and a 1978 communist textbook for fourth-graders taught the children, including girls, to 'be martyrs of the revolution' (Davis, 2002: 91).

In 2010, the MoE, and the donor community that funds it, have learned their historical lesson and invested in the revision of the basic education curriculum and mass reprinting of textbooks, after the hastily edited and reprinted 2002 curriculum had mistakenly included text reproducing Shia–Sunni divides (Spink, 2005: 199). Yet the ideology of the state touches not just the curriculum, but also the use of school facilities in a broader sense. This is illustrated by the section below on the use of schools as voting stations in the 2009 elections. As a result of NGO advocacy for children's right to education, the government decided to try to cease using schools for the 2010 elections and find alternative locations for voting.

As predicted, and despite strong opposition from UNICEF, NGOs, and human rights organizations to using Afghan schools for the presidential elections, election day on 20 August 2009 in Afghanistan saw 26 armed attacks on the 2,700 polling stations located in schools across the country. No casualties were reported because students were off that day, according to the MoE (O'Malley, 2010: 174, citing IRIN, 2009*b*).

Confronted with the news of the attacks, Asif Nang, spokesman of the MoE, told IRIN News: 'We stand ready to make more and bigger sacrifices for the elections and similar important processes' (IRIN,

2009*b*), adding that the schools were only partially damaged, and that the attacks had not disrupted classes.

'Schools must be – and be seen to be – neutral places of learning, rather than showplaces of government policy successes', Ajmal Samadi of ARM insisted (2009*a*). Prior to the elections, ARM, as well as other NGOs and UNICEF, had suggested a range of conflict mitigation measures, such as using mosques or other public buildings as polling stations and reducing military presence near schools. It was suggested that girls' education and curriculum reform should continue, but that compromises such as gender-segregated learning spaces might be necessary. It was recommended that students refrain from greeting official visits with flag-waving and singing, as the Afghan flag, presidential portraits, and donor logos could provoke attacks. For the same reason, government and international security were recommended to refrain from distributing school supplies and stationery items (Samadi, 2009*a*).

Reports prior to the September 2010 parliamentary elections showed that the position of the government and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) had not changed: 'Schools are attacked regardless of their use in elections', said Noor Mohammad Noor, an IEC spokesman. A provincial level education director disagreed: 'It would be good if places other than schools will be used as voting centres, particularly in insecure districts', said Shir Aqa Sapai, education department director in the Helmand province (IRIN, 2010).

CARE International is a trusted partner of the MoE in delivering CBE (see *Chapter 6*), and is among the agencies that lobby for holding elections elsewhere than in schools. Jennifer Rowell, an advocacy expert with CARE International in Kabul, said: 'Here it does not make sense to use schools as polling centres as it jeopardizes the right to education', adding that there was a strong correlation between the hike in attacks on schools and presidential elections in 2009.

Receiving a negative response from the government and the IEC, CARE decided to advocate among donors, who pay for holding elections, to try to influence the government's position, or to shift some of their funding into genuine alternatives for polling stations, such as tents. However, a US Embassy spokesperson said that these decisions should be made by the IEC, which had not requested any tents (IRIN, 2010).

A joint NGO report issued on 14 June 2010 reiterated the recommendation to the Government of Afghanistan to 'under all

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circumstances avoid the use of education and health facilities in the upcoming elections and for other political purposes' (Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2010: 7). This point was underlined during the launch of the report by Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (UNDPI, 2010), who made similar recommendations during a mission to Afghanistan in February 2010 (OSRSG-CAAC, 2010: 11).

The advocacy efforts were successful: during the UN Security Council's Open Debate on 16 June 2010, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the UN, Zahir Tanin, announced that 'because of the threat from the Taliban, the MoE has instructed that schools will no longer be used as polling stations in elections' (Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the UN in New York, 2010).

3.5 'Good enough' governance embedded in communities

CARE's landmark study *Knowledge on Fire* (Glad, 2009), which was funded and supported by the World Bank and the MoE, shows that community involvement is the key factor in ensuring protection of schools, teachers, and pupils, while police and armed forces are largely seen as irrelevant to protection. Hence, the report recommends that 'education stands the strongest chance of being optimally protected if the analysis, decision-making and implementation power of school security is decentralized to the provincial, district, and community levels, with budgetary and technical support offered by the central government' (Glad, 2009: 4).

However, as Lynn Davies has pointed out, '"the community" is not without divisions and disagreements, and should not be romanticised' (Davies, 2009: 26–27). Leaving education to community initiative alone will not work – there needs to be some sort of basic, national education system in place.

Can this dichotomy between the state and the community be transcended? Could the MoE get to a position of power in which it is able to enforce adherence to a basic (and fairly non-ideological) curriculum, still allowing some local autonomy? Cases from community-based schools (CBSs) in Afghanistan suggest that this is possible; here, peace education has been integrated into curricula in schools supported by

Save the Children, and the MoE has adopted several such policies, at least in principle, although the capacity to implement it is not there yet. In such a decentralized 'good enough' governance model (Brinkerhoff and Johnson, 2008; Grindle, 2007), schools would be nested in and 'owned' by communities, but funded, supported, and inspected by the central government. NGOs and UN agencies would, probably for at least another decade, continue to play a key role in service delivery, overseen by the MoE.

As a result of, among other factors, the CD and advocacy efforts described by the NGO consortium PACE-A in *Chapter 6*, the MoE is now formally in charge of coordinating all efforts for CBE in Afghanistan. All involved parties agree that this is their rightful position. The MoE approach is pragmatic and flexible. It accepts help from UNICEF and NGOs, on the condition that the MoE is in charge of the coordination. It also chooses an adaptive strategy in cooperating with the Taliban and other insurgents, who de facto control large parts of the country. If it is necessary to call a teacher 'mullah' or a school 'madrassa', then the MoE will do so, as long as education provision is maintained (Asif Nang, MoE spokesman, quoted in IRIN, 2009*a*). The MoE's core capability to adapt and self-renew here complements its core capability to carry out technical, service delivery, and logistical tasks (*Section 2.3*). These are good examples of the utility of the multi-faceted CD approach that *Chapter 2* argued for.

The current state model, which relies on mass deployment of foreign troops, may be renegotiated over the coming years, as the current government seems ready to negotiate with insurgent groups. The future set-up of education could become a driving force in a peace process, but could equally become the opposite. CD agencies will have an important future role to play in supporting a governance set-up where education can be perceived – by all parties – as a peace dividend, as a neutral force for equality. In the educational planning processes, this involves conducting an education sector diagnosis that is conflict-sensitive, as included in the latest draft of the NESP-II/Interim Plan to be submitted for Afghanistan's membership of the FTI (MoE, 2010*b*).

Giustozzi's (2010) claim was that popular allegiance to the Afghan state could only be secured in the long term by imposing a strong national ideology through the curriculum, with teachers to transmit the national ideology who believe in it too, and a strong education administration to enforce it. The MoE does need to be strengthened, but popular allegiance

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to the state through education will depend less on the ideology of the content, and more on the access to, and quality, relevance, and equity of the educational services the state offers.

The principles of the current education system, as enshrined in the education law, are moderate: that there exists one Afghan people, with a shared history and identity – regardless of the numerous divisions of ethnicity, class, tribe, language, gender, urbanization, and, not least, education level – united in its adherence to Islam as a religion and as a moral guideline. This vision is moderate enough to enable people from different backgrounds to buy in to education; for example, it has allowed the MoE and communities to negotiate with insurgents and keep schools open. A relatively neutral education system that offers a decent basic education seems like the most sustainable way of strengthening the bond between state and the population. UNESCO Kabul (*Section 8.6*) discusses this further.

Humility, patience, and pragmatism are necessary values for those who work with education in Afghanistan. Perhaps the ambition of 'education provision that is transformative'[21] needs to be replaced by a more modest aim for education provision that is conflict-sensitive and resilient, and that at least does not exacerbate conflict. After all, how much peace can an education system be expected to generate, when the rest of a society is at war? This question is also reflected on the INEE Working Group on Education and Fragility's synthesis report on the subject (INEE, 2011).

This chapter shows that due to education's contested nature as a carrier of national values, educational planners – and donors – need to be aware that it has the potential to create instability and should pay attention to the historical lessons from Afghanistan's experiments with education during the twentieth century. In a country as radicalized as Afghanistan, the education sector, despite being inherently political, could ensure longer-term benefits by remaining neutral.

21. As stated in the INEE Working Group on Education and Fragility's note on terminology (2009).

Chapter 4

From scratch to self-confident planning: The MoE–IIEP partnership

Dorian Gay and Morten Sigsgaard

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned in *Chapter 1*, IIEP has been involved in a technical partnership with Afghanistan's Ministry of Education (MoE) and its Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), particularly the MoE's Department of Planning and Evaluation (DoPE). This chapter aims to record its history and share lessons from this unique and long-standing partnership, with the hope that it may help and inspire other practitioners in the field of education and CD.

The chapter reviews what IIEP considers to be successful CD, that is, an approach where technical and financial partners focus on long-term engagement with a ministry of education, giving as much attention to the complex processes that lead to the formulation and eventual implementation of a sector development plan as they do to the products of the planning process.[22] Drawing from the successes and challenges of this project, the chapter makes a case for a CD model that is sustainable. This model, founded on principles of participation and national ownership, focuses both on individual and organizational capacities and culminates in making national training institutions a priority.

Drawing on a 47-year history of educational planning partnerships with a long list of countries, IIEP sees CD as a holistic process, as outlined by De Grauwe (2009) and summarized in *Chapter 2*. IIEP advocates for a pragmatic approach, where CD agencies do not try to impose big plans but rather remain in a counselling and technical backstop position and

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22. Processes involved in the formulation of a sector plan include mentoring, building trust, securing political and financial backing, setting up institutional arrangements and working groups, establishing reliable base data sets, and developing country-specific projection and simulation models. The products of the planning process include the strategic document itself, budgets, yearly operational plan documents, and monitoring reports of different kinds.

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focus on solutions that can work in spite of obstacles and contradictions. Other important CD outcomes include inspiring hope and confidence and developing ministerial capacity to take leadership of a fragmented education sector.

4.2 Early beginnings of the MoE–IIEP partnership, 2002

Following the fall of the Taliban and the 2001 Bonn Agreement, and at the request of President Hamid Karzai, UNESCO sent a project identification mission to Afghanistan in May 2002. IIEP was represented by an education specialist, who would remain involved in the project during the next eight years. Assessing all levels and types of education, the mission found that the education sector had to be rebuilt completely from scratch (*Box 2*), and called for massive and long-term assistance.

Box 2. First impressions of a MoE in disarray, 2002

All the institutions I visited in Kabul (e.g. the MoE, the MoHE, Kabul University, Kabul Pedagogic Institute) had no equipment and almost no furniture, other than some old tables and chairs and very few old filing cabinets. They also had almost no stationery. ... The offices [of the MoE's Personnel Department] had no windows and had broken doors. In some cases they had plastic sheets on windows to protect the employees from the wind and cold in winter. (Kabul is 2,000 metres high and surrounded by mountains that still had snow in the spring month of May.) They lacked electricity, running water and proper toilets (which makes it extremely difficult for women employees). In some cases, offices were dangerous with wooden floors and ceilings which were about to cave in. ... Very few employees have ever used a computer ... Most departments and institutions had no relevant information and statistics, even regarding their own departments.

Excerpt from IIEP report on UNESCO mission to Kabul, May 2002

In Afghanistan's education sector in 2002, IIEP's CD activities were a small programme compared with many larger ones such as those of USAID or UNICEF, which focused respectively on school infrastructure and teacher training and on the Back to School campaign. Within the priority areas identified by UNESCO, IIEP's specific assessment was that the MoE's capacity in education sector planning, management, and policy development needed drastic reinforcement. IIEP's initial programme was small in size but strategic in nature, based exclusively on existing MoE structures: it never opted for setting up an independent implementation structure. It was not a high-profile activity, as planning and management are less visible than for example infrastructure.

IIEP's first concrete activity was a workshop on Institutional Management in Higher Education in Kabul in October 2002.The Minister of Higher Education, Dr Sharief Fayez, asked IIEP for more workshops on strategic management and proposed exploring the possibility of preparing a Higher Education Strategic Plan. The MoE joined in with the MoHE's requests.

IIEP's CD activities at this point were somewhat tentative. The working relationships were new, funding was short-term, and the country was in a chaotic immediate post-war phase. Physical infrastructure, technical capacity, and all policies had to be built from scratch in the education sector; yet there was optimism and some successful interventions such as the UNICEF-led Back to School campaign in the spring of 2002, which succeeded in enrolling 3 million schoolchildren into a makeshift school system. But at the policy level, there was no coherent overall framework for Afghanistan's development, including the education sector.[23] Technical capacity was lacking everywhere and MoE and MoHE staff would have to begin with learning the basic fundamentals of planning before they could meaningfully participate in planning and policy processes.

To address this major capacity constraint, cooperation between IIEP and the MoHE (later also the MoE), followed three basic principles: to be pragmatic, to set realistic targets, and to collaborate closely in a relationship of mutual trust. During the period 2002–2005, IIEP started supporting MoHE and MoE staff in the basics of educational planning. Topics ranged from higher education management and financing to basic educational statistics, educational indicators, budgeting, and gender in education. The CD objectives were realistic, even modest. An operational structure slowly started to materialize within the MoE, and IIEP purchased basic equipment such as desks, chairs, computers, and the necessary equipment for simultaneous interpretation to ease communication during training workshops. The physical work facilities were very basic – an early report notes that 'windows in the MoE building should be in place no later than mid-October 2002, before the cold'. These initial activities were funded through short-term agreements with Germany and Italy.

How far these activities contributed to the overall capacity of the MoE and MoHE during this period is an open question. The MoE had

23. The process that led to the formulation of the Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy (I-ANDS) did not begin until 2005.

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no fewer than four ministers of education between 2002 and 2005, and priorities were constantly shifting. Staff turnover was high in ministries that constantly had to re-adjust to a fast-changing environment, and many of the human resources developed were lost – if not from the education sector or from Afghanistan as a whole, at least from the MoE and MoHE. Activities largely consisted of training individuals, with no real possibility at this stage of applying a comprehensive long-term strategy for the development of sustainable capacities. This ad hoc approach seemed to be the only possibility under the circumstances. The longer-term ambition of developing a critical mass of planners would clearly take a while. In the meantime there was a need to start *somewhere*.

The metaphor of 'assembling the bicycle while at the same time trying to ride it' has been used to describe this challenge. Nevertheless, dozens of ministry staff were trained, mainly in Kabul, some of whom are still MoE and MoHE civil servants today. A few ministry staff were also trained at IIEP in Paris. A relationship built on trust and mutual respect was established between IIEP and officials from both ministries, proving to be of strategic importance at later stages of the partnership.

4.3 The Ministry of Higher Education's first strategic plan, 2003–2004

During this period, in 2003, IIEP responded to a request from MoHE to develop a strategic sector plan (MoHE, 2004). At this time, Afghanistan was still in the so-called 'early recovery' phase. The MoHE had only recently started functioning and was in effect operating in a vacuum with no policy or legal framework to guide its work. Emerging from a protracted conflict, the Ministry needed external input and advice to determine the most appropriate mechanisms for rebuilding Afghan higher education. The MoHE had a pressing need to develop a strategy document that would provide a vision for this sub-sector. The document envisaged at this time was initially more of a policy and regulatory framework for higher education than a strategic medium-term action plan.

IIEP's support was called upon in a context characterized by severe time constraints and the lack of qualified or experienced MoHE personnel capable of developing a strategic document. This meant that a participatory planning process was not possible. A joint expert team was formed by MoHE and IIEP, with 10 Afghan academics and a broad joint

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venture of 10 internationals from German and Japanese donor agencies, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and IIEP itself. During the team's two-week mission to Kabul in September 2003, it met not only with MoHE staff but with the embassies of Canada, Italy, Iran, and France, and the EU Special Representative's office, aiming to create a coalition of donors. The drafting of the strategy document took into consideration the draft higher education law prepared by the MoHE within the process. In May 2004, this collaborative effort led to the formulation of the MoHE Strategic Action Plan for the Development of Higher Education in Afghanistan, which set out a vision for the development of the sub-sector and included concrete action programmes. Soon after this plan development phase, longer-term MoHE CD activities began, primarily by training MoHE officials at IIEP.

In this process, IIEP faced a dilemma. Should it as a CD institute support a ministry in issuing a national strategic plan, while knowing that circumstances would not allow the proper skills development of the staff with the responsibility to implement it? Yet, could IIEP refuse its support to a ministry in need of a leading strategy in an early recovery phase? Afghanistan's situation at the time was critical, and a choice was made to assist MoHE despite the risk of less sustainable results.

The end result was a mixed success. Although many Afghan scholars and officials were involved in the process, it must be acknowledged that this first process did not lead to the desired ownership and sustainability, in spite of the financial and human resources invested. The plan was written in English from its inception, and mostly by internationals, including IIEP experts. Some high-level MoHE staff and advisors may have increased their capacities for plan formulation, but middle- and low-level MoHE staff had minimal roles in the process. The predictable consequence was that the first Strategic Action Plan for the Development of Higher Education in Afghanistan received little attention from either the national or the international communities.

The plan's long-term impact was limited, but the process yielded valuable lessons for IIEP's (and other development partners') future work with the MoE, and symbolically marked the return of Afghanistan into the international scientific community at a crucial point in time, regardless of the long road that still lay ahead.

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4.4 Principles for a plan emerge, 2004–2005

It took another two years before IIEP's partnership with the MoE started to take off. In 2004 and 2005, IIEP was still operating on short-term funding agreements from Nordic countries through UNESCO's extra-budgetary funds. It was still holding training workshops for MoE and MoHE staff on topics such as institutional management and gender and education; the MoE's Director of Planning visited Paris for a 10-day training course. IIEP did not yet have a permanent presence in the MoE, but relied on its Paris staff and on consultants who would visit Kabul on week-long missions.

In March 2004, IIEP initially agreed to assist the MoE in developing an EFA national plan. The turning point came when the MoE decided to start formulating a sector plan (later to become NESP-I). The Deputy Minister of Education for Academic Affairs requested IIEP's assistance for this task in September 2005. IIEP's response was a concept note describing the required steps and principles for preparing an EFA plan. Already at this early stage core principles included participation of all MoE staff, gender equity, and CD. This was the first premise of the future NESP-I, which was approved by the Minister of Education, Noor Mohammad Qarqin, in December 2005.

Intentions and the principles were thus in place and funds were secured through the Norwegian embassy in Kabul; Norway was keen to support CD for strategic planning of the education sector over a three-year period, 2006–2009. Medium-term planning was now feasible, enabling IIEP to use its preferred approach of a combination of CD activities for developing the sector plan. The aim was to develop the DoPE's capacity, enabling it to produce the MoE's first NESP. In this period, the political will of the Deputy Minister of Education for Academic Affairs was central, as was IIEP's strong relationship with the Director of Planning.

In retrospect, this 'gestation' period from 2004 to early 2006 was necessary: it allowed all parties to comprehend the complexity of the task under the prevailing circumstances. There was a lack of reliable educational data, as the first comprehensive survey would only take place in 2007. The MoE technical staff had serious capacity constraints. Financial resources were limited. The context was one of increasing insecurity and tension. And on top of all this, the MoE had no institutional experience of education sector strategic planning. Clearly, embarking on the project would have far-reaching implications for the MoE, in terms

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of internal organizational arrangements, staff mobilization and skills development, and external communication with the national community and with international partners regarding the necessity of the plan.

During this period, some guiding principles were set for the future plan development:

- EFA goals would be placed in an education sector development framework, which would be clearly linked to poverty reduction and other national development strategies (IIEP, 2005).
- The plan would clearly spell out MoE priorities, which would assist in harmonizing donor aid and aligning it with MoE priorities.
- The plan should be prepared by MoE technical staff, under ministerial leadership.
- The technical support provided by IIEP and other partners should be conceived as the first phase of a longer-term programme to build national education planning capacity.
- The planning process should be participatory and carried out in close consultation with international development partners and national civil society (IIEP, 2006).

This ambitious plan formulation process understandably did not start immediately, with the structured arrangements adopted at a later stage; the initial analysis of the education sector did, however, start with IIEP support. This process was given a significant boost when Hanif Atmar took office as Minister of Education in May 2006.

4.5 Initiation of sustainable CD, 2006

As discussed above, during the three years that followed the fall of the Taliban regime (2002–2005), IIEP was a permanent technical partner of the MoE and provided training workshops as well as technical advice. The mutual trust and knowledge developed during this period enabled them to scale up their technical partnership in early 2006. This Strategic Planning and Capacity Development Project aimed to improve MoE capacity in planning and managing the education sub-sector, as well as in leading efforts directed towards education and human resource development. IIEP would assist the MoE in formulating its first strategic education sector development plan (NESP-I) by helping it develop its

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capacities in plan preparation, implementation, and monitoring at the education system's central and decentralized levels.[24]

The Project resulted from collaboration between three actors: the Afghan MoE, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and IIEP. The MoE understood the necessity of an education sector plan very early on in the reconstruction process, demonstrating strong political and technical commitment from the early stages of its development. In addition, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided financial support and also technical advice and moral support. IIEP provided strong technical expertise in educational planning and agreed to make long-term engagement a priority.

After the funding agreement was signed, the day-to-day partnership was managed by the MoE and IIEP, with logistical support from UNESCO Kabul.[25] The project could not have succeeded without all three parties' cooperating jointly and with genuine team spirit. The project also benefited from a very committed donor, Norway. Although not legally bound to be more than a funding partner, its embassy's successive education representatives gave guidance throughout the NESP-I formulation process and hosted meetings of like-minded donors to support donor coordination and alignment around a national plan. Norway greatly facilitated the management of MoE's and IIEP's work by being results-oriented and flexible, as the situation required. The MoE's frequent priority changes and ongoing internal reforms – not to mention the volatile security situation – would often call for some of the Project's activities to be modified, some to be simply abandoned, and new ones to be added. Donor involvement and flexibility proved to be key in these situations.

24. Training at provincial level was extremely difficult due to the security situation. Some training of provincial level staff took place in Kabul, but not on the scale originally envisioned. Even by November 2010, training at provincial level remained a very difficult task for UN agencies due to the strict UN security regulations. NGOs, however, are not necessarily subject to these regulations.
25. Since Afghanistan is a conflict area with many uncontrollable external factors, IIEP's programme needed a secure administrative and logistical base. UNESCO Kabul's field office provided just that. This facilitated missions and ensured, for example, that local staff salaries were paid on time. Moreover, UNESCO Kabul helped IIEP stay abreast of day-to-day politics and other developments in the education sector, in the MoE, and among donors.

The move towards a more ambitious technical partnership was however not without some tension, as the interests and priorities of IIEP and those of the Ministry were not always identical. This became clear during a mission to Kabul soon after Hanif Atmar took office in May 2006.

The Minister intended to produce a medium-term education strategy within three months. Possible reasons for this were many. Atmar was enjoying a positive reputation amongst the donor community: this confidence in the MoE was in part due to his excellent track record as Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, where he had launched the National Solidarity Programme, and his former work in the NGO sector. He was also ascending rapidly within the Afghan Government. It was logical for him to want quick and visible results for the MoE as well: the MoE could then be seen as leading recovery and reconstruction as demonstrated by a credible sector plan.

Consequently, the MoE decided to embark on the formulation of its first national strategic plan for the post-Taliban era, even though most of its staff were not properly qualified or experienced in education sector strategic planning. Initially, the MoE conceived of the plan much like the MoHE plan of 2004: as a turnkey product. This would bring direct benefits to the MoE in terms of visibility and as a major fundraising tool – necessary for a MoE in need of such support.

This turnkey approach, however, lacked a crucial dimension: long-term participatory planning. IIEP therefore presented the Minister with its approach to plan formulation, which consisted of two main elements. First was the conviction that a future strategic plan needed to be prepared in a participatory way, with involvement of MoE staff from all Ministry departments and on all administrative levels, including the provinces, since it was the staff who would possess expert knowledge about Afghanistan's education sector and possible remedial strategies for it. Second was the conviction that the MoE staff needed to strengthen their planning and management skills throughout the plan formulation process, to become able to implement the plan themselves and subsequently reformulate the NESP. IIEP was thinking of the long route to CD, focusing on process more than product.

In order to explain to the MoE why a change in approach was necessary, IIEP needed to rely on the trust developed between the two institutions in recent years. An important and fruitful debate took place

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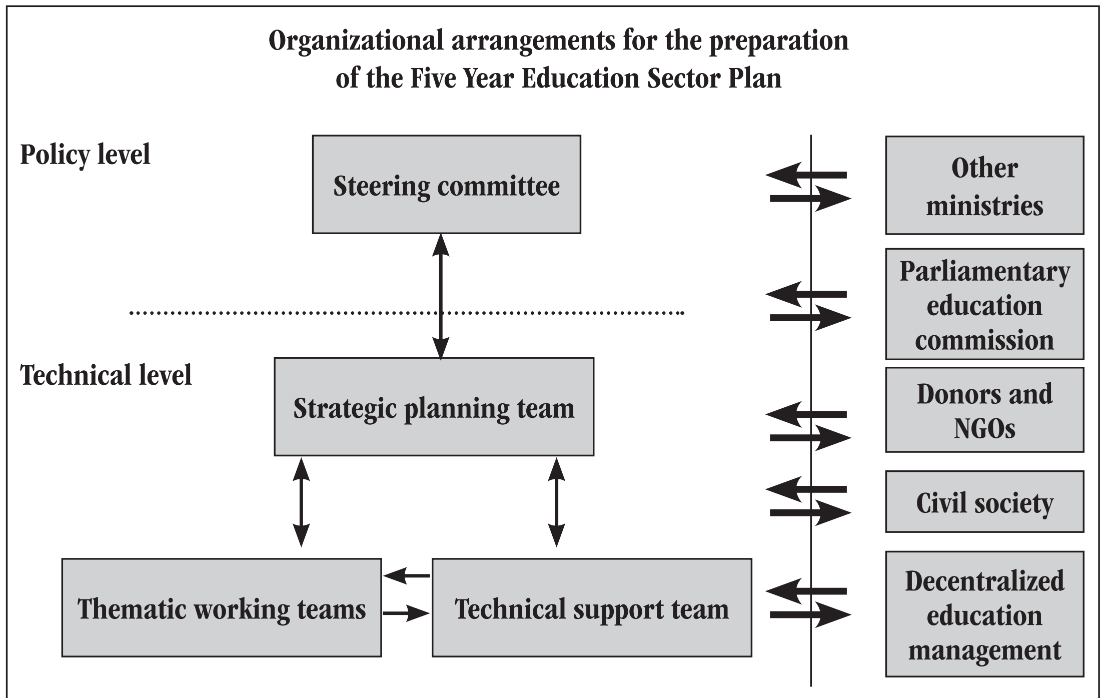
on the basis of a working document (IIEP, 2006) that included IIEP's ideas about the organizational arrangements the MoE would need to put in place to carry out the plan development process successfully (see *Figure 4*). A key proposal in this document was the organization of a consultation process with the plan's main stakeholders – other ministries, education donors and NGOs, civil society organizations, and provincial and district level administration (IIEP, 2006). The MoE carefully reviewed the plan preparation document, which proved extremely useful in harmonizing the vision and concepts related to strategic education sector planning on both sides.

Under Atmar's leadership, the MoE made a long-term strategic choice despite external pressures to produce a plan quickly. Although Atmar was known for exerting pressure to increase the speed of the process (Shah, 2010: 10), formulating the plan would inevitably take longer than the MoE had initially desired. It was evident that the formulation processes would be more important than the product (the strategic plan document) itself.

At policy level, the whole process would be guided by a high-level steering committee chaired by the Minister, while at technical level the planning tasks would be carried out by eight thematic working teams, supported by a technical support team, and coordinated by the strategic planning team. At the same time, continuous formal and informal consultations would take place with donors and NGOs, other ministries, decentralized levels of management, civil society, and the Parliamentary Education Commission (*Figure 4*).

The idea behind these organizational arrangements was twofold. First, the aim was to deepen the entire MoE's involvement in the planning process. Policy was to emanate from the technical specialists who were best placed to judge whether new policies would be practicable. Second, the aim was to broaden the planning process beyond the MoE to include consultations with donors, NGOs, civil society, decentralized education levels, and other ministries, all of whom had an important stake in the education sector and often possessed valuable expertise.

Figure 4. Preparing the NESP-I



4.6 Plan preparation, 2006–2007

With political backing for the plan and the participatory approach in place, the MoE staff went through a number of steps to start designing the plan. These are outlined in *Box 3*.

If capacity were to become sustainable, MoE national staff themselves needed to develop the necessary planning, implementation, and monitoring skills. IIEP insisted on a mentoring ‘on-the-job’ approach and refused to substitute staff. Despite the challenge this represented, there could be no better learning opportunity than a real-life national sector planning exercise.

The Strategic Planning and Capacity Development Project started taking shape over the summer of 2006. This included a situation analysis workshop with the eight Technical Working Groups who were responsible for the bulk of the plan’s contents, followed later by increasing staffing levels and securing suitable office space. With secure working conditions, staff were working on a daily basis with IIEP, and had strong political backing from the Minister. The NESP-I was actually being written. This writing process and the NESP development process involved a number of CD modalities, outlined in *Box 4*.

Box 3. Steps in the MoE's planning process

(1) setting up organizational arrangements to ensure Ministry-wide participation in the plan preparation process: forming working groups, defining their respective functions, assigning tasks, and elaborating work schedules;
(2) continual data collection and analysis, especially for the situation analysis of the education system contained in the plan;
(3) consulting with national and sub-national MoE representatives and with donors;
(4) adjusting staffing and Terms of Reference (ToRs), based respectively on the ongoing *tashkeel** and the organizational needs emerging from the NESP formulation process;
(5) drafting the plan's chapters, specifically the action programmes** – balancing policy and political aims with technical constraints, and making hard choices in the process;
(6) costing out the priority programmes and facilitating collaboration among the planning and budgeting processes and personnel.

* *Tashkeel* is the name given to the establishment of staffing structures within MoE. It is part of the broader Public Administration reform (PAR) framework that seeks to create an efficient, effective, and transparent civil service in Afghanistan through restructuring the civil service and introducing merit-based, non-partisan recruitment (Evans *et al*., 2004: 65, 83).

** NESP-I contains eight priority programmes: (1) General Education, (2) Teacher Education and Working Conditions, (3) Education Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Development, (4) Curriculum Development and Learning Materials, (5) Islamic Education, (6) Technical and Vocational Education and Training, (7) Literacy and Non-Formal Education, (8) Education Administration Reform and Development.

With capacity lacking in many areas of the MoE, the process needed a driving force. Minister Atmar himself, the foreign advisors, and Afghan TAs[26] would be driving the final drafting process,[27] which was conducted in English. The plan was that civil servants should participate deeply in the planning process, but in reality this level of participatory planning was not always easy, as the civil servants lacked the skills needed to articulate and draft a quality policy document. This tension between the need to deliver results relatively fast and at the same time to generate broad-based participation with civil servants and non-MoE stakeholders has been analysed in detail by Shah (2010) and Holland (2010).

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26. National TAs were employed by the MoE with support from foreign development agencies and donors, and received higher salaries than the civil servants on the MoE's payroll. The TAs had English and computer skills, which was necessary for working with the foreigners.
27. The ideas discussed and the recommendations made by the civil servants in the working groups were recorded or drafted in the local language and used as input for drafting the full document.

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Box 4. Modalities of IIEP's holistic approach to capacity development

IIEP's support of the MoE in 2006–2010 was intended to be comprehensive from its inception, as CD was always perceived as more than just formal training. IIEP used various modalities to develop capacity:

- training workshops in-country (with due recognition that few workshops included the provincial education planners, for security reasons);
- in-depth training in educational planning and management at IIEP on the Advanced Training Programme (an international master's programme in educational planning and management);
- tailor-made technical mentoring in the MoE during IIEP missions;
- continuous distance support in which IIEP provides guidance, shares views, comments on documents;
- support on issues not strictly related to planning (as an example, IIEP commented on the appropriate structure for the DoPE);
- permanent technical support based at the MoE's DoPE: a coordinator supported by IIEP, working alongside a team of eight Monitoring and Reporting Officers, whose recruitment was requested by the MoE;
- training in English and computer skills as these two generic skills are widely recognized as instrumental for MoE staff;
- tailoring training materials for training workshops;
- assisting with simulation model development during the NESP-II formulation.

As practitioners understand, writing an education sector plan is no easy business. It requires a wide variety of competencies, depends heavily on different types and sources of information, and requires strong and structured coordination to ensure impartiality and sustainability. This is true even under normal conditions. The Afghan MoE throughout the period of NESP-I development was not working under normal conditions. Since 2006, violence in Afghanistan in general including Kabul has been rising constantly. This insecure environment greatly affected the development of NESP-I, even if it did not prevent it from being written.

As the MoE is the largest employer in the country and one of the most visible ministries, due to its deployment over the entire national Afghan territory, it inevitably was (and still is) a target for opponents of the government. As a result, the work of MoE staff, including those involved in the development of NESP-I, was affected in various ways and with different degrees of severity. The most common disruptions included these:

- The attention of the Minister of Education was often diverted from the MoE core business and the planning process in particular, given the importance of political leadership during this phase.

- Threats of attacks on the MoE disrupted its regular work meetings and thus too often disrupted the normal decision-making processes guiding policy-making.
- Numerous attacks on school buildings and education personnel in the provinces required a lot of attention from the MoE, to the extent that it was forced to set up a special provincial support team to mobilize senior and less senior MoE officials on a full-time basis, with the effect of weakening its work force.
- It was difficult for provincial MoE staff to travel frequently enough to Kabul to take part in the national planning process.
- It was difficult for the MoE to collect education data in the provinces, especially the most conflict-affected ones, though these data were necessary for the projection of needs and the estimation of required resources.
- It was understandably difficult for the MoE to develop realistic and efficient policies and strategies to address insecurity in the education system without causing harm to its beneficiaries.
- Costs were incurred by the MoE for security enhancements of its premises and other related measures.

A special example was a threat of attack on the MoE buildings in late 2007, causing the Minister – in the midst of the NESP-I formulation process – to relocate almost all MoE staff very suddenly to several other buildings, some of them on the outskirts of Kabul. While these measures helped to protect the MoE and avoid casualties, the impact on the NESP-I development was radical and immediate: it was suspended completely for several days and partially for many weeks. The replacement buildings had no running water or communication structures such as Internet and telephone. Since this very telling episode, the MoE has been forced countless times to juggle the competing priorities of carrying out its mandate and ensuring the basic security of its staff.

Nevertheless, after nearly 16 months of preparation, the NESP-I was initially launched at the Afghanistan Development Forum convened in Kabul in late April 2007. The Forum was an opportunity for the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to work together on subjects crucial to Afghanistan's sustained development.

The NESP-I was officially released in public at the Education Development Forum (EDF) in February 2008 by the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, and the Minister

of Education, Hanif Atmar. The EDF was the first joint NESP implementation review meeting to gather the MoE and all development partners in the education sector. The MoHE was also part of the event, which demonstrated the mutual concern of MoE and MoHE for coordination and commitment to articulate their programmes. Over 200 stakeholder representatives were invited to the EDF – ministers, commissions, advisors, donors and aid agencies, UN agencies, consultancy firms, NGOs, and civil-military Provincial Reconstruction Teams, among others. All Provincial Education Office (PEO) directors and many PEO staff were also heavily involved. The sheer number of actors in the sector indicates the need for coordination that the NESP helped to address. At the forum, Canada was assigned to be the lead donor for the Education sector, and was also appointed the first co-chair of the newly created Education Development Board[28] alongside the MoE.

Two important breakthroughs were also presented to the national and international stakeholders: firstly, the results of the first School Survey (2007), a long-awaited comprehensive and reliable set of educational data for Afghanistan, and secondly the MoE's plan to develop a comprehensive EMIS. On this occasion, NESP-I was widely recognized as the most comprehensive national education sector plan developed in Afghanistan's recent history, and was adopted by all partners as the reference document to guide their programmes.

Yet IIEP had also faced dilemmas throughout the NESP-I formulation process.

One dilemma was: Should IIEP pull out of Afghanistan after the NESP-I had been produced, or should it stay? Donors and the Afghan government lauded the NESP-I as a success. In principle, IIEP could very well have ended its CD partnership with the MoE then and there: some national capacity had undoubtedly been developed, of which the NESP-I was the proof. This would have allowed IIEP the comfortable and convenient position of leaving Afghanistan on a high note. But was the same the case for the MoE? Formulating the plan was one thing. More challenging steps still lay ahead, for example implementation of the plan, monitoring of progress (including with MoE partners), and eventually assessment and reformulation of this first plan. Upon MoE's express

28. The co-chairmanship of the EDB (now HRDB) rotates annually between the main education donors; in 2010 it was transferred to Denmark.

request, IIEP finally decided to continue its engagement alongside the MoE. This was not an easy institutional decision, as IIEP was concerned that it might not be able to guarantee results under the circumstances. However, this is a risk that CD agencies working in challenging contexts must accept, with all due consideration to the fact that the MoE had no choice but to implement the plan regardless of the circumstances.

A second dilemma was: Should IIEP get involved in policy formulation, or should it limit itself to supporting MoE in organizing the planning process and with planning methodologies? It was difficult not to be involved in policy, because planning is closely intertwined with it. At the same time, Afghanistan is a society with many lines of conflict, and planning needs to engage with the notion of conflict and policies that address it.

Education in Afghanistan has been a politically controversial topic throughout the twentieth century (as described in *Chapter 3*), and still is: some elements in the Taliban oppose education for girls and draw recruits from extremist madrassas, but education's role in fuelling, or mitigating, conflict is much broader than that, as numerous studies since Bush and Saltarelli's *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict* (2000) have documented. Conflict issues include access to education for Afghanistan's many ethnic minorities, language policies, rural vs. urban divides, curriculum content including history, and questions of corruption and control over the MoE budget (teacher salaries) as a source of patronage. Some authors (Giustozzi, 2010; Rubin, 2002) claim that the Afghan state historically has used the education system to produce cadres of bureaucrats loyal to urban elite ideologies rather than out of more universal concern for the entire Afghan population, which has led to an anti-education backlash among the traditional rural population.

IIEP's mandate was to build capacity for planning and then let the MoE use this capacity to reach its EFA objectives.[29] However, EFA is in itself a specific policy agenda, as is evident when its objectives are translated into concrete action plans and budgets. Afghan politicians and other national stakeholders would not necessarily always agree on what IIEP might interpret as the best way to reach EFA – and they have a right to disagree. For IIEP, engaging in policy meant entering a more

29. IIEP is an integral part of UNESCO, which is the lead agency for the Education for All (EFA) movement. IIEP's mandate is thus to help countries, in this case Afghanistan, to achieve their EFA objectives.

politicized domain where its legitimacy as a planning institute might be questioned – more than if it stuck to strictly developing national capacity for planning – but at the same time, it was impossible to completely steer clear of the policy level.

It could be argued that IIEP had an obligation to try to affect education policy in a conflict-sensitive direction based on UNESCO's EFA mandate. On the other hand, Afghanistan's state apparatus, including the education sector, has historically been over-reliant on foreign assistance: Afghan politicians have based their rule on external support, and have therefore found it unnecessary to develop a social contract with the population (Rubin, 2002). IIEP had to be mindful not to import ready-made solutions that lacked anchoring in the MoE; its assistance would be more sustainable if it helped the MoE to match policy with concrete planning techniques.

An indirect way for IIEP to affect policy-making was to advise the MoE on how to set up coordination and consultation with other agencies (both national and international) in the education sector. On its missions to Kabul in 2004–2006, IIEP met with like-minded education donors to align strategy and share information. This policy dialogue later was institutionalized in the EDB, which was later renamed the HRDB. Policy dialogue around the NESP revision thus included inputs from a broad range of non-MoE stakeholders from the education sector. They commented on specific issues like CBE, gender, inclusive education (IE), and security/protection. The DoPE stayed in charge of comparing policy suggestions with their planning implications, and of accepting, modifying, or rejecting them. This 'capacity to resist' was in itself evidence of strengthened capacity overall, according to Dana Holland (2010: 16).

For example, the NGO consortium PACE-A helped the MoE adopt a community-based education policy (see *Chapter 6*). UNESCO Kabul offered an IE policy (see *Chapter 9*). These policies were often ambitious, but they also eventually needed to be converted into operational plans with time-frames and budgets. Not all policies could have equal priority. IIEP's role was to strengthen the DoPE's ability to base planning on facts, and enable the DoPE (the institutional level) to realistically engage with, and resist pressures from, the MoE's political level and international agencies (as documented by Holland, 2010).

A positive outcome of this policy dialogue was that the draft NESP-II is a much more conflict-sensitive document than NESP-I. NESP-II takes the attacks on education and their implications for access to education very seriously, and offers remedial strategies. The new plan also has better strategies for coping with natural disasters. NESP-II highlights the role of communities in school protection and management, thus mainstreaming key features of CBE (as delivered by NGOs and UNICEF) into the national school system. Under the NESP-II's Education Administrative Development subprogram, an entire component is devoted to Security and Protection. The planned protection measures include establishing central and provincial security and protection units, developing security systems, monitoring security incidents (from 'night letters' to bombings of schools), recording them in a security database and reporting on it, and delivering security awareness training for students and staff, all in cooperation with security organizations and communities (MoE, 2010*a*: 34, 120–121).

4.7 Post-planning reflections, 2007–2008

The NESP-I gave the MoE an opportunity to take its rightful place as the leader of the many agencies in the education sector. In particular, it went a long way in fostering donor alignment on nationally defined priorities and on the underlying premises of a sector-wide approach. What was missing was a structure that would make this policy dialogue more regular. On its missions to Kabul, IIEP therefore convened informal meetings of like-minded education donors, such as Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Canada, UNICEF, the World Bank, USAID, and UNESCO. These meetings in 2007–2008 helped to increase trust, mutual knowledge, and coordination; they were a precursor to what later became the EDB, which was founded in December 2008 and then began its regular monthly meetings.

In 2010, the EDB was transformed into the HRDB, which was tasked with coordinating the development of Afghanistan's human resources broadly speaking, and whose mandate therefore was expanded from the Education sub-sector to include representatives of the Ministries of Higher Education, Women's Affairs, and Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled. This was a visionary initiative that outlived Minister Atmar's strong and charismatic leadership: 'people may come and go, but structures remain', as Anastacio and Stannard point out in *Chapter 6*. The monthly meetings of the EDB/HRDB have saved significant

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amounts of time and effort compared to previous meetings – there had been 13 Education Forums and Working Groups in the education sector, out of which only six seemed to meet on a regular basis (Wirak *et al.*, 2009: 34) – and have allowed the MoE to develop its capability to relate and to attract resources and support.

This period was instructive in showing how important political leadership is in starting a plan formulation process. Minister Atmar's full support of the process, and his credibility both within the MoE and among donors, was a driving force that got things done. The process of developing the plan was just as important as the end-product, the plan itself. This process entailed a good deal of coaching – sitting down and doing planning work together – and through this Afghan education planning staff learned the nuts and bolts of planning step by step (the pros and cons of this approach are discussed in *Box 5*). The MoE's and IIEP's long-term strategic approach to the development of NESP-I has resulted in a sense of ownership and increased dignity, capacity, and self-esteem of the MoE officials. They later built on this confidence as they went on to develop the subsequent NESP-II, with IIEP providing 'back-seat' guidance.

Box 5. Pros and cons of IIEP's mentoring approach

The challenges to IIEP's mentoring approach are numerous*:*

- The cost is high: expensive international consultants travel far, often in order to work with small groups of people. Local trainers doing conventional training workshops for larger groups of people would appear to be more cost-effective.
- External assistance is often short-term, in two- to three-week missions. A permanent secretariat would not face the same time constraints.
- Coaching is time-consuming: it is a slow process to understand the various challenges of the MoE departments and sort out issues in a personalized way. Substitution of MoE staff would be faster, but less sustainable.
- Language and technical barriers exist: some MoE staff cannot participate fully in the mentoring process because they lack technical skills or do not speak English, and foreign advisors rarely speak Dari or Pashto.

Yet, despite these challenges, IIEP insists on this mentoring approach. This is because there is no blueprint for the planning process: it needs to be rediscovered empirically almost every time. Hence, no university-style training can teach MoE staff how to prepare a national plan in a participatory way. The only way MoE staff can acquire these skills is by being guided once, twice (perhaps more), through a full plan preparation process, and learning by doing. This allows technical self-confidence to develop. Finally, IIEP's mentoring provides the ministerial departments with a technical broker. This facilitates discussion on issues which for political reasons may not always be easily discussed inside the MoE.

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NESP-I may have been the first national education plan Afghanistan had seen for decades, but it was more of a utopian vision of what the education sector could look like than a clearly prioritized plan that stood a realistic chance of reaching its goals. Yet perhaps this was what was needed at the time: something to be proud of, to aspire towards. The realities of Afghanistan were bleak, and while it would be easier to say 'nothing is possible', it was perhaps wise to use the plan as a symbol of hope for the nation.

Intangible factors like trust, hope, and faith are fundamental resources in Afghanistan, especially because many of the structural obstacles to developing education remain outside the remit of the education sector. For example, education planners have no influence on the particular way that the 2001 Bonn Agreement[30] framed politics, or on security and access constraints resulting from the war, and only slight influence on payment delays in the financial bureaucracy (a job for the Ministry of Finance) or the distorted salary scales and competition for TAs. Planners need to work around these challenges the best they can, and that requires commitment and determination.

Of course, the opposite consideration is that there should be no building on false hope. The recent draft NESP-II has also been criticized as unrealistic or impossible to implement. Critics, including IIEP, advise that plans must be operational and set objectives that can actually be achieved.[31] A plan should contain at least one base scenario that can reasonably be achieved, taking into consideration among other parameters the current ministerial implementation capacity.

Trusting the plan was perhaps also a leap of faith for the donors, who themselves needed a beacon of hope to convince their parliaments

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30. Officially termed the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions, the Bonn Agreement was the initial series of agreements intended to recreate the state of Afghanistan following the US invasion in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001. Critics of this agreement have pointed out that since the US invasion owed much of its success to the assistance of warlords from the Northern Alliance, these warlords were given relatively large amounts of power in the state formation process.
31. Civil society commentators point out that unrealistic plans are currently the norm in Afghanistan – not just those of the government of Afghanistan, but also for example of the NATO forces (Clark, 2010; Ruttig, 2010). In indignation, a civilian blogger based in Kandahar noted that 'Hope is not a strategy' (von Linschoten, 2010).

to keep up the investment in Afghanistan's education sector as a peace dividend. The MoE needed the donors to be very flexible, so it helped when international agency and donor staffs were willing and capable of taking technical advisory roles. Donors should not just be accountants or subcontractors. A MoE needs counterparts who can challenge and stimulate it, and who stay engaged for a longer period of time than short-term consultants. When donors employ technical education specialists as their core staff, they are better able to engage in the real dilemmas and hard decisions. They then stand a better chance of earning the trust and respect of their MoE counterparts.

Staff working in the MoE seem to be divided into three main groups: the Afghan civil servants (usually the group with least capacity), the Afghan TAs (who are better paid, speak English, and can use computers), and the international advisors (who are very highly paid). It is only rational that civil servants will want to seek jobs as TAs with donor agencies, when their capabilities have been built to the point where agencies would want to hire them (for instance if they have learned English and computer skills).

Donors have funded hundreds of TAs (Shah, 2010: 30–31), although there is some disagreement over the exact numbers (personal communication, MoE senior staff, December 2010). The TAs are embedded in the MoE, which somewhat blurs the distinction between who has allegiance to the MoE and who does not.

Donors' tendency to hire foreign consultants and national TAs have led to increased salary levels for these groups, a distorted labour market, and diversion of capacity to non-state employers such as private consulting companies. These factors have led to reduced motivation among the regular civil servants and have thus had a negative impact on MoE performance. On the other hand, the MoE has itself contributed to this problem by increasing its requests for TAs. (This is further discussed in *Chapter 5*.)

IIEP faced similar negotiations with the MoE, which initially requested that IIEP hire a large number of national TAs through the Strategic Planning and Capacity Development Project with a view to increasing the DoPE's technical capacity – a legitimate request, though in IIEP's view it was not addressed to the proper funding source. A compromise was eventually reached, and eight national TAs were hired to support the DoPE in its daily planning tasks, under two conditions: first,

that the sustainability of these positions would be guaranteed through MoE's commitment to convert those TA positions into civil servant positions over time, and second, that they would become trainers at the MoE in charge of multiplying capacities among the MoE permanent staff. If IIEP had yielded to the request to hire a much larger number of TAs, then MoE civil servants would probably have been less involved in the planning process and would have been denied CD opportunities.

Recent HRDB discussions have centred on this issue, and DANIDA has consequently launched a proposal to map TAs and harmonize their salaries. The issue remains contested, and many well-paid jobs depend on it. International advisors may receive salaries and allowances in the order of US$20,000–40,000 per month (Waldman, 2008: 3), and as pointed out in *Chapter 5*, salaries for national TAs in 2009 were on average about seven times higher than those of civil servants.[32] For an education plan to be sustainable, a central question for the future will be how much of this plan could be implemented by civil servants. This is a dilemma not just for the education sector, but for state-building in Afghanistan on a more general level. IIEP's views on the issue are summarized in *Box 6*.

Box 6. Pros and cons of IIEP's hiring of national TAs

Hiring TAs contributed to strengthening the capacity of the DoPE at a time when it could not afford to be without basic competence and enough staff to develop plans, start its EMIS, produce regular reports, move towards provincial operational planning in provinces, and so on. As such, it was clearly a necessary move.

However, the sustainability of hiring TAs is debatable. Several of the TAs hired by IIEP served MoE very well – but used the opportunity as a springboard towards doing master's degrees abroad. As such, hiring them was a bad short-term investment, yet possibly an excellent investment in the longer term, as they may later find incentives to return to Afghanistan to serve the education sector in one way or another.

Some of the TAs are still in the MoE and occupy important positions, such as the Deputy Director of Planning, the Head of the EMIS section at the DoPE, and the Deputy Head of the Research and Evaluation Unit. Some of these positions were supposed to be civil servant positions but are in fact paid by IIEP at TA rates.

IIEP's TAs have not yet become trainers per se for other MoE staff, but they do work informally with others. In order to be trainers, they would need a formal structure in which to train others. This is a long-haul task, and the MoE is creating a basis for a national training programme in educational planning, with the support of IIEP's new DANIDA-funded project.

32. In 2009, national TA salaries were, on average, US$783 per month, whereas civil servants received an average of US$109 per month (MoE, Department of Finance, 2010).

4.8 Revision of NESP-I and formulation of NESP-II, 2008–2010

An analysis of the revision and (re)formulation process that led from NESP-I to the existing draft NESP-II might be considered premature: although the NESP-II is in its final stages of development at the time of writing this chapter in October 2010, it is not yet clear when this process will come to its end. This section is therefore limited to looking at the reasons and circumstances that pushed MoE to revise NESP-I and later formulate NESP-II, and tentatively comparing the formulation processes of NESP-I and NESP-II.

The revision of the NESP-I began in conjunction with a mid-term review of IIEP's Capacity Development Project during an IIEP mission to Kabul in July 2008. The MoE, and especially the DoPE, had been attentive to external critiques of the plan document and had made its own informal self-assessment of its plan. The reasons for the NESP-I revision, however, were not exclusively linked to the document's shortcomings, but also related to external factors.

In June 2008, the Government of Afghanistan presented the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) at the Paris Conference.[33] As a result of decisions made at the highest policy-making levels, the MoE and other line ministries subsequently needed to adjust the NESP and their respective strategy documents to the ANDS' new targets and its time-frame, 2008–2013.[34]

Perhaps more important was a very alarming statistic: in 2008, the number of attacks on schools, teachers, and pupils had almost tripled to 670 – almost two attacks every day! – compared to the two previous years (O'Malley, 2010: 173; Glad, 2009: 21). Attacks on education were becoming a very visible obstacle to reaching the NESP-I objectives. Hence, the revised NESP needed to include clearer and more specific protection, risk mitigation, and recovery strategies.

The NESP revision was also motivated by a structural-organizational change within the MoE: the number of priority programmes was reduced

33. The MoE played a key role in formulating the education sector strategy within the ANDS. The inputs were based on NESP-I with projections for the subsequent years.
34. Ultimately, the time-frame of NESP-II would be changed: at the time of writing, it is 2010–2014.

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from eight to five, and the number of deputy ministers was increased from three to five accordingly. Each deputy minister was now in charge of one MoE department and one priority programme. However, Shah (2010: 22) notes that 'the demand for decreasing the number of programmes also came from the [Ministry of Finance], which reasoned that fewer programmes would reduce its management burden and increase effectiveness in terms of fund [disbursal]'.

The data basis for planning had also changed: the Ministry had conducted its first School Survey in 2007 and had a much more accurate EMIS and data to base its planning on.

Moreover, the NESP revision would give the MoE (especially the DoPE) the opportunity to address technical issues in the plan document. The relationship between objectives, targets, and activities was perceived as being too loose, and the revision would enable a more systematic use of results-based planning and management. As mentioned above, it would also allow for a modification of the NESP targets to fit the ANDS.

Finally, despite the MoE's and IIEP's efforts to encourage participation of all stakeholders in the development of NESP-I, the MoE may have sought to go further to build ownership around the national plan. Large parts of the NESP-I had been written by national TAs and international advisers, as opposed to MoE civil servants. Revising the NESP-I was an opportunity to continue this 'Afghanization' process.

From the outset, the MoE made the political decision to produce NESP-II with less technical assistance than it had called on for NESP-I. For the first nine months after this decision, MoE organized its planning process without external support and produced a first draft of NESP-II (2010–2014) in Dari. The DoPE coordinated the process and gave technical inputs. The DoPE's strength was remarkable – during the planning phase for NESP-I, it had been reliant on IIEP. Its self-confidence may simply have stemmed from the experience gained with NESP-I development and the relative success of NESP-I (Shah, 2010: 22). Based on previous experience, the MoE departments were consulted throughout and actively contributed to the draft plan. This was essential to ensure that the situation analysis, and the suggested policies and strategies, emerged from the MoE staff who were in charge of implementing them. The MoE managed this complex process very efficiently, which indicates that its technical capacity had indeed increased significantly since the development of NESP-I. This time, the technical support requested from

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IIEP was a lot more targeted, specific, and technical. For example, IIEP supported the development of an Afghanistan-specific projection and simulation model. This tool was developed by a team composed of a small number of DoPE staff and one IIEP specialist (in line with the CD principles mentioned earlier). The DoPE had an indispensable role in providing data and information. The development work was coupled with training sessions and the tool was ultimately used to generate scenarios for policy dialogue at the MoE.

Like the MoE's other close technical partners, IIEP also gave support by commenting on the draft NESP-II at various stages and editing the document in English. It goes without saying that any ministry developing a plan would resort to copy-editing and share drafts with partners for comments.

NESP-II was not solely written by the MoE, since many advisors from many agencies commented on the drafts. But the fact that the plan was initially drafted in Dari[35] is a strong sign that the MoE essentially owned and drove the process. The MoE also made good use of its recent technical breakthroughs, such as the 2007 School Survey and EMIS with corresponding projection and simulation models, the Staff and Teacher Registration System, and the recent school maps. For the first time, the Ministry could base its planning on facts instead of estimations, a profoundly satisfying development for IIEP, which since the beginning of the partnership had argued that this be a key technical objective, and had provided advice and training workshops on, for example, the projection and simulation model.

Although an advanced draft of the plan exists, NESP-II was not officially launched at the time of writing in October 2010. It is too early to analyse a process that is still going on. Nevertheless, it can be said that several internal processes have delayed the release of NESP-II. During October 2009, the EDB and the MoE asked an international team of consultants to carry out an education sector analysis, whose final report was presented in July 2010. This sector analysis has been conceived as a contribution to the process by which the Government of Afghanistan seeks endorsement of the EFA-FTI for NESP-II. The MoE has taken heed of the conclusions of this sector analysis and of the NESP-II assessment that

35. Dari is one of Afghanistan's two main languages and has traditionally been used in the state administration. The other main language is Pashto. A number of minority languages exist as well.

was linked to it. The assessment noted that NESP-II was over-ambitious and not operational enough, and hence recommended revising it. The MoE has therefore introduced three funding scenarios (low, medium, and high) for the NESP-II, and developed a draft Interim Plan for 2011–2013, a separate document but fully aligned with the NESP-II. The Interim Plan is based on the low funding scenario. Accordingly, the Interim Plan targets are lower and activities are prioritized. At the time of writing, this Interim Plan is undergoing appraisal by local donors, a process expected to result in formal endorsement of the plan, followed by FTI membership. NESP-II is expected to be finalized once the Interim Plan has been endorsed.

What Afghanistan's MoE stands to gain from the FTI process is still not clear, as Shah (2010) writes:

> There is a different understanding of FTI partnership by the ministry's leadership who are perhaps attaching much too expectation in terms of funding. The ministry appears to consider FTI to be a source of funding that would fill the financial gap between the strategic plan and its implementation. In fact, FTI partnership is primarily about demonstrating commitments by the government of a country to achieve the targets of FTI EFA and, secondarily, supporting the country from its catalytic fund for this purpose. What the FTI catalytic fund can offer in case its conditions are fulfilled by the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) may not be enough for the implementation of even one of the programmes of the draft revised NESP. So far the biggest single expenditure of FTI funds has been in Kenya, which was over US$150 million for three years, while the financial demand presented in the revised NESP is gigantic (Shah, 2010: 35).[36]

4.9 Looking ahead: development of sustainable national capacities, 2010– ?

Looking at the evolution of the MoE as an institution over the eight years since 2002 greatly helps in appreciating what has changed and what still needs to change. The MoE's institutional management and technical capacity was understandably very weak immediately after the fall of

36. In the revised FTI Guidelines, the Catalytic Fund may be closed and converted into the EFA Fund. The 'gigantic' financial demand in the revised NESP-II is US$8.4 billion for the high funding scenario, and US$5.6 billion for the low funding scenario over a period of five years.

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the Taliban: it was facing management difficulties in the early stages of reconstruction and was not able to carry out its mandate properly. Its decision in 2005 to remedy this situation by developing a sector plan was already a clear sign of improvement in political leadership, and a sign of confidence in its own mounting technical capacity. As of 2010, the MoE had produced two national plans, made significant progress (especially with regard to access to education, but also for instance in terms of management at the central level), convened one important joint implementation review meeting with all its partners (the EDF in early 2008), and is demonstrating the will and capacity to lead the donor group. This is a truly remarkable development given the dire challenges affecting Afghanistan.

The keys to this positive evolution are strong national commitment to take the lead in the development of the education sector, and increased capacity. The capacity gaps, however, are still enormous, particularly at the sub-national levels. At the central MoE level, quite a lot of progress has been made, but the capacity of individuals remains greater than the capacity of the MoE as an institution. As discussed in previous sections, recourse to national technical assistance has also made it possible to partly fill the capacity gap, but probably not in a sustainable way. At the provincial level the capacity gap is wider, and worsened by the isolation and security situation of many provinces. Given that the provincial and district level is where the MoE's service delivery is or should be happening, this is also where the MoE and its partners ought to make the greatest future investments.

Capacities to plan, implement, and monitor progress therefore need to be consolidated at the central level and further developed at provincial and district levels on a large scale. Based on this observation, IIEP and the MoE decided to partly dedicate their recently initiated, DANIDA-funded CD project to establishing a national training programme in educational planning under MoE leadership. For the first time in the post-Taliban period, the MoE will be developing its own training capacity for planning. With support from IIEP, the Afghan MoE staff who were involved in the NESP-I and NESP-II formulation processes will be trainers in this programme – an important symbol of national empowerment – and over the coming years, the programme will be rolled out at the provincial level, where 300 educational planners should be trained (slightly fewer than 10 per province).

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4.10 Lessons learned: the IIEP model of capacity development

Throughout its partnership with the MoE, which as of 2010 had lasted eight years, IIEP has learned a number of lessons that are proposed here as the IIEP model of capacity development.

1. Need for political leadership and national ownership

IIEP's work with the MoE reflected the Ministry's effort to try to achieve education for all regardless of the social and political divides. The principle was that education could lay the foundation for a more united nation. Building such ownership can be an issue within a political context that is fragmented and polarized; success therefore requires strong political leadership in the plan formulation process.

2. Advocacy

CD agencies have a key role to play in advocacy and networking, both with the MoE leadership and with other international stakeholders, whose alignment is crucial because they pay for most of the MoE's development budget. IIEP has continuously provided advice and encouragement to the MoE and its partners to secure political will for embarking on sector-wide planning (linked to poverty reduction through the ANDS), aiming for greater alignment and harmonization around the strategies in the national sector plan. Within the MoE, IIEP has advocated for maximal stakeholder consultation and involvement in the plan formulation; and for developing an adequate EMIS and databases to make planning information-based.

3. Taking the long route to capacity development

CD in educational planning needs to be designed with a long-term perspective, and also with regards to funding. The complexity of educational planning tasks requires a large portfolio of competencies to be developed, ranging from very technical ones, such as statistics, databases, or report writing, to more generic ones, such as leadership, coordination, and language and computer skills, all of which takes time. Time is also required to nurture the mutually trusting relationships that proved so central in IIEP's work with the MoE, as when Minister Atmar decided to pursue developing the NESP-I based on IIEP's participatory model. Finally, IIEP also needed time to better understand the Afghan context, which should always be taken as the starting point.[37]

37. As enshrined in the first of the 10 OECD-DAC *Principles for Good Engagement in Fragile States* (OECD-DAC, 2007).

4. *Flexibility in implementation and funding is a must*

Especially in so-called fragile contexts like Afghanistan, flexibility in implementation modalities and use of project funds is a prerequisite for efficiency. Donors play a key role here in permitting reasonable deviations and changes of plans. CD agencies need to combine patience during less opportune periods with a readiness to switch gears when windows of opportunity present themselves. Flexibility can also be furthered by employing a variety of CD methods, which reduces vulnerability to disruptions for security reasons and changes in political leadership or staff.

5. *A variety of capacity development methods*

Short training seminars are just one among many CD modalities. IIEP provided dovetailed coaching and accompaniment to the MoE by sending consultants to sit and do planning work with MoE officers. This was done throughout the formulation of the NESP-I, but also during its implementation and monitoring phase and during the formulation of the NESP-II. A small core of DoPE officers was trained in depth at IIEP's Advanced Training Programme in educational planning and management, a long-term investment in human capital that enabled the DoPE to take qualified leadership in the NESP planning process. Finally, IIEP provided continuous advice to the MoE over the years on appropriate structures and arrangements for planning.

6. *Hands-on learning by doing yields better results*

What makes CD most effective is to work with MoE staff on their real-life assignments such as the development of a sector plan, the drafting of implementation progress reports, or the development of a simulation and projection model addressing the specificities of the education sector. This requires more resources, but focusing on processes as well as products proves to be a better investment.

7. *National training capacity is essential for self-reliance*

Historically, the Afghan state apparatus has tended to be over-reliant on foreign support. The long-term aim of foreign CD agencies should therefore be to help their Afghan counterparts achieve technical self-reliance. This will allow the MoE to develop a vision for national educational development that brings people together. IIEP's contribution is to help develop national institutional capacity for further domestic CD. Its projected work with the MoE (in 2011–2013) will result in designing

an Afghanistan-specific training programme in educational planning and management, developing corresponding training materials in national languages, and training trainers who will, in turn, become able to train large numbers of Afghan educational planners and managers, not only at central but also at provincial level.

Chapter 5

Capacity development, challenges, achievements, and next steps from the MoE's perspective

Mohammad Aref Arefee

5.1 Introduction

> When I first came to the Ministry of Education (MoE) and joined the Department of Planning and Evaluation (DoPE) in 2002, there were only two broken desktop computers. The DoPE staff used old instruments for their daily work such as pens and paper in an absolutely traditional and out of date manner. Now, in 2010 almost everybody in the department has access to a computer and internet. They have developed several systems such as the Planning System, EMIS, new processes and procedures. The Ministry has developed National Education Strategic Plans which was led and coordinated by DoPE staff ... (MoE Human Resource Department staff member, author interview, March 2010).

This quotation is an example of a success story from the MoE, highlighting achievements in the development of MoE capacities – capacities vital to delivering quality education to the millions of knowledge-craving students across the country.

CD is a strategic factor in development and reconstruction in post-conflict settings such as Afghanistan. It should include 'the capacity to plan, manage, implement and account for the results of policies and programmes critical for achieving development objectives' (*Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*, 2005). Yet in spite of its achievements, the Afghan education system still faces daunting challenges. Lack of proper capacity in the MoE is a key obstacle to achieving education objectives, and the Ministry has therefore put CD at the top of its agenda.

The Afghan Constitution mandates MoE to provide quality education services to all children across the country. The ability or capacity of MoE to deliver on public demands depends on its human

resource, systems and organizational settings, financial resources to fund education programmes, and more importantly communication with public and education stakeholders on issues related to education.

The MoE has established a broad range of programmes and activities to improve its capacity at individual, organizational, and institutional levels, and to be able to deliver services in a challenging context (see *Chapter 2*). The Ministry leadership realized from the early days of the reconstruction of the education system that to achieve EFA goals in Afghanistan and improve access to and quality of education, it had to (1) improve the competencies and performance of individual employees, (2) enhance organizational performance, (3) strengthen institutional capacities, and (4) educate and train children and adults to contribute to the improvement of social and economic conditions and political stability of the country.

The Ministry considers itself responsible for taking all four dimensions into consideration in making the needed policies, adopting the relevant strategies, and establishing short- and long-term training and programmes for the development of MoE capacity.

In this chapter (written in 2010) we examine the CD achievements of the MoE since 2002, its challenges, lessons learned, and plans and strategies for the future.

5.2 MoE capacity development achievements, 2002–2010

In the period between 2002 and 2010, the MoE managed to provide access to education for approximately 7 million students, compared with a starting point of little more than 1 million (MoE, 2010*b*). To do so, the Ministry recruited and trained thousands of teachers, provided millions of textbooks, rehabilitated educational facilities, and improved systems and administrative services.

The education system had lost almost all of its infrastructure and human resources during three decades of civil war and political instability. The Ministry started to reconstruct the system and develop the relevant capacities immediately after the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001. The first priority of the MoE was to respond to urgent need and demand for education, and it conducted short-term CD training courses with this in mind. When the relative stability of the education system had been secured in 2005, the Ministry began planning for CD on the basis of a

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long-term strategy, which is reflected in the National Education Strategic Plans, NESP-I and NESP-II.

The MoE developed the first NESP (2006–2010) in 2006 with technical support provided by IIEP. The first NESP development process was led by MoE staff and formally launched in February 2008 at the Education Development Forum (EDF). The main objectives of NESP development were to create a common vision and a policy framework for the education system on the basis of a series of policy commitments – the Afghan National Constitution (1382[38]/2001), the EFA goals, and the Interim Afghan National Development Strategy (I-ANDS) (2006) for the education sub-sector. This was to give systemic direction to MoE development activities, ensure better coordination among different MoE sections, and serve as a donor coordination and aid alignment tool.

The MoE revised the first NESP and developed the second NESP (2010–2014) in 2009 in the light of the lessons learned from three years of implementation of the first NESP and new national and international political developments such as the Paris Conference for Afghanistan in 2008.[39] The revision process was also led by MoE civil servants and national technical advisors. The NESP-I and NESP-II processes contributed to developing the educational planning and management capacities of MoE civil servants and national advisors, enabling the MoE to work with less technical support from international organizations and partners.

In the course of the NESP development exercise, the MoE has developed or adopted policies that were formerly non-existent or unclear. One example is the policy for CBE, developed jointly by the MoE and CBE-providing NGO partners. The MoE's CBE policy aimed to create a framework in which the MoE and its partners would collaborate to provide education services that complement each other and are integrated into a national education system. Many of the NGO partners have aligned their CBE programmes with the MoE policy (see *Chapter 6* for an NGO perspective on this process). In a second example, the MoE has developed regulations for private school operation, facilitating private sector investment in education and enabling many private schools to be established.

38. The year according to Afghanistan's official calendar.
39. The Declaration of the Paris Conference (2008) explicitly supported the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), which includes the education sub-sector.

A daunting challenge for any development of the education sector was the lack of credible data for planning and decision-making; in response, the MoE developed an EMIS in 2006. In late 2005, the first survey plan and questionnaire was designed by MoE staff with the help of a national advisor and some technical support from donors. The database for the survey data was developed by an Iranian software company, who also helped set up the network and database server. The software was designed to input the survey data into the computers and generate reports.

The aim of the first comprehensive school survey in 2006 was simply to collect data on schools and students. The school survey was a major milestone, providing much-needed data and information for better management of the education system. The survey methodology and questionnaire were modified in 2007, mainly by MoE staff supported by the EMIS advisor, and a new and more robust database was designed. In order to sustain the flow of information from schools to provincial and central levels, headmasters were trained to fill in the survey forms and to report.

The EMIS has not only provided the MoE management with a much-needed planning and monitoring tool but has also helped reduce corruption, contributed to human resource development at all levels, and helped streamline processes and procedures. It has also helped develop and enhance capacity in a number of areas. Information collection has become needs-driven, and the capacity to process, analyse, share, and disseminate information has been improved, reducing overlap in activities. New data visualization techniques, including mapping and geographic information systems (GIS), have improved decision-making processes. Lastly, it has enabled managers to use information at the policy and implementation levels, and has led to better coordination and resource allocation.

For public financial management, the MoE at the central level and in all the provinces uses the Afghanistan Financial Management System (AFMIS) developed by the MoF. The MoE has been preparing and implementing programme budgets since 2006. The AFMIS provides a solid base for MoE finance staff to plan, implement, and monitor programmes and provincial budgets. This has been possible only with the support of national TAs embedded in the finance department and periodic input from international advisors. The finance department

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enters the programme budget into the system after the annual budget has been approved for the national and provincial levels. Allocations and transactions are recorded at the provincial and central level. The system provides programme managers and MoE leadership with updates on budget expenditure and on any obstacles to budget implementation. Through AFMIS, the MoF has access to all ministries' financial data, enabling it to take necessary action for public financial management.

MoF and donors have suspected that ghost teachers exist on the MoE payroll. Since 2007, the MoE has been using a staff registration and payroll system to improve transparency and accountability in recruitment and payment. At the launch of the system, all MoE staff at central and provincial levels were physically verified, received ID cards, and were registered in the system. Bank accounts have been opened for all staff and the salaries of over 70,000 staff are now paid by bank transfer.

Teacher competency is at the core of MoE capacity. The MoE's end product is graduating students; their learning achievements and maximization of their potential depend on how well skills and knowledge have been transferred to them. A main obstacle to improving access to and quality of education is the shortage of qualified teachers, especially women. According to EMIS figures, 73 per cent of the teachers are 13th grade graduates or lower (MoE, 2010*b*). In principle, a teacher must be at least a 14th grade graduate with a teaching diploma to be recruited in the provinces, and must hold at least a bachelor's degree in Kabul and some other provinces, but most of the teachers do not meet these criteria. The Ministry established short-term teacher training programmes such as In-Service Teacher Training (INSET), mainly with financial and technical support from the World Bank and USAID, in order to address urgent training needs. This short-term training does not meet the long-term requirements for a quality education, but it has helped the teachers improve teaching methods and knowledge of the subject-matter.

In order to establish a long-term CD programme for the teachers, the MoE has established teacher training colleges in all provinces to provide in-service and pre-service training programmes. A new teacher education curriculum is being developed and introduced. Teacher education support centres are being established and made operational at district level to take the training closer to teachers, particularly women, who cannot reach the training programmes otherwise. In close cooperation with the Independent Civil Service Commission, the MoE has established

criteria for teachers' remuneration, which link the level of education and competencies to the grade and pay scale.[40] In implementing the new Pay and Grade (P&G) system, the MoE conducted teacher competency tests for approximately 44,000 teachers with grade 14 qualification or higher in 2009. Over 42,000 of them were accepted into the new P&G system. In 2010, all teachers with a grade 12 certificate took a teacher competency test, and those who successfully passed are being adapted to the new pay scale. There are two criteria for their assessment: teaching methodology (skills and knowledge), and the specialized subject-matter knowledge that they teach. Teacher competency test results are analysed to develop teacher training programmes more relevant to the teachers' needs. The combination of CD programmes with incentive schemes is expected to produce better results.

The capacity to develop a relevant, quality curriculum is a primary concern for the MoE as it determines what sorts of values and human resources are developed. Students' learning achievements depend not only on how well skills and knowledge have been transferred to them, but also on teaching the right knowledge and skills for their daily lives and for Afghanistan's reconstruction and development.

The development of a new curriculum and textbooks for primary and secondary general and Islamic education, with the financial and technical support of MoE international partners, is another success story. The old curriculum and textbooks were no longer relevant to socio-political and educational development needs at national and international levels. A new curriculum based on the education system's needs has now been developed and will regularly be revised and updated by MoE staff, drawing on the latest developments in education, science, technology, and pedagogy.

Curriculum development requires time and competent specialists. Previously, the MoE's entire Curriculum Department had only 37 writers with, at most, a bachelor's degree in one of the subjects required. (Some countries deploy around 100 experts or teachers to develop one textbook.) To address this capacity gap, the Ministry recruited dozens of national TAs to develop civil servant capacity and accelerate development of the new textbooks, which students needed urgently. These civil servants and national experts were exposed to curriculum development in other

40. A newly graduated teacher with a grade 12 qualification will now receive a salary of 6,500 Afghanis (US$143) per month while a newly graduated teacher with a BA qualification will receive 8,000 Afghanis (US$177) per month.

countries and went to Jordan, Iran, and Turkey for training in curriculum development and textbook writing. New textbooks are being developed based on active learning approaches and experiences learned from other countries.

The Ministry chose these countries because as developing, Muslim countries they share cultural similarities with Afghanistan and at the same time have experience in educational reform similar to that of Western developed countries. Dari/Farsi is a national language of both Afghanistan and Iran, so the Afghan experts were able to easily communicate with Iranian specialists during the training. The new textbooks not only promote subject knowledge but also include cross-cutting issues such as human rights, gender, anti-narcotics, environmental protection, civic education, and peace-building. They are available in the two main languages, Dari and Pashto. Language textbooks for other local languages such as Uzbek, Turkmen, Balochi, Pashayi, Nuristani, Pamiri, and Gujori are also being developed to be taught in schools where the local population speak the language in question.

The Ministry introduced Public Administration Reform (PAR) in 2006 in order to restructure and improve its organizational efficiency and institutional capacity. The old MoE structure was out of date and incompatible with the NESP-I. Working closely with the Civil Service Commission, the MoE structure was reviewed and revised in the light of the NESP-I programme structure and modern management practices. A new structure with new terms of reference (ToRs) for all departments and employees was developed and implemented in 2008. Along with the administration reform, the Ministry is also implementing a new P&G scheme that includes merit-based recruitment (discussed in *Section 5.6.2*).

In close cooperation with the donors, the MoE established the Education Development Board (EDB) in 2008 in order to create an efficient mechanism for coordinating policies and programmes of, and improving relations between, the Ministry, donors, and private sector and civil society education partners. Its main objectives were to (1) support the leadership and oversight of education programmes, (2) provide a platform for policy dialogue between the Ministry and donors, (3) support establishment of effective policy frameworks, (4) strengthen alignment and harmonization of development activities in education, and (5) advocate for aid coordination.

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In the 2010 London conference on Afghanistan, the donor conference participants agreed to support:

> the Government of Afghanistan's plans for more coherent and better coordinated development. This involves aligning key ministries into development and governance clusters and refining the Afghan National Development Strategy development priorities, in particular infrastructure, rural development, human resources development, agriculture and the main areas of governance (Government of Afghanistan, 2010).

On the basis of this agreement, the ministries involved in human resource development (the MoE, MoHE, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, Ministry of Women's Affairs, and MoF) came together in the Human Resource Development Cluster. EDB was an effective coordination platform between the MoE and international donors and education partners. The EDB members decided to expand the board in order to cover all ministries and international partners involved in human resource development; in March 2010 it was re-formed and renamed the Human Resource Development Board (HRDB). This is an example of a successful MoE coordination platform whose member base is now broadened to ensure alignment of the work of different sectoral ministries in the education sector and human resource development – not just the MoE – as well as development partners and the MoF. The HRDB consists of a steering committee, five technical working groups, and two task forces.[41] It convenes regular monthly meetings.

5.3 The challenges of capacity development

Few organizations in more 'normal' contexts expand the scale of their programmes beyond 30 per cent each year, since developing capacity to cater for this expansion is usually seen as not feasible. The MoE has been faced with a demand to increase the size of its services seven-fold over the past eight years – nearly 100 per cent each year for seven years.

The MoE is mandated by Afghanistan's Constitution to make quality education accessible to all, and parents have shown tremendous enthusiasm for sending their children to school over the past years. The

41. The working groups are (1) General and Islamic education, (2) Curriculum development and teacher education, (3) TVET, (4) Literacy, and (5) Education management. The task forces are (1) Gender mainstreaming and (2) Employment support.

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number of students has increased in the past eight years from nearly 1 million in 2001 to nearly 7 million in 2009, and it is this almost 100 per cent annual increase that requires a similar increase in MoE capacity and resources to properly respond to growing need. Despite this progress, 42 per cent of school-age children, mainly girls, still do not have access to education. Unfortunately, less attention has been paid in recent years (by both government and donors) to developing adequate capacity and resources to meet the demand, resulting in a gap between the demand and supply.

The MoE and its education partners need to collectively answer this question: Should we wait for proper MoE capacity to be developed first and then provide adequate resources for expanding education programmes to reach out-of-school children and improve the quality of existing services, or should we provide the necessary funding and technical support to the MoE to address the supply gap? Parents and children want access to quality education as their constitutional right. Parents have been and will be sending their children to school, whether the MoE has the capacity and resources or not. The international commitments of EFA and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) impose a moral obligation on the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to fulfil this need. Despite tremendous efforts by the Ministry and its international and national partners to enhance MoE capacity, it has yet to fully meet the increasing demand for education.

What are the main challenges to increasing Afghan children's access to quality education? While 76 per cent of all government civil servants are MoE employees,[42] only 12 per cent of the national core budget in 2010 (1389) – US$523 million out of $4.5 billion – is allocated to education.[43] The MoE estimates a cost of around US$8 billion over five years (US$1.6 billion each year) to implement the education development programmes of the NESP-II (2010–2014), using the high funding scenario. In this scenario, the Ministry needs to recruit 27,200 new teachers and administrative staff each year. However, because of national financial resource limitations, budget constraints, and the extreme budget needs of other sectors such as security and health, the MoF agreed to budget only

42. 79 per cent of the total MoE staff are teachers.
43. MoE, Department of Finance, internal report, 2010.

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for 10,000 new positions in 2010, as part of the ordinary budget.[44] This is one of the main reasons why the MoE is unable to implement all planned development programmes, including CD activities, and hence cannot respond to the people's increasing demands for quality education.[45]

On the other hand, the MoE was not able to spend even this inadequate development budget properly, due to government and donors' bureaucratic procedures, insecurity, and inadequate capacity at sub-national level. It spent only 44 per cent of the core development budget (US$77.3 million out of $175.3 million) in 2009 (1388).[46]

A main reason for this is poor technical MoE capacity, rooted in pervasive illiteracy resulting from decades of political instability and violence, and recruitment of qualified technical staff by donors, NGOs, and private sector companies who provide much higher salary levels than the MoE. This leaves the Ministry unable to identify and recruit competent employees and hence unable to plan, manage, and implement its education projects and CD activities. This is a vicious circle: since the MoE's capacity is low, it cannot spend the allocated budget, and conversely the low budget means that it cannot improve its capacity.

Allocation and approval of the development budget is done on an annual basis. In recent years, parliamentary budget approval delays have resulted in procurement delays and low budget expenditure. The complicated bureaucratic national procurement law and process form another major constraint on spending the available budget and implementing development programmes. It usually takes about 4 out of almost 11 months of a fiscal year to get a project approved and the requested budget released.[47] The projects can be implemented only during four to six months of the year, due to impassable roads, shortage of transportation, and cold or harsh weather in remote areas, with the result that few development projects are completed on time.

44. The Afghan government is able to fund only around 65 per cent of the ordinary budget from internal revenue; the remaining ordinary budget and all the development budget is funded through international assistance. Afghanistan will remain dependent on international assistance in the medium to long term.
45. MoE staff, author interview, June 2010.
46. MoE internal report, 2010.
47. MoE, Procurement Department, author interview, March, 2010.

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Despite these challenges, MoE budget expenditure capacity has seen constant growth over the last five years. *Table 1* illustrates the nominal growth in budget expenditure, in millions of US dollars.

Table 1. Approved development budget, actual expenditure, and growth rate

Fiscal year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010[a]
Approved development budget	61.10	122.10	140.00	175.30	162.90
Actual expenditure	16.40	30.33	54.80	77.30	73.68
Actual expenditure as percentage of development budget	27%	25%	39%	44%	45%
Growth rate in actual expenditure of development budget		85%	81%	41%	-5%

[a] Expenditure for 9 months only, from March 2010 to November 2010.[48]

Table 1 indicates that investment in CD during previous years has produced results in the years that follow. According to this table, MoE capacity to spend the development budget has improved regularly over the last five years.

Another pervasive CD challenge is a lack of staff commitment, mainly for financial reasons. First, the majority of MoE employees are not paid enough to sustain themselves and their families. Civil servants used to be paid around US$60–160 equivalent per month, which was not enough to support themselves and their families. Starting in 2009, after the implementation of the P&G scheme, MoE staff salaries have at least doubled, ranging from US$130 for an entry-level officer to US$650 for department heads. But since the majority of civil servants are in low grades, their salaries are still inadequate,[49] which affects their commitment. Second, nation-wide insecurity and political instability have affected the overall atmosphere. People, including government staff, do not feel secure and are not optimistic. This is a key factor in the lack of effectiveness and efficiency in Afghanistan's public sector. Third, civil servants and TAs have vastly different salaries, responsibilities, and roles in decision-making. In spite of suggested policy modifications and some progress in this respect, TA recruitment apparently is still not

48. The fiscal year in Afghanistan begins on March 20 (Hamal 1, the first month of the year) and ends on March 19 (Hoot 29, the last month of the year).
49. A typical Afghan family with seven family members needs at least US$500 per month if they own a house, more if they do not.

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based entirely on the MoE's real needs or on transparent procedures.[50] This means that it can neither attract high-capacity candidates as civil servants, nor retain those whose technical or academic capacities have been improved through training and scholarships.[51] The Ministry is trying to mitigate the effects of this disparity through the P&G scheme and administrative reform to encourage staff to enhance their skills. Fourth, the increasing cost of living and of basic food items puts pressure on civil servants to seek overtime jobs elsewhere.

Because of low technical capacity and insufficient budget, the MoE depends on international donors and education partners' contributions to fund most of the education programmes and pay the salaries of national TAs and international advisors. However, due to its low technical capacity most international donors circumvent the MoE, instead granting education funding directly to international and national NGOs and private companies.[52] This is an immediate solution to education needs, but slows down the process of strengthening MoE capacity.

In 2008 two units were established to coordinate and align donor policies, programmes, and activities with MoE priorities. These are the EDB (now HRDB) and the Grant Management Unit (GMU). Still, not all donor operations are necessarily aligned with MoE priorities. Some donors do not share their decisions, information, and results with the MoE, which is thus unaware of their activities and achieved results and unable to supervise donor-funded projects and programmes, whether they are aligned with MoE priorities or not, and whether they finally produce the intended results or not.[53]

In addition to inefficient coordination between the MoE and donors, donors commonly prefer to fund projects that generate immediate concrete results, which they can then report as success stories to their respective authorities. Few donors usually invest in programmes with long-term impacts but fewer concrete immediate results. It thus seems essential in future to improve donor–MoE coordination and align donor

50. MoE, Human Resource Department staff, author interview, March, 2010.
51. MoE staff, author interview, March, 2010.
52. Foreign NGOs and companies are often contracted for a service that could easily be implemented by national NGOs, and some donors prefer to award contracts to bidders from their own country.
53. MoE, GMU staff, author interview, March, 2010.

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activities with the education priorities of the MoE, if the MoE and donors are to get proper results and improve the education system.[54]

In spite of a relative increase in girls and women's participation in education, statistical data show that it remains very low. Out of approximately 7 million students in general education, only 37 per cent are female. Out of 170,000 teachers in total, and a total of 217,000 MoE employees, only 29 per cent are female, according to 2009 data (MoE, 2009*a*: 26; MoE, 2010*b*).

There are four main reasons for women's low participation in education:

1. There is a lack of female teachers, especially in rural provinces and districts, in general education schools. This is mainly due to the disconnect in education during the 30 years of war, a low female literacy rate of 12 per cent (MRRD and CSO, 2009: 66), high drop-out rates for girls in the secondary grades, and inadequate investment in the relocation of qualified female teachers from urban centres to rural districts. This is a vicious circle – if girls do not continue secondary education due to a lack of female teachers then there will be no girls graduating from grade 12 to become teachers. This situation requires an intervention in the form of relocation of qualified married female teachers from urban centres to rural schools.
2. Security issues. Even in Kabul women do not feel secure, let alone in the provinces and districts. This has caused a drop in the number of females in education, especially at provincial and district levels. In spite of the measures taken by the Ministry for women at these levels, they are not able to take part in most of the CD and education programmes. (These measures include paying remote area allowances for female teacher trainers and incentive payments for female students of teacher training colleges, as well as providing dormitories.)
3. The male-dominant Afghan culture is a major challenge to women's participation in all social life, including education. Afghans in the rural areas traditionally think of women as housewives whose main responsibility is reproduction and providing comfort for the family. Even if some families agree in principle with women's participation in social activities, they are usually unhappy with the environments

54. MoE, GMU staff, author interview, March, 2010.

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where men and women come into direct contact. They prefer professions that, from a traditional point of view, appear to be more relevant to women, such as medicine, teaching, and nursing, jobs that involve little direct contact between males and females. This is a positive factor that helps the Ministry attract more women to the profession of teaching, mainly in urban areas. At the same time, women are able to work independently and separately in these jobs. But the male-dominant culture also means that the number of female students in secondary education schools and higher education institutes, and hence the number of graduates, is very low.

4. It is stereotypically assumed that women are not suitable for planning and management positions, which are usually viewed as male jobs. Fewer women than men are employed in these positions, in spite of the rapid increase in the ratio of female teachers (from 0 per cent in 2001 to 29 per cent in 2008) and their relatively active role in teaching. Many women themselves believe that even if qualified they would not be employed in managerial positions, and therefore rarely apply for them. At the same time, the authorities usually prefer to recruit men, assuming that women are unable to manage these kinds of obligations either because of low ability or social constraints, since most women experience social and family pressures that restrict their performance.

All these issues have limited women's opportunities in educational management. In order to facilitate and enhance women's role and increase their opportunities in education, the Ministry has taken a number of measures:

1. Campaigns to increase public awareness of the positive effects of women's participation in education, to encourage families to send their girl children to schools and to take an active part in teaching as well as school management and administration through school councils (*shuras)* and parent–teacher associations.
2. Mainstreaming of gender in policy, planning, and programming, closely monitored through EMIS gender-segregated information.
3. A policy of taking the school to the children in order to reduce the barrier of long-distance travel on foot for girls. Also, boundary walls and water and sanitation facilities are now part of the school construction package for girls' schools.
4. Dormitories for female participants in CD activities and other programmes at the central and provincial levels.

5. Incentives for women and girls who take part in teacher education programmes and teach in provinces with few female teachers; dormitories and financial incentives are planned for female teachers, teacher education students, and secondary students from the districts.
6. Lastly, positive discrimination in favour of female applicants for advertised MoE positions. If male and female candidates have similar qualifications, the Ministry would prefer to recruit the female candidates to departments with low female staff numbers. The Ministry would also set aside some of the conditions for a position if a female candidate applies.

The MoE hopes that these measures will reduce the disparity between men and women.[55]

Security issues keep the MoE from implementing CD programmes in some of the country's insecure provinces. Between January 2006 and December 2008, 1,153 attacks were reported: grenades, 'night letters' or verbal threats against teachers, and killings of students and education personnel. According to the MoE, 230 people died as a result of attacks on schools, students, and personnel between 2006 and 2007 (Glad, 2009: 2). In 2007–2008, around 481 schools were either closed or burned down in these provinces, and around 336,000 children have lost access to education. It is noteworthy, however, that around 220 schools were reopened as a result of the cooperation of local communities with the MoE (MoE, 2010*a*: 29).

Teachers and administrative staff are often unable to work in these areas. The same goes for international partners: most national and international advisors are not allowed to or willing to go beyond Kabul or the provincial capitals.

Preparing CD programmes for regional and provincial staff in the secure provinces and in Kabul is one of the available possibilities. Recently, some local education authorities have found ways to negotiate with insurgents in order to open the schools and implement educational programmes. The devolution of authority for decision-making to local education offices has been an efficient but temporary solution, but would not be applicable as a long-term strategy, because (1) these authorities have to modify the curriculum in line with local insurgents' opinions,

55. MoE, Human Resource Department staff, author interview, March 2010.

which affects the quality of education; (2) the insurgents do not allow girls to participate beyond primary schools, so the Ministry would be unable to train female students in secondary schools in order to provide more local female teachers; and (3) the results of these negotiations are not always sustainable and will change as insurgent policy changes toward government authorities in the insecure provinces. These are all reasons for developing a long-term and nation-wide strategy.

Due to low technical capacity the Ministry has not established a proper M&E system to monitor programme implementation and evaluate results and long-term programme impacts. The Ministry has implemented many CD programmes and trained a great number of staff, but how many have relevant and sufficient capacity – in each section, at each level, and in the MoE as a whole – is unknown. The lack of an M&E system has left the Ministry unable to organize and design the CD training and programmes properly. Moreover, these programmes have not been based on a needs assessment of the education system. Hence it remains unknown whether these CD programmes have had any long-term effective impacts on the MoE overall capacity or not.[56]

5.4 Capacity development impacts and lessons learned

The MoE realized from the first days of reconstruction of the educational system in 2002 that CD was a must. CD programmes were its first priority. Lack of professional teachers in schools, shortage of experts to train the teachers and prepare quality textbooks, limited budget, and the lack of an efficient administrative system with updated rules and regulations to provide a conducive educational environment for students were major challenges that needed to be addressed immediately and urgently. The MoE established different CD programmes to enhance each of its required capacities, supported by national and international partners.

The Ministry understood that it faced multi-faceted challenges. On the one hand, it needed to address the urgent demands for educational services for children deprived of education for almost three decades, on the other hand it had to develop capacity for the long-term requirements of the education system. It adopted two measures simultaneously: buying or building the required capacity to address urgent needs, and planning for sustainable and long-term capacity for the Ministry and its civil servants.

56. MoE, DoPE staff, author interview, March 2010.

5.5 Short-term capacity building or 'capacity buying' to address urgent challenges

The Ministry adopted short-term training and recruitment of national and international advisors as a strategy to address the urgent needs of the education system and to improve civil servant capacities though peered working with national TAs and international advisors. These strategies have been mainly focused on CD at the individual level; the resulting achievements and challenges are examined in this section.

The Ministry established short-term individual CD training such as computer literacy, English language, and principles of educational planning and management, usually supported by international education partners. They were conducted in most of the MoE departments, but were not well-designed and usually done in an ad hoc manner.[57] They had only short-term positive effects and did not meet the MoE's long-term CD needs.

The Ministry also regularly sends employees to foreign countries for short-term training in various areas. These programmes have often had many positive effects, being conducted mostly in developing or developed countries with well-equipped and qualified instructors, familiarizing the trainees with the latest developments in those countries.

These programmes have had short-term positive effects at the individual level but no long-term impacts on overall MoE capacity, because they were designed and implemented sporadically. In addition, some of the well-trained civil servant staff leave to take better-paid jobs as TAs at the Ministry or in the private sector. The Ministry needs instead to plan for CD on the basis of a needs assessment and develop and adopt long-term policies and strategies.

Few civil servants had the capacity or the initiative to tackle the challenges the education system faced after 2002. During the political conflicts of the past decades, most education experts left the Ministry, and those who stayed had no opportunity to update their capacity, knowledge, and skills. At the same time, because of the expansion of the job market after the collapse of the Taliban many of the remaining competent Ministry staff were attracted to national and international NGOs and UN

57. MoE staff, author interview, March 2010.

agencies. In response, the Ministry has recruited hundreds[58] of TAs with the financial support of the international donors. These TAs are mostly former Afghan refugees who were living in neighbouring countries and had the opportunity to study at higher education levels or improve their capacities. They have English language and computer skills, which is a minimum requirement for communicating with the donors. The donors have encouraged recruiting these TAs at the central level in order to implement their supported projects.

The use of TAs has had temporary positive effects in addressing the urgent needs of the education system: it has enabled fast implementation of development projects such as teacher training, textbook development, construction projects, and provision of support services such as procurement and financial management. But in the long run, the widespread use of TAs has created new challenges. First, as mentioned earlier, the salary disparities between TAs and civil servants aroused jealousy and mistrust among civil servants: they felt discriminated against by the MoE and gradually became passive and demoralized. Second, the presence of TAs has led some MoE authorities and their counterpart TAs to believe that the civil servants are not competent enough. Consequently, civil servants are marginalized in decision-making, which has intensified their demoralization.[59] Third, TA salaries are enormously expensive.[60] Moreover, they are secured through the core and external development budgets, which is not sustainable, as their recruitment and salaries are temporary and depend on donor commitment. This also drains funding from other development activities. Fourth, because TAs are contracted for a short time, they are not committed to the Ministry. They leave abruptly if they find a better job opportunity or when their contracts end. A constant challenge for government organizations including the MoE is that TAs and civil servants with proper capacity are both apt to leave the

58. It is not possible to give a precise figure, because some of these TAs are recruited directly by the donors and some by the different MoE departments without sufficient coordination with the Human Resource Department.
59. MoE civil servant, author interview, March 2010.
60. According to an internal report (2010*c*) by the MoE's Department of Finance, the total cost of TA salaries in 2009 was approximately US$9.4 million per year for around 1,000 TAs (an average of US$783 per TA per month), compared with US$281 million for 214,000 civil servants (an average of US$109 per civil servant per month). These figures show that individual TAs receive salaries around seven times those of individual civil servants.

Ministry, though the civil servants are expected to stay, especially after implementation of the P&G scheme.[61]

For all these reasons, the Ministry assessed the performance of all TAs in 2008 and terminated the contracts of a large number of them, especially in the Curriculum Development Department (CDD), as part of a strategy to use only a small and effective team of TAs to build the capacity of the system and of the civil servants and mentor the civil servants in implementing the new systems.

A third part of the MoE's immediate 'capacity buying' strategy was to recruit international advisors, either directly or through international donors. As with hiring national TAs, this measure aimed first to provide technical advice and assistance to help the Ministry improve its daily performance, and second to help it develop the capacities of the civil servants. This strategy helped the Ministry overcome some of its immediate challenges, but it too generated a number of challenges of its own.

First, international advisors are not familiar with the national and local languages and culture or the socio-political situation of Afghanistan. They need a translator/interpreter to communicate with the Ministry staff, which is time-consuming, and a long time to get familiar with the education situation before they can provide proper advice. Second, they are usually recruited for short-term missions, so do not have the time and opportunity to help civil servants improve their capacities. Third, they receive high salaries that the Ministry cannot afford without donor support; a large amount of the budget is allocated to these salaries instead of education development. Fourth, security problems have affected MoE activities in the insecure areas and provinces. While the provinces and districts need more CD activities and educational services, government staff in these provinces face obstacles in implementing the programmes.

These limitations have affected international consultants and advisors more than the national staff and TAs, because as these international advisors are obvious targets for the insurgents they are not generally able to go beyond the capital.[62]

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61. The salaries of civil servants have at least doubled since implementation of the P&G scheme. This double increase will not fill the disparity between TA salaries and civil servants, but it is a positive measure *per se*.
62. MoE staff, author interview, March 2010.

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However, in order to complement its capacity and accelerate service delivery, the MoE has recruited the services of NGOs and private contractors. It has contracted international and national NGOs to deliver services of the World Bank-funded Teacher Education Program. It also contracts local national and international companies for school construction and supply of education materials and equipment. Some donors – through off-budget programmes directly managed by themselves – have also contracted the services of NGOs and private enterprises to deliver education services.

In many cases, this strategy has been successful and cost-effective in addressing the supply-side capacity gap. For example, the MoE itself was unable to build thousands of schools without deploying private construction companies. Children would remain without access to education for many years if CBE were not supported by NGOs in rural areas. But at the same time, these strategies have faced challenges. For example, off-budget programmes have ignored government systems and coordination mechanisms. Piecemeal education projects have been funded without being aligned with the NESP. CD by the MoE has been stalled when NGOs recruit MoE staff, offering higher salaries, to work on their projects.

This strategy has been essential to improve access to education, and remains so. However, the MoE needs to take the necessary measures to take the lead and ensure that these efforts are well coordinated and aligned with the NESPs and other MoE policies and priorities. In most cases, donors, international and national NGOs, and private contractors have neglected these.

5.6 Long-term strategies to improve MoE capacity

The Ministry has undertaken strategic measures to improve individual competencies as well as organizational and institutional capacities in the education system. So far, increase in access to education has been its first priority, but now it has focused its attention on the quality of education and equity in provision of educational services. This requires the Ministry to adopt long-term and sustainable CD strategies and measures. The inclusion of a CD target in every NESP programme, the establishment of various CD institutes, administration reform, and the P&G scheme are among the measures discussed in this section.

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As stated in the I-ANDS (2005), administration reform was planned after the collapse of the Taliban regime and the Bonn Agreement in 2001 as an essential step towards restructuring and development of the country, transparency and accountability of government institutions, and efficiency of service delivery. Accordingly, all government institutions including the MoE were subject to administration reform. The new organizational structure of the Ministry was designed on the basis of the new educational needs and requirements.

Two fundamental changes took place. The first was restructuring that led to structural expansion of the Ministry along with the expansion of its services. Previously the minister had three deputies. In the new structure, three deputy minister positions were added[63] in order to better coordinate and lead service delivery by the respective departments. In addition to the deputy minister positions, new departments were added at central and provincial levels, such as the Structure and Capacity Development Section in the Human Resource Department to revise structure as the needs arise, conduct CD needs assessment, plan, organize, and lead the CD programmes and training. Another new section was the Strategic Planning and Policy Sub-Department added to the general DoPE to coordinate and lead the planning processes. Positions considered useless have been eliminated from the structure, such as the deputy positions for the heads of departments. These changes resulted in more coordinated and efficient service delivery.

The second change was the development of new rules, regulations, procedures, and ToRs for the departments and individual employees at all levels, on the basis of administration reform principles as well as the Education Law approved in 2008. Previously there had been no clear terms of reference for the departments and individual employees; relationships were unclear, leading to eroding confusions, duplications, and functional interventions between and within departments and between individuals. This reform paved the way for effective and efficient utilization of the full Ministry capacity in delivering educational services, and reduced duplication and confusion among different departments.

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63. This means that six deputies now lead the Ministry: (1) Academic Deputy Minister (for General Education), (2) Administration and Finance Deputy Minister for Administrative and Financial Affairs, (3) Islamic Education Deputy Minister for Islamic Education, (4) Teacher Education, Curriculum and Science and Technology Education Deputy Minister (for the mentioned departments), (5) Technical and Vocational Education Deputy Minister, and (6) Literacy Deputy Minister.

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The P&G scheme is a supplementary programme, implemented along with the administrative reform, to improve the morale of the staff and capacity of government organizations including the MoE at the central and sub-national levels. It is supported by the World Bank and has so far been implemented at the MoE at the central level. It will cover all provinces and districts by the end of the NESP-II time-frame (2010–2014).

The P&G scheme has four elements:

1. Every employee is recruited through a merit-based and open competitive process, so that every qualified person gets an opportunity to apply.
2. The Ministry has developed ToRs of all positions based on the position requirements.
3. Every single employee's performance will be evaluated annually by the heads of the relevant departments or sections against specific performance indicators developed on the basis of their ToRs. Staff promotion is based on evaluation results and the staff member's capacity improvement. This process encourages everybody to enhance their capacity, skills, and knowledge, or they will lose their position.
4. As a result of the P&G scheme, salaries have increased at least twice compared with the previous civil servant salary scales.[64] This should persuade qualified candidates to apply for the positions.[65]

So far, around 10 per cent of the administrative staff has been reappointed within the reformed organizational structure and the P&G scheme,[66] and the salary of over 42,000 teachers has been adapted to the new scheme.

The increase in salaries, the sustainability of government positions, and the competitive basis of the recruitment processes have attracted

64. Previously the civil servants' monthly salaries were approximately 2,900–8,000 Afghanis (US$60–160), but according to the P&G scheme they increased to more than twice the previous salaries at around 6,500–32,500 Afghanis (US$130–650).
65. MoE, HRD staff, author interview, March 2010.
66. The Ministry will reappoint the rest of the existing administrative staff and all teachers by 1391/2012 and will also employ new staff based on the P&G scheme by 1391/2012.

more university graduates and competent candidates to the Ministry.[67] The system also persuades existing staff to enhance their capacity in order to qualify for promotion and pass the annual evaluations. The P&G scheme is thus one mechanism for sustainable CD.

This scheme, however, faces some challenges. First, the wide salary disparities between civil servants and TAs are still a problem for this CD mechanism. At around US$600 per month, the lowest salary of a TA is at least three times more than that of a civil servant. Because of this, the brain drain of civil servants to TA positions will probably continue, endangering the retention of civil servants with proper capacity. This challenge calls for more attention to closing the pay gap, but despite efforts in this respect it has not yet been accomplished, and there are no fixed criteria for the TA salary scales. Second, the P&G budget is, at the time of writing, partially funded (44 per cent) by the international community, mainly the World Bank. This international funding is decreasing, and the P&G scheme is assumed to be fully funded through the ordinary budget in 2012. The MoF expects the gross national income of the government to increase in the coming years through national taxation,[68] but due to deteriorating security tax revenue is decreasing and government income probably will not increase as much as expected. The low gross national income of the government combined with the annual increase in the number of MoE staff over time makes the P&G scheme appear risky. A third challenge is the lack of qualified candidates for announced positions; for this reason, most of the positions are announced more than once in order to identify qualified candidates.[69]

While 74 per cent of the population live in rural areas, only 60 per cent of the total number of school-age children in rural areas have access to education. In addition, whereas in urban areas 48 per cent of children 15 years old and more are literate, only 21 per cent of the same age group is literate in rural areas (MRRD and CSO, 2009: 66), due to the shortage of professional teachers and educational facilities at the decentralized levels.

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67. Previously most MoE employees were grade 12 graduates and lower, but in 2010 more university graduates have been attracted to the Ministry as civil servants. For example, in DoPE, almost half of the recently employed staff are university graduates. The exact figures, however, have not yet been surveyed, and the data are not available in EMIS.
68. MoE, Finance Department staff, author interview, April 2010.
69. MoE, HRD staff, author interview, March 2010.

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The Ministry is gradually decentralizing planning, management, and administration, taking decision-making closer to where educational services are actually delivered. It has already devolved civil servant recruitment to the provincial education departments, as well as planning and decision-making on spending the allocated budget. This will enable provincial and even district-level authorities to align planning decisions (including on CD programmes) with their local priorities, realities, and needs (*Box 7*). So far, most CD programmes have been implemented at the central level, but the decentralized level is in dire need of these in order to carry out its obligations.

Box 7. Decentralization of the selection of teacher education students

Teacher training college (TTC) students used to be selected by the MoHE at the central level through the University Entrance Examination (UEE). During the last decade, even the weakest candidates with the lowest scores in the UEE were admitted to the TTCs, regardless of the subject needs of the schools. As a result, students with low motivation were attracted to a teaching career. After the recent decentralization, these students are now selected through both UEE and MoE processes. Based on consultations with provincial education authorities and past experience, the MoE decided to select teacher education students at the provincial and district levels through a special process based on provincial-level needs for teachers in certain subjects. The provincial authorities recruit the candidates as teachers and then train them in TTCs in in-service programmes. This approach has at least two benefits: since they are recruited at provincial and district levels, the process is expected to attract more competent candidates who wish to study and stay in their provinces and districts, and it is expected to attract more female candidates who are not able to study in other provinces far from their families.

In order to develop and enhance its organizational capacity, the Ministry has developed new systems such as the Educational Planning System[70] and P&G system, and expanded existing systems at central and provincial levels.

Systems development facilitates the MoE's daily work, ensuring that all relevant staff will be regularly trained in line with system requirements. It helps pave the way for sustainable and organized CD at individual and organizational levels. It will also cultivate the collective and organized working culture that is absent from most Afghan organizations.

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70. The Educational Planning System is used in the Strategic and Operational Planning Section of the Department of Planning and Evaluation. It consists of specific mechanisms, procedures, and tools such as projection models and logframes for the educational planning cycle.

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These new systems should be updated and equipped with modern technology and qualified staff but still remain based on the existing systems that are founded in the Ministry's long-standing experience. This makes the process of systems development cheaper and compatible with the overall cultural, economic, and technological conditions and context of education in Afghanistan. It will also secure crucial Ministry ownership of the systems.[71] The EMIS, staff registration and payroll system, and Academic Supervision System[72] are examples of systems that have been updated and further developed with a basis in existing systems.

The Ministry has undertaken to establish CD institutes[73] to improve the capacity of its individual staff through well-designed and organized training programmes (*Box 8*). This is because, as Anton De Grauwe notes, 'lack of individual skills is a core constraint [on the development of education], especially because the governance reforms (towards decentralization) and the advent of new challenges (quality and equity rather than access) may have made the existing skills somewhat redundant' (De Grauwe, 2009: 61). Each of these institutes specializes in one area of education, providing an opportunity for all relevant staff to be trained in a regular manner.

These institutes will provide well-designed, specialized, continuous, and sustainable CD training for all administrative and teaching staff from all over Afghanistan. The Ministry will recruit permanent academic and administrative staff for training and administrative work and prepare curriculum and learning materials. The trainers will be recruited as civil servants and will serve at the institute permanently. Since they will be paid through the ordinary budget and are permanent staff, they will be retained in the Ministry. The curriculum and respective learning and training materials will be based on needs assessments carried out by the institutes. The curriculum and learning materials will be updated regularly on the

71. DoPE staff, MoE, author interview, March 2010.
72. The Academic Supervision System is specifically designed for supervision of teaching and learning in the classrooms. It is used to supervise teaching and its results, and to gauge whether students learn properly as planned.
73. So far, the MoE has established a National Teacher Education Academy and a National Institute for Capacity Development (NICD) respectively in the Teacher Education and Human Resource Departments. Further, it has planned to establish two Teacher Education Institutes in the Literacy Department and the Technical and Vocational Education Departments, a National Institute for Curriculum Development, and a specialized Educational Planning Institute.

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basis of new requirements and developments in the field of education. The TTCs operational in all of the provinces will continuously provide in-service teacher education programmes to enhance the competencies of existing teachers and pre-service teacher education programmes to produce new teachers for recruitment in the schools, to cater for the enrolment of new students. In this way, the Ministry plans to pave the way for sustainable CD and reduce its dependence on international partners and the development budget in the long run.[74]

Box 8. National Institute for Capacity Development

The National Institute for Capacity Development (NICD)* was established in 2009 in the Human Resource Department. This institute is specifically designed to train administrative MoE staff at central and decentralized levels in educational administration and management, and in generic skills through short-term courses on computer literacy and the English language. The Ministry has planned to establish special courses for each field and train the MoE staff on the basis of their needs and respective department priorities. As of 2010, around 20 per cent of the staff at the central level has been trained. The Ministry has planned to train at least 80 per cent of administrative staff from central and provincial levels between 2011 and 2014.

* As of 2010, the institutes are based in the training centre of the Commission of Administration Reform (CAR). The Ministry has planned to construct its own building to be equipped with computer laboratories, library, and separate dormitories for provincial male and female participants.

5.7 Conclusion

Despite MoE success in providing educational services for millions of students, and despite all its CD efforts, around 42 per cent of school-age children are out of school. The main reasons for this are the rapid increase in the school-age population, low MoE capacity, and lack of needed financial resources. In order to reach the EFA goals and improve the quality of education, the MoE needs to provide human resources and capacity in line with the following priorities:

1. ***Long-term strategies:*** Afghanistan, like any other post-conflict setting, is in dire need of enhanced capacity to reconstruct and develop the education system. In recent years, the MoE has implemented many CD programmes, mainly focused on short-term training to improve the capacity of individuals. Having attained many of the set goals, it now needs to plan strategically and mobilize

74. MoE, HRD staff, author interview, March and June 2010.

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all of its own and its partners' facilities to develop more sustainable and relevant capacities for the future. Future CD should therefore focus more on improving the MoE's organizational structure and reforming education administration regulations and processes to improve efficiency. CD policies and long-term strategies should target national and local staff capacity so as to reduce the MoE's dependence on international organizations, NGOs, and advisors. Recruiting national and local staff with adequate technical skills is also more financially viable. Teachers and school staff, and the units responsible for improving school-level capacity, should be strengthened, aiming to increase capacity close to where education takes place. Medium- and long-term planning and funding is thus crucial for success in capacity building.

2. ***Gender equity:*** While half of the population is female, the numbers of female teaching and administrative staff are low, mainly due to women's general low level of capacity. The Ministry should raise public awareness to increase female participation in education, and focus more on addressing female teachers' practical needs. In most parts of the country, lack of female teachers is a main reason for low girls' enrolment, especially at the secondary school level. Investing in female staff capacities and recruiting more female candidates for academic and administrative posts should help in increasing girls' enrolment and women's participation in managing schools.
3. ***Decentralization:*** There is a big gap between central and provincial levels, and there are huge disparities among provinces in terms of access to educational facilities and programmes. For this reason, the Ministry is gradually decentralizing and devolving authority, responsibilities, and decision-making to the provincial, district, and even school levels, in areas such as planning, resource allocation, implementation and its monitoring, staff recruitment, and school supervision. The MoE considers equity a main principle for budget allocations and distribution of posts; decentralization is thus a substantial issue in CD programmes and implementation strategies. Decentralized authorities are in a better position to identify capacity building needs and make proper decisions, and to plan and manage the processes.
4. ***Flexibility:*** Afghanistan as a fragile setting needs more flexibility in planning and implementation of the projects. For many reasons, CD plans will not always be implemented in due time. Sometimes insecurity prevents implementation. Most international and

national advisors and experts are not able or willing to travel on missions to the insecure provinces and areas. For example, in 2009, after a terrorist attack on a UN guesthouse in Kabul, most of the international missions were cancelled and the existing staff left the country. It is thus necessary to plan CD programmes in a flexible manner if they are to be implemented effectively.

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Chapter 6

People come and go, but systems remain: Strengthening the MoE system for community education

Anita Anastacio and Helen Stannard

6.1 Introduction

Forms of community-based education (CBE) have a long history in Afghanistan. Village or 'dehati' schools emerged in 1949 (Samady, 2001: 37) and were used as 'feeder' schools at a time when there were very few official primary schools in existence. These 'feeder' schools only offered grades 1–3; their purpose was to prepare children for entry into the few central primary schools, which also served as administrative hubs. The 'dehati' schools continued to operate through the conflict between the Mujahideen and pro-Russian government forces during 1978–1989, which left about two-thirds of all primary, secondary, and vocational schools either damaged or abandoned by 1990 (Samady, 2001). During the Taliban times of 1996–2001, small 'home-based' schools were operational for boys and girls. They mostly functioned with support from sections of the community who valued education for their children, despite opposition from the Taliban authorities. Some of these schools were supported by NGOs (Mohammed, 2006).

Today, around 20,000 community-based classes are operating in Afghanistan[75] and about 3 per cent of all students in Afghanistan have attended some form of CBS (MoE, 2008: 9). Most of these schools have only one or two classes and deliver early grade instruction to young children. Villages and communities have provided schools for girls and boys in people's homes, mosques, or other venues close to family homes. These have been predominantly established in remote areas which the MoE has been unable to serve. Generally, families allow girls to study within the community rather than walk distances to the formal school (Burde and Linden, 2009).

75. Correspondence with Minister of Education (2006–2008) Hanif Atmar.

The fact that thousands of classes have been established by communities reflects the Afghan people's great thirst for education. These CBSs have a network of support that assists them to offer quality education to the children of Afghanistan. Support is often garnered from remittances, benefactors, and NGOs.[76]

The Partnership for Advancing Community Education in Afghanistan (PACE-A) consists of four international non-governmental organizations (INGOs): CARE, the IRC, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF). Funded by USAID for a period of five years, the partnership's goal is to expand quality learning and life opportunities in Afghanistan for marginalized communities and their children. By April 2011, PACE-A will have provided CBE to 90,000 children, youth, and adults in over 1,000 rural and remote communities in 19 provinces. Under PACE-A, the communities are responsible for providing and maintaining a classroom space, ensuring sustained attendance, selecting and compensating a teacher, and the daily management of the school. PACE-A provides training and ongoing support to the teachers and elected school management committees, supplies the teaching and learning materials, and advocates for their integration into the MoE system.

Together, these four organizations in PACE-A have over 28 years of experience in Afghanistan and in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan. They have pioneered various innovations to increase access to education for marginalized populations, particularly girls, through community participation strategies. From these experiences, they have drawn valuable lessons about how to coordinate and maximize the impact and cost-effectiveness of a multi-agency effort. More importantly, they have developed positive relationships with Afghanistan's MoE at the central, provincial, and district levels over the years. This has been fostered mainly through open exchange of information and joint planning of various projects.

Relationships that are built on trust and respect lay a strong foundation for any CD efforts. As discussed in *Chapter 2*, the core capability to commit and engage underlies any successful CD initiatives.

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76. Organizations such as the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA), CARE, International Rescue Committee (IRC), UNICEF, Save the Children Alliance, CRS, AKF, and Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) support community-based schools.

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PACE-A found that working with MoE officials who demonstrated a willingness to adapt and review their own systems led to better results than efforts that depended on unwilling or uncommitted partners. By the same token, PACE-A staff who were tasked to implement capacity building initiatives with the MoE needed to be willing to impart skill and responsibility and, in effect, eventually make themselves redundant. PACE-A worked to strengthen MoE systems at the central, provincial, and district levels in order to enact MoE's own policy regarding CBE. The success of these efforts across the country varied depending on the parties' mutual agreement on the end goal and the degree to which the MoE took ownership of CD efforts to improve their own systems.

This chapter discusses some of PACE-A's CD initiatives to bring CBSs under the rightful auspices of the MoE. It is a case study based on the personal reflections of the two authors who were closely involved with PACE-A. Helen Stannard worked as its Deputy Chief of Party from April 2006 through to July 2008 in Kabul, while Anita Anastacio served as the Chief of Party from August 2006 through to April 2009. This case study also draws on various sources of PACE-A documentation, workshops, training reports, and publications related to education in Afghanistan.

6.2 Community-based education policy in the making

Hanif Atmar became Afghanistan's Minister of Education around the time that PACE-A started implementing its project in 2006. As a boy, he had benefited from INGO education programmes himself, and went on to work with INGOs, including the IRC, for some years before taking office in the government. He has been an advocate for drawing on international expertise for achieving national goals.

Very soon after his appointment, Atmar began to address the issue of CBSs. To many colleagues in the education sector this did not come as a surprise. Prior to his appointment as Minister of Education, he had served as the Minister for Rural Rehabilitation and Development and was responsible for the launch of the National Solidarity Program that rooted development initiatives and decision-making in local communities. He realized that aside from the 9,000 official MoE schools, there were close to 20,000 community-based classes operating throughout the country, which accounted for tens of thousands of students. As Minister of Education, he affirmed his responsibility for these classes and sought to formalize a structure in which they could be included. Needless to

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say, Afghanistan was working towards meeting some of the goals set out in its MDG and EFA plans as well as the Afghanistan Compact,[77] and formally recognizing these students, most of whom were girls, would contribute to achieving these goals and his success as minister.

Perhaps more importantly, Minister Atmar was fearful that CBE was becoming a parallel structure to the formal education system, and he was keen to unify the community-based students and teachers within the formal structure. He was seeking one structure under which all of Afghanistan's students and teachers could be counted and monitored.

This echoed the voices of colleagues and stakeholders of PACE-A, who wanted the MoE to be the ultimate education provider in the country. CBE was generally viewed as a temporary solution that would exist as long as the MoE lacked the ability to integrate the CBSs into the formal system. To advance and prepare for any such integration, CBSs generally use the government curriculum, government textbooks, government school records, and follow the academic calendar despite operating in a family home or local mosque. Kirk and Winthrop (2008: 106) called this 'a "shadow alignment" strategy to facilitate pathways for integration, recognition and onward movement of students and teachers through the system whenever opportunities emerged'. While the Minister's initiative was laudable, unifying the systems was fraught with challenges.

According to the MoE, '73 per cent of all [MoE] teachers lack the minimum qualifications of Grade 14 and are in need of professional development ... [and] 245 out of 412 urban and rural districts do not have a single qualified female teacher' (Ayobi, 2010). The teachers of community-based classes are invariably the mullahs (religious leaders) or a trusted parent selected by the community. Very few of the community teachers have been formally trained or have received much formal education themselves. Depending on the source, the literacy rate in Afghanistan is said to be around 39–74.4 per cent for males and 12–53.3 per cent for females (MoE, 2007: 48; UIS, 2007; MRRD and CSO, 2009: 66). In rural areas where 74 per cent of all Afghans live, however, an estimated 93 per cent of women and 65 per cent of men cannot

77. By end 2010, in line with Afghanistan's MDGs, net enrolment in primary school for girls and boys will be at least 60 per cent and 75 per cent, respectively; a new curriculum will be operational in all secondary schools; female teachers will be increased by 50 per cent; 70 per cent of Afghanistan's teachers will have passed a competency test (excerpt from *The Afghanistan Compact*) (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2006: 10).

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read or write or do a simple computation (MRRD and CSO, 2009: 66). Within this context, it is no surprise that the lack of qualifications among community-based teachers is a major issue. It created a dilemma for the MoE, as the teachers did not meet its basic standards, yet many were providing sound instruction to the children.

The other dilemma was how to formally include the children in the MoE database (EMIS) so that they could be assigned a student number and be officially counted. Students in the MoE formal schools are assigned a number that stays with them throughout their schooling. The EMIS was being developed with assistance from USAID and a contracting agency with expertise in this area. The development process had been fraught with difficulties and challenges as most of the MoE staff had little experience with computerized databases or collecting verified data. It was soon understood that the EMIS would expose 'teachers' who did not exist (ghost teachers) yet were still 'receiving' monthly salaries, and other fraudulent activity within the MoE across the provinces. In addition, the sheer practicality of overseeing community-based classes in remote Afghanistan was going to be challenging for the MoE.

The MoE was also moving towards a decentralized structure whereby district offices would be responsible for their own teacher recruitment, salary disbursement, procurement of textbooks and supplies, and monitoring of schools' progress. District offices submitted requests for funds to the provincial offices, which then submitted provincial budgets to the central MoE office. Asking the district offices to take responsibility for community-based students and plan for their inclusion in the formal structures was yet another challenge. Many district offices are under-resourced and under-funded, and motivation to monitor schools, let alone remote CBSs, was low.

Nonetheless, with these challenges of implementation ahead, Minister Atmar and his team forged ahead with the development of a CBE policy. His advisor for Basic Education was tasked to facilitate the process and all the leading CBE providers were invited to join the Working Group in July 2006.[78]

By and large, the Working Group agreed that a CBE policy was necessary for the country. Organizations supporting schools in small communities were willing to grapple with the issues that the policy and its

78. The working group included PACE-A, SCA, BRAC, Save the Children Alliance, and UNICEF.

application would raise. Not every organization provided the same level of support to communities, and no agency operated in the highly insecure areas of the south. Some provinces received more support than others, and some provinces had many agencies providing education support, for instance Nangarhar and Kabul. Minister Atmar asked for some equity across the country and suggested that agencies could geographically relocate themselves so as to saturate each province with education support in a similar way. This was not going to be feasible, as most organizations had multiple activities in one province with established field offices, staff, and positive relationships with communities. They were not prepared to leave their provinces of operation altogether, but were willing to find compromise where possible.

The first draft of the policy was shared in August 2006 and was hotly debated within the Working Group. There were impractical elements in the initial policy: all teachers were required to have completed grade 9; community-based classes would cease after grade 3 (similar to the 'dehati' schools 50 years earlier); an identified MoE school would be supervising the community classes; and all teacher training would be conducted by the MoE.

In August 2006, PACE-A wrote a response to the advisor leading the policy development in the hope that further negotiation could see changes to the draft. PACE-A yielded some influence as it was a consortium of four international NGOs, each of which had fostered positive relationships with the MoE over time. PACE-A was also supporting one of the largest CBE projects in the country and was acting as 'one voice' in the dialogue with the MoE. The main points of the PACE-A response to the first draft of the community-based policy were:

- The Ministry could consider a tiered approach to teacher accreditation to address the diversity in levels of education and training. Some community-based teachers without grade 9 education were providing quality instruction to the lower grades. They had been selected by the community to teach girls in particular, organizations had provided ample training, and the level of instruction was acceptable. The suggestion was that the policy could recognize these teachers in light of their ongoing professional development.
- The MoE would allow, if not encourage, all schools to offer as many years of education as possible to Afghan children, especially in remote locations where accessibility to formal schools is a

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major issue. Children, especially girls, would not walk more than 3 kilometres to the MoE formal school, even after grade 3.

- A clustering approach, without supervision and administrative responsibilities, could work well in unifying and modernizing Afghan education in this context. This recognized the sheer impracticality of assigning the supervisory responsibility of CBSs to a principal, yet would still move towards a unified system with some administrative accountability.
- Once mapping of all schools in Afghanistan was completed, the Ministry could identify which CBSs it would like to include in its system and use location, size, accessibility, and quality of teaching and learning as the criteria for that selection. This would help the MoE to plan and budget accordingly.
- In-service teacher training would not be delivered by the MoE but rather approved by its Department of Teacher Training. The training packages of NGOs could be registered so that graduates of the packages could be recorded in the database associated with teachers. This way, community-based teachers would continue receiving training and support from organizations while the MoE would continue to develop their structures.
- The Ministry recommended maintaining the current structure of school management committees (SMCs) and forming clusters chaired by an official Ministry representative to support school management issues. A 'cluster SMC' would have equitable membership and would be one way for schools to be supported by both government and community.

The final draft of the CBE policy acknowledged these raised concerns and responded to the complexities presented by PACE-A. It recognized that while it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for communities to find highly educated teachers for their children and continue to manage their own school, there was also an understanding that the Ministry needed to set ambitious goals for itself. Minister Atmar made no apology for setting high goals, but rather viewed it as his duty, given the right of all Afghan children to receive quality education.

While the final draft of the CBE policy was never officially signed by Minister Atmar, all NGOs supporting CBE programmes were asked to adhere to the final draft within one year. Minister Atmar made it clear that NGOs had a responsibility to align their activities in accordance with this policy and that he would oversee and approve NGO implementation

plans himself. This level of involvement was a clear indication to all that he was committed to the policy and would persevere to see it through. This demonstration of his engagement meant that community-based classes were destined to become part of the formal structure.

6.3 Enacting the policy

The four PACE-A partners and USAID started discussions in early November 2006 to design its second year of implementation in accordance with the new CBE policy guidelines. The policy called for a number of strategic changes to the original PACE-A project design to align with the new policy:

- ensuring that all CBSs are at least 3 kilometres away from the nearest MoE school[79] (students within a 3 km radius to a MoE school were expected to walk that distance);
- ensuring that students and teachers are registered at the nearest MoE school;
- clustering CBSs within geographic reach, and identifying a MoE school to be the hub school of each cluster, with the hub school's principal providing administrative support to all CBSs in the cluster;
- ensuring that teachers in CBSs are regularly compensated;
- having one PACE-A partner assigned to oversee the implementation of CBE in a province, rather than have more than one partner working in one province.

PACE-A partners, with support from USAID, were committed to implementing the policy, even though it was still in draft form. It was an opportunity to further the recognition and integration of CBSs, by strengthening the MoE systems that would ultimately support community-based classes in the future. The opportunity to provide capacity building efforts within the MoE at central and provincial levels had first been presented under the leadership of Minister Atmar, but the strategies PACE-A adopted for its second and subsequent years of implementation went far beyond the parameters of the original project design. It was in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration that PACE-A partners extended their brief to help the MoE enact its own policy. The details of the activities for Year Two implementation reflect the efforts

79. Interestingly, the original 'dehati' schools of 50 years ago operated within a 5 km radius of a formal primary school (Samady, 2001: 37).

PACE-A made to support and strengthen the MoE and contribute to the advancement of CBE in Afghanistan.

Changes to PACE-A's implementation strategies were made in early 2007 and approved by Minister Atmar. The original design had included funds to support local organizations to provide CBE in remote areas of PACE-A's assigned provinces; it was decided to drastically reduce this activity and channel funds into CD initiatives within the MoE instead. Funds would be used to second advisors to the central and provincial MoE offices where PACE-A was operating, with clear terms of reference regarding system building and developing staff capability to carry out technical, service delivery, and logistical tasks along with developing procedures relating to the new CBE policy.

PACE-A made several changes to its implementation plan for its second year of operation. The following pages outline some of the changes that deal specifically with PACE-A's CD efforts with the MoE.

6.4 The secondment of a CBE advisor to the MoE at the central level

Minister Atmar had engaged several national and international advisors at the central level until capacity to perform similar functions could be found within the government structures. Several donors and agencies provided funding for advisors as well as CD initiatives through the central MoE office.

The Minister had requested that PACE-A support an advisor to oversee the implementation of the CBE policy. This request was first discussed at length within PACE-A and then negotiated with USAID. PACE-A partners viewed a dedicated advisor as a strategic move; having an ally in the Ministry would be beneficial to it and all other agencies, and would help accelerate efforts to communicate CBE policy within MoE. A long-serving senior staff member of CARE was seconded as the CBE advisor. She was placed with the Department of Basic Education but was housed in an office with two other advisors close to the Minister's office. The terms of reference for this assignment were negotiated with PACE-A and the Minister's advisor for basic education.

The CBE advisor's function was to negotiate with CBE providers to adopt strategies to unify CBE with the formal structures. UNICEF and NGOs would coordinate and plan their activities through her; she was

responsible for communicating the policy – and the importance given to it by the Minister – to the MoE's provincial and district offices. She was also responsible for meticulously translating the policy document into Dari and Pashto and for liaising with MoE provincial directors directly.

Although CBE sat firmly within the Department of Basic Education, the community-based advisor had little contact with the director or staff of this department. In effect, the advisor was fulfilling the role of the director by negotiating education activities in the provinces and overseeing the enactment of the policy, but for the policy to be truly implemented, and for procedures to be developed by and for the MoE, the director herself had to take responsibility.

The first CBE advisor was replaced after a year. Within that time, both PACE-A and MoE had learned valuable lessons from the secondment and incorporated them into the new terms of reference. The second advisor was located in the offices of the Department of Basic Education, rather than in an office close to the minister. Here, the new advisor was now jointly supervised by the department director herself. He assisted her to facilitate regular meetings with all NGOs delivering CBE; this created a forum to discuss strategies such as student registration, compensation of teachers, and recognition of teacher training. PACE-A also provided a monitoring tool for the director to disseminate to the provincial offices so that officers could document elements of quality within the schools. The director travelled both with and without the advisor to visit several CBSs for assessment and appraisal. Her direct involvement very quickly led to her engagement and willingness to take steps to unify CBSs with the formal MoE structures.

Interestingly, in contrast to the central MoE offices, the offices of the Department of Basic Education were in terrible disrepair, with no heating, little furniture, a sporadic electricity supply, and no internet. The advisor used PACE-A funds to carpet and furnish his designated office. It quickly became apparent that the director's office would also need to be refurbished to maintain her status as director. She also requested a laptop and internet connection, and training on how to use a computer and e-mail, which the CBE advisor provided. While it was important to maintain the director's apparent status through such displays, it was also important to update her own skills while at the same time addressing the more systemic issues of the MoE.

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With PACE-A support, the CBE advisor initiated a revision of the CBE policy in the summer of 2008. This process involved provincial and central level MoE staff as well as CBE providers, and took far longer than the initial CBE policy development. The drafting of the original policy in 2006 had not included inputs from central level MoE staff, let alone from the provinces. Two years later, MoE staff were sufficiently acquainted with CBSs in their districts, as well as the policy itself, to be able to contribute in a meaningful way. In April 2009, the revised policy was officially endorsed by the new Minister of Education, Farooq Wardak, who had replaced Minister Atmar in October 2008.

The terms of references for both CBE advisors at the central level were negotiated between Minister Atmar's advisors and PACE-A. Clearly identified duties and responsibilities as well as expected outputs were negotiated with the MoE, allowing progress to be monitored and reported over time. The CBE advisor officially reported to the PACE-A chief of party, but performance reviews were conducted with the Basic Education advisor, who consulted with the director of Basic Education. This way progress could be jointly reviewed and any points of contention addressed early on. Clear communication was also at the heart of the Memorandum of Understanding drafted between the MoE, USAID, and PACE-A. It outlined roles and responsibilities for the MoE as well as for PACE-A and gave a clear commitment by both parties to advancing community education.

6.5 The secondment of 18 provincial liaison officers to the MoE

Effort at the central level alone was not going to create the impact required for CBE policy to be enacted in the provinces, districts, and schools. PACE-A channelled funds to support senior staff members – provincial liaison officers – to work in the MoE provincial offices to help oversee the implementation of the policy in the 18 provinces where PACE-A was operating. Within a few months, the Minister's Basic Education advisor had requested other agencies (BRAC and UNICEF) to support additional provincial liaison officers in the provinces where they operated, using the same terms of reference and offering the same support for CD as PACE-A.

Before the provincial liaison officers were placed in their respective MoE offices, PACE-A organized a three-day orientation workshop to

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outline their new roles and responsibilities and discuss strategies for success. The MoE provincial directors were invited to attend so that clear direction could be agreed from the onset. The MoE did not release funds or approve travel for MoE staff to attend, but sent a letter from the Minister outlining the purpose of the secondment and the expected collaboration from provincial staff. The provincial directors were to select and assign a counterpart to work with the provincial liaison officer for a minimum of two years. The counterpart would also receive individual skills development from the provincial liaison officer in reporting, data collection, and use of computers. The provincial liaison officer would be supervised by both the MoE provincial director and the PACE-A field manager.

The first task of the provincial liaison officers was to hold several face-to-face meetings with provincial and district MoE staff and stakeholders to explain and illustrate the new CBE policy and how it pertained to their own operations. Their next task was to assist the provincial education departments to physically map all schools and create clusters with a designated hub school in all the districts, as described in the policy. This activity was assisted by the MoE's DoPE, which provided skills training to the provincial liaison officers. Once clusters were mapped, the principals of the MoE hub schools were oriented in the provision of administrative support to the CBSs within the cluster. As agreed with the MoE, the hub school teachers would receive training alongside the community-based teachers when workshops were delivered by the PACE-A partner operating in the districts.

The provincial liaison officers were tasked to work with MoE staff to collect and verify data from community-based classes for the development of the MoE's EMIS. Their task was to jointly monitor classes with relevant MoE provincial staff, ideally their assigned counterpart, and demonstrate the use of the tool developed by PACE-A for this purpose. The tool identified key aspects of the policy as well as minimum standards[80] to which CBSs should adhere. The provincial liaison officers were also to advocate on behalf of community-based teachers and students for formal recognition within the MoE system, by providing students with student numbers and teachers with a salary. In addition, some provincial liaison officers organized regular coordination

80. These minimum standards for community-based education were developed by a working group of providers led by PACE-A, and are based on the INEE's Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crisis, and Early Recovery.

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meetings with other CBE providers who were delivering programmes in the province. This way, the MoE would stay abreast of all educational activities operating in the districts.

The CBE advisor in Kabul was in direct contact with the provincial liaison officers, so the flow of information was swift and reliable. Issues soon arose over resistance by some MoE staff to making monitoring visits without compensation. Similarly, some of the assigned counterparts had not been consulted about their own selection and resented having to work with an NGO employee. A couple of the provincial liaison officers were being viewed as additional staff to be used as the provincial director decided, such as with report writing. The success of the provincial liaison officers was affected by varying degrees of understanding and willingness to participate among the MoE provincial offices.

The provincial liaison officers attended another PACE-A workshop six months into their secondment. PACE-A had collated the common problems and challenges that the provincial liaison officers were facing and encouraged the more successful of them to share their strategies and experiences with others. PACE-A conducted sessions around how to work with a counterpart and encouraged the joint design of CD plans for the individual counterpart to assist with transferring particular technical skills, knowledge, and logistical tasks. Some provincial liaison officers requested direct communication by the Minister with the MoE provincial directors to explain the role of the liaison officers once again.

It seemed that some of the MoE provincial directors were struggling with their capability to balance diversity and coherence. The introduction of a new CBE policy with its tasks, not just of monitoring classes but also integrating them into the formal system, meant that MoE officials were required to respond in new ways and initiate changes in their established systems. Some resistance stemmed from the threat of exposing practices that were not necessarily equitable or fair.

6.6 The issue of compensation for teachers working with PACE-A

PACE-A does not pay teacher stipends directly but ensures that all teachers of its classes are compensated by the community, either in cash or in kind. With dire poverty prevalent in most of the communities, many teachers were not receiving adequate or regular compensation. Although every teacher deserves the right to be adequately compensated for their

efforts, PACE-A was struggling to mobilize communities to take this responsibility seriously.

The introduction of the CBE policy provided an opportunity for PACE-A to insist that the MoE take responsibility for the payment of all teachers. If the MoE wanted all Afghan teachers and students to fall under its mandate, then it should be held accountable for teachers' salaries. Afghan citizens are becoming increasingly aware of the Constitution of 1382 (Government of Afghanistan, 2003), which mandates that the state will provide free and compulsory education from grade 1 to 9 and free education up to the completion of grade 12. It is the responsibility of the MoE to provide the structures for this, and there has been growing resentment in the remote and rural areas where the community itself is being asked to support its teacher.

Through the Memorandum of Understanding, PACE-A successfully negotiated that MoE would provide all textbooks free of charge to PACE-A schools and that, contingent upon funding, MoE would start including all teachers of PACE-A supported community schools on its payroll. This represented a major success; no other organization had been able to get agreement from the MoE to include community-based teachers on the payroll. It also signalled a major step in the Ministry's recognition of CBSs as part of the MoE formal school system.

The provincial liaison officers and their counterparts spent many weeks collecting and completing the required forms with personal information, photos, and signatures from over 1,500 teachers. PACE-A collated, verified, and copied all the documents in order to present them to the relevant departments of the MoE. To ask central MoE office to formally recruit teachers and put them on the district office's payroll was at odds with the usual recruitment system: normally, district offices request salaries for the required number of teachers from the provincial offices, which then seek funds from the central office. District offices are responsible for recruiting and paying their own teachers. PACE-A was asking the central office to intervene and ensure that these specific teachers would be placed on the MoE payroll immediately. Minister Atmar wrote letters in support of these applications, triggering a chain of directives to the relevant district offices complete with community-based teachers' names and details.

Several MoE officials ignored this directive and continued to pay the teachers they recruited and fund schools they themselves had identified.

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Fraudulent practices were being revealed through this process, and several MoE officials had obviously been supporting favoured schools. It took several months of continued lobbying to get the majority of PACE-A community-based teachers onto the MoE payroll. As of summer 2010, many of the community-based teachers who were to receive MoE salaries had not yet been paid.

6.7 Conclusions

The development of the first CBE policy in Afghanistan triggered a series of CD interventions by PACE-A over three years. The goal was to see the MoE's policy enacted in such a way that CBSs would fall under the ownership of the government, and thus be recognized and supported in years to come.

PACE-A held CBE forums every month from December 2006 to April 2009: all CBE providers would meet together to coordinate activities, share practices, and negotiate geographic areas of operation, as requested by the Minister. Partners within PACE-A exited from certain districts to allow another partner to oversee education programming in the entire province. In a similar way, other NGOs also negotiated their geographic reach by leaving some districts to other providers or moving their education programmes altogether. The spirit in which organizations were willing to compromise their own mandates to accommodate to MoE priorities was commendable.

The mapping of all schools in the districts was a huge undertaking but crucial to the DoPE and the Department of Basic Education. All CBSs are now identified and attached to a formal MoE school. This paves the way for all students and teachers to be formally recognized by the system. Processes are still under way to get all students of community-based classes registered with the EMIS of the MoE. The MoE provincial and district offices, and a large proportion of its official schools in the various regions, are aware of the CBSs as well as the implications of the MoE policy of including them in the formal system. Over 900 community-based teachers have now been formally recognized by the MoE, and are receiving regular salaries; other community-based teachers can now legitimately lobby for their salaries too to be paid by the MoE.

In April 2010, PACE-A began its fifth and final year of implementation. The roles of CBE advisor and provincial liaison

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officer no longer exist. Now PACE-A coordinates all activities directly with the director and staff of the Department of Basic Education and the MoE provincial directors. The directors and staff now seem sufficiently versed in CBE issues and the policy itself to guide the work in integrating community-based classes into the formal structure. Nonetheless, challenges remain and always will. The capacity to carry out technical, service delivery, and logistical tasks is severely hampered by a lack of resources, and reliance on agencies like PACE-A for many tasks continues. MoE does not have enough access to vehicles to monitor schools, there are not enough staff with computers or the skills to maintain data and information, many MoE offices are under-resourced, and accessing funds is slow and cumbersome.

'Buying capacity' to perform tasks within the government has been a major short-term strategy used by the Afghan government (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2007: 4) and the MoE is no exception. Several advisors supported Minister Atmar and the MoE, but PACE-A tried to move away from placing external capacity within the MoE to perform tasks for which MoE staff are responsible. Instead it preferred to rely on introducing systems that would integrate CBS into the MoE system, and assisting MoE staff to do this. This meant working with systems of policy and procedure while supporting individuals to take on responsibilities. In this way, PACE-A was successful in helping the MoE to align its policy to the school level and getting CBE officially recognized in the formal system.

Minister Atmar's strong leadership moved to the Ministry of the Interior, which is a sober reminder that people come and go but systems remain. CBE will be a feature of Afghanistan for many more years, but efforts to unify these schools under the formal structures of the MoE have made significant headway. Systems to support CBE have been strengthened from the central offices of the MoE right to the classrooms of the remote villages.

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Chapter 7

A donor's perspective on capacity development in the education sector in Afghanistan

Christel Eijkholt

7.1 Introduction

In 2000, the Dakar World Education Forum recognized that governments and the international community have to pay special attention to the education of those affected by conflict. According to the 2010 Save the Children report *The Future Is Now*, 72 million children still do not go to school. Of these, 39 million live in fragile states affected by conflict (International Save the Children Alliance, 2010). Attention to their plight is a logical next step in our efforts to achieve EFA. Education is recognized as one of the most vital investments a government can make. As well as being every child's right, it has a crucial role to play in safeguarding children, empowering women, promoting democracy, and protecting the environment (International Save the Children Alliance, 2009: iv). In countries affected by conflict or fragility, getting children back into school is an effective way to maintain or restore the rhythm of everyday life in communities that have been disrupted. Investments in education can provide a first tangible peace dividend for communities emerging from a period of civil conflict.

Investments in education are not made in isolation but are part of a broader, integrated, and coherent strategy propelled forward by domestic aid policies, international agreements, and principles. The aim of this chapter is to provide a donor's perspective on CD in the education sector in Afghanistan in general and Afghanistan's MoE in particular. First, a general policy perspective is presented in the context of international agreements and commitments. Second, the Dutch conception of CD in the education sector will be elaborated, with Afghanistan in the limelight. The chapter will also elaborate on the efforts of the Government of the Netherlands (GoN) to support the reconstruction and re-strengthening of the education system in Afghanistan in general and at decentralized levels (Uruzgan Province) in particular.

7.2 Dutch development policy perspective on security, development, and education

It was not until mid-2007 that the GoN explicitly announced in its policy note *Our common concern* that it would be more actively involved in fragile states (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, GoN, 2007). The policy recognized the necessity of a focus on fragile states, as these countries are lagging behind in reaching the MDGs. It took GoN until 2008 to thoroughly elaborate a strategy on Security and Development (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, GoN, 2008). The strategy has three dimensions: to improve the security situations of civilians, to contribute to a legitimate government with sufficient capacity, and to create a peace dividend. The Netherlands' key aim is to create and strengthen international frameworks and mandates, with multilateral commitments and a mainly supplementary role for bilateral efforts. This is in line with the Paris agenda.

This all evolved in a time of growing international recognition of the importance of engagement with fragile states and a realization that the international community has to act together. Political awareness of the negative impact of violence on development, and the urgent need to act upon it, had been expressed in the 2006 Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. This was a follow-up to the 2005 UN Summit that emphasized the close connection between security, development, and human rights. The concept of the responsibility to protect was also acknowledged. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) drafted policy and implementation guidelines, such as the OECD-DAC *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations* (OECD-DAC, 2007).[81] These *Principles* give pride of place to the principle of 'do no harm' – ensuring that outside interventions do not increase the distance between parties to a conflict, for example, and underlining the importance of a tailored approach,

81. The 10 *Principles for Good Engagement* divide into the basics (1–6) and the practicalities (7–10): (1) take context as the starting point; (2) do no harm; (3) focus on state-building as the central objective; (4) make prevention a priority; (5) recognize the links between political, security, and development objectives; (6) promote non-discrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies; (7) align with local priorities in different ways in different contexts; (8) agree on practical coordination mechanisms between international actors; (9) act fast, but stay engaged long enough to give success a chance; (10) avoid pockets of exclusion.

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integrated efforts, coordination, and setting priorities. Ownership in the country concerned is vital, with the understanding that ownership is not exclusively by government: the Netherlands is keen for all relevant parts of government, civil society, and the private sector to be involved in formulating and implementing policy.

Based on the above, the GoN's guiding policy principles are: (1) an integrated approach; (2) local partners, local priorities; (3) a context-specific approach and political sensitivity; (4) fast, flexible, and long-term involvement; (5) multilateral where possible, bilateral where needed; (6) prevention; and (7) taking responsible risks.

These principles require an integrated approach involving a broad range of actors, with a role for diplomacy, development aid, and sometimes armed intervention – the latter only if strictly necessary. In Afghanistan, the Dutch have actively promoted an integrated approach to security, governance, reconstruction, and construction as part of the International Security Assistance Force. Addressing state fragility is often a long-term affair, as evidenced by the Netherlands' long-standing efforts in Afghanistan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, GoN, 2007: 17). Ways of promoting security and development differ from country to country, from conflict to conflict, and across varying levels of fragility.

In fragile and transition countries, the Netherlands aims at supporting both the provision of education services and the creation of a perspective of lasting peace and development on the restoration – preferably 'building back better' – of the education system through an integrated approach to CD. The interventions can be categorized in various instruments or dimensions, some of which will be explained in more detail below. An overview of the instruments for education in emergencies and post-conflict situations, applicable to Afghanistan, can be found in *Figure 5*.

Education as such, however, is not a panacea in fragile situations. In conflict-sensitive situations, education can be part of the problem as much as it is of the solution. Education can exacerbate inherent political or social tensions through its institutional structures, or through the content and attitudes conveyed at schools. But complex emergencies also present new opportunities to dismantle such destructive educational practices and rebuild the entire system (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, GoN, Education and Development Division, 2006: 3). This is an important window of opportunity as the education system as an institution is rather

resistant to change. As Bush and Saltarelli point out, 'It is easier to add new educational initiatives than to change old ones ... because the change of educational practice is a fundamentally political threat in the sense that it challenges structures of authority, dominance and control' (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000: 33).

Figure 5. An overview of Dutch instruments for education in emergencies and post-conflict situations

Instrument used by GoN	Main CD components
Bilateral support	• Policy dialogue • (Sub)-sector support • Technical assistance
Fast Track Initiative	• Education sector support • Development of credible sector plans • Support to education reforms
Multilateral support	• Innovative strategies and delivery mechanisms • Support to education reform process
Civil society support	• Community-based strategies • Advocacy • Strengthening of provincial and district Education Departments
Netherlands Initiative for Capacity Development in Higher Education (NICHE)	• Institutional capacity strengthening of post-secondary education and training, including technical and vocational education and training (TVET) • Government services, NGOs, and private sector
Networking and knowledge building	• Adopting the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies as a tool for Education sector planning, capacity gap analysis, and coordination • Development of knowledge of specific intervention strategies to improve access to quality education

It is essential to conduct a thorough analysis of the baseline situation and underlying foundational factors – including the shortcomings of the education system – before supporting its re-establishment or reconstruction, to ensure that those factors that caused fragility in the first place are not reinforced. In fragile contexts, the Netherlands aims to support the provision of education services and the restoration and strengthening of the education system, by investing in improved education responses, strengthening the resilience and sustainability of education systems, increasing the sector's contribution to country stability and reducing fragility, and enhancing the quality of policies and instruments.

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7.3 The policy nexus: education, fragility, and capacity development

Developing the capacity of the education system and service delivery to the population are both key to the Netherlands' vision in expanding its support for EFA in fragile conditions. They are viewed as inseparable strategies, integrated in a sector-wide approach. A flexible use of the instruments listed in *Figure 5* is important to maximize impact and work towards stability and a strengthened education system at all levels, central as well as devolved.

The OECD-DAC principles are a guide to effective work in the complex context of fragile environments. The international community has made CD a priority. Beyond the general principles of ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results, and mutual accountability, the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (2005: paras 22 and 23) formulated guidance and a set of indicators for demand-driven CD.

The Netherlands follows the basic definition of capacity as formulated by OECD-DAC: 'The ability of people, organizations, and society to manage their affairs successfully.' This definition clearly goes beyond gaining knowledge and skills at the individual level. The example of the NICHE programme (mentioned as an instrument in *Figure 5*, and planned for Afghanistan as well, see *Section 7.6*) clearly shows how this approach can work in practice. It recognizes that CD at the individual level depends on the organizations in which people work, while in turn the enabling environment influences the behaviour of organizations and individuals, largely by means of the incentives and vicious or virtuous circles it creates (EFA-FTI, 2008: 6).

As the motto is 'multilateral where possible, bilateral where needed', the GoN was actively involved in the development of *Guidelines for Capacity Development in the Education Sector within the EFA-FTI Framework* (EFA-FTI, 2008). This document represents an effort at implementing the OECD-DAC and Paris principles in the education sector. These guidelines recognize the need for a more systematic approach to CD, and even more so the need to develop system capacity in fragile environments. It stresses that successful CD is country-specific and endogenous, and a flexible process. It points to fostering the institutional environment and working with organizations already on the ground. Civil society organizations could play a role here by raising

awareness and training key persons. CD challenges and strategies in fragile environments are listed in *Box 9*.

Box 9. EFA-FTI capacity development in fragile environments

'Fragile environments' refer to a wide range of countries and situations (armed conflict, poor governance, economic decline) in which capacity challenges are largely the same as in other countries but more intense. More flexibility may be called for in this regard.

CD challenges in fragile states are more complex and urgent, with:

- fewer individuals with capacity (history of neglect and discrimination, concentration of power);
- more profound organizational disintegration (less organized civil society, less formal and accountable private sector, weaker political will and capacity);
- a more 'disabling environment' (insecurity, poor governance, less funding, less data);
- additional stakeholders (more local and international NGOs, new leaders, rebel groups and armed forces, child soldiers and alienated/demobilized youth, refugees and displaced communities);
- additional issues (security, reconstruction, nation-building);
- trade-offs between a strong need for speedy delivery and long-term CD.

CD strategies in fragile states need to be more varied and flexible:

- prioritize key capabilities: delivering basic services, addressing critical inequities and sources of fragility, developing strategic policies and frameworks;
- capitalize on local capacity: state fragility usually impacts capacity at the central level but education capacity at the local level often remains, it should be protected and can be enhanced;
- support the development of interim arrangements for laws and regulations;
- where non-government provision is necessary, involve government stakeholders;
- use local languages, make explicit plans to phase out external expertise;
- bridge donor support and funding between humanitarian assistance and development assistance and commit to consistent and sustained partnerships.

Appropriate CD in fragile environments can contribute to stability. Fragile contexts, such as conflict and post-conflict situations, may also provide new opportunities for change and CD (EFA-FTI, 2008: 7).

7.4 From policy via instruments to practice in Afghanistan

Afghanistan's national policy for basic social services has been laid out through sector strategies, as input for Afghanistan's National Development Strategy (ANDS). The Netherlands aims to contribute to the country outputs as formulated in the Education Sector Strategy: increasing access to quality education for all school-age children (nation-

wide), reducing illiteracy, creating a skilled labour force, and reducing the gender gap, are steps on the way to achieving the ANDS objective of EFA. The Netherlands supported a range of CD activities with the MoE in Afghanistan and Uruzgan Province in the period 2002–2010. The Netherlands stresses the need to work according to local needs and through a variety of instruments at the same time. Some deliver quick and tangible results – to cater to the needs of the population and create a peace dividend, and to maintain the level of support for development cooperation in the Netherlands as well. Other instruments are designed to support longer-term processes, as an integrated approach to CD.

7.5 Bilateral support

The bilateral channel involves a direct development cooperation relation between the Netherlands and a partner country. An embassy is based in-country and manages delegated funds, as in the case of Afghanistan (a 'profile 2 country'[82]). The philosophy behind this is that political and policy dialogue should take place in-country, and that the embassy, in consultation with the Government of Afghanistan (GoA), is best placed to decide on priorities for support. The aim of the Dutch Embassy in Kabul is progress towards reaching the MDGs and EFA. The emphasis is on improving access to education with a special focus on women and girls, and on technical and vocational education and training (agriculture). The delegated bilateral funds for education in Afghanistan for the period 2008–2011 amount to about €10 million per year.

Together with other bilateral donors, the GoN is supporting the Afghan government through EQUIP, the Education Quality Improvement Programme of the MoE. With technical support from the World Bank, this programme aims for education reform, teachers' education, learning materials, and strengthening the capacity of the MoE itself. The World Bank finances this programme in 10 provinces through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). The Netherlands supports the financing of school management committees, pre- and in-service teacher training, learning materials, and the reconstruction of schools in Uruzgan Province. There are stark disparities between rural and urban areas.

82. The Netherlands has organised its bilateral support through profiling of its partner countries: Profile 1: Accelerated achievement of MDGs in countries with a stable political and security situation; Profile 2: Security and development, tackling the causes of fragility, inequality, and conflict sensitivity; Profile 3: Broad-based relationships with countries enjoying solid economic growth.

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Education statistics for Uruzgan show the need for support of all aspects of education, from access to quality to relevance to governance. Adult literacy rates are 0.6 per cent for women and 7 per cent for men. About 53,000 children are currently enrolled in primary schools, including more than 4,600 girls. About 7,000 children are in secondary education, out of which 260 are girls. There are 1,481 male and just 45 female teachers working in Uruzgan, in around 100 schools. In local village meetings (*shuras*), tribal elders and leaders time and again ask the provincial government for support for education for their children and youth.

GoN considers the recruitment and training of (female) teachers key to increase access to education, particularly for girls. However, there is an immense shortage of qualified teachers. Moreover, it is difficult to promote rural Uruzgan as a career path for teachers from other geographical locations. This capacity constraint can hardly be underestimated, and the success of most other capacity investments at various levels in the education sector depends on this. A possible short-term solution is the training and recruitment of youngsters, both girls and boys from the local communities, who have completed the primary cycle themselves. The Dutch Embassy in Kabul considers visibility of the central government in a province like Uruzgan important from a monitoring perspective, both to signal possible capacity constraints in financial and infrastructural terms and to signal capacity constraints in the enabling environment. The security situation remains an issue, slowing down the construction of schools. Another issue is the payment of salaries, as teachers have to travel to the district capital to collect their remuneration in person.

At the request of GoA, GoN has agreed to become the lead donor in the field of agriculture education, training, and extension. According to GoA, sustainable agriculture and education are cornerstones of its economy and society. Agriculture provides food, jobs, and income for the majority of the population, although the sector has badly suffered from 30 years of war, insecurity, and destruction of infrastructure.

Agriculture education is not structured as yet. At the academic level, there are few agriculture institutions. At other tertiary levels there are some regional and provincial agricultural schools. Kabul has a national agricultural institute. However, a policy and qualification system is lacking so far, as is the link between curriculum, research, and the labour market. These capacity challenges at all levels require an integrated approach to CD at individual, organizational, and institutional

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levels. *Box 10* describes the various paths to CD in agriculture education in Afghanistan.

Box 10. Capacity development in the field of agriculture education

Through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between GoA and GoN,* the Netherlands committed itself to provide expertise, donor coordination, and financial contributions to the development and the implementation of a multi-annual National Programme for Agriculture Education. This incorporates all educational levels and TVET of professionals from farmers to agriculturists and extension workers. Agricultural education comes under the responsibility of the MoE's Deputy Ministry for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (DM-TVET). This DM requested support for implementing capacity. Together with other international donors, the Netherlands supports the Afghan Government through:

- assistance in the development of a National Afghan Vocational Education and Training Policy;
- the construction and implementation of a National Agricultural Education Center (NAEC), which will train teachers, develop curricula, design and execute an applied research programme in agriculture, and implement a national agricultural documentation centre for the whole country;
- reinforcement of two regional agricultural institutes in two different agro-ecological zones;
- construction and implementation of a practical training centre for Horticulture near Kabul;
- construction and implementation of an agricultural school with an attached practical training centre in Uruzgan.

To improve the capacity of the NAEC, the Netherlands is providing fellowships for a one-year master's course in the Netherlands for curriculum developers, master trainers, and managers. These master students signed an 'employment bond', a contractual agreement to stay at least five years in the service of NAEC and at the same time receive a job guarantee from the MoE. An extra effort is being made to recruit female candidates, which is a big challenge.

Another CD component is the provision of technical assistance – both national and international personnel – for MoE/DM-TVET. The aim is to develop policy on agriculture education including qualification frameworks, a multi-annual plan, and an institutional framework, and to monitor implementation. The Netherlands, in close cooperation with the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and GTZ, supports the establishment of a technical school in Uruzgan. MoE/DM-TVET is recruiting young people in Uruzgan for intensive training in Kabul. After the technical school is ready, these young people will teach there.

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Wageningen University and Research in the Netherlands implements a CD programme by sharing its experience in research, teaching, and extension methods with Afghan institutions. GoN financed the initial phase of this programme from April 2009 to October 2010, with a strong commitment for the next phase from November 2010 to November 2013, when the first Afghan students will start their agricultural education.

* This was signed between the government of Afghanistan, MoE, and Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development as a witness, and the Dutch government (both Ministries of Agriculture and Foreign Affairs).

With bilateral delegated funds, Save the Children is implementing the Quality Primary Education Programme (QPEP) in Uruzgan Province. Out-of-school children are taking catch-up accelerated learning classes (ALCs). By agreement with the MoE, they receive certificates allowing them to enter the formal school system. The children study for two grades in one calendar year.

Save the Children works with formal schools and their faculty to help them create spaces where children feel safe and receive quality education. Teachers are trained in alternatives to corporal punishment. School structures are improved. Save the Children works with the children's parents and communities to promote the importance of education and introduce parent, teacher, and community forums (community education committees) – the 'whole school approach', involving key stakeholders in developing schools as child-friendly learning environments. Innovative approaches are being piloted. In 2009, 30 teachers from 7 schools attended training to build their skills, knowledge, and attitudes. Also in 2009, 524 teachers, ALC mentors, parents, and other stakeholders were trained on various topics regarding human rights and child protection as well as drafting lesson plans, homework correction, class management, and health education. Seven schools have drafted plans to improve their performance and to prepare themselves for receiving ALC pupils. In 5 formal schools, 180 children actively participate in rights-based children's groups, where they discuss issues that affect them and express their opinions directly to the appropriate adults in the local community.

The GoA delegates officials to participate in a Project Advisory Committee. The role of province and district level governments is to coordinate activities with local partner NGOs and to help ensure programme activities are responsive to local needs. The Provincial Education Department is fully involved in decisions on the locations of ALCs, enrolment of pupils, and choice of mentors. Alongside this type

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of capacity building activity, the QPEP also invests in the management capacity and subject expertise of local implementing partners.

The Netherlands advocates for connecting countries dealing with fragility to the FTI, through its Catalytic Fund and Education Programme Development Fund (EPDF). The latter is established as an upstream mechanism for policy development and capacity strengthening. The current plan is to merge these different funds under the FTI. An alternative 'progressive framework' (EFA-FTI, 2008) as an analytical tool to jointly assess a country's progress and bottlenecks and the best type of support for it was developed in 2007/2008. This support can serve as an acceleration lane towards a credible sector plan and FTI's endorsement phase, and is therefore more flexible than the current Indicative Framework.

EPDF, to which GoN contributes, provided support to the MoE to develop an education sector plan and strengthen institutional and technical capacity, first by support for the development of strategies and sustainable education sector programmes conducive to growth and poverty reduction, and second by strengthening the government's technical and institutional capacities.[83] The NESP-II is about to be submitted to the EFA-FTI for endorsement. The level of support from FTI depends on the resource envelope – commitments from GoA and the local donor community – and the existing funding gap.

A third instrument is UNICEF's Education in Emergencies and Post Crisis Transitions programme (EEPCT, €166 million for the period 2007–2010). In response to the void between humanitarian and development stages, the Netherlands, in partnership with UNICEF, started a programme for reconstruction of schools and education systems in countries dealing with (post-) conflict and emergency situations. The core objective of the programme is to improve both the effectiveness and efficiency of educational response in a wide range of affected countries. It seeks to establish innovative strategies and delivery mechanisms to make educational interventions in fragile countries a first step in a continuous reform process that will get them back on a development path. Flexible funding is provided to accommodate the changing needs of a country. In the period 2007–2008, Afghanistan was also covered under this programme.

83. EFA-FTI, EPDF, May 2007.

7.6 Civil society initiatives

As mentioned above, in a situation where a government is still in the process of establishing itself, the channels for providing access to education and improving education systems need to be more diverse. A fourth instrument, consequently, is support through civil society organizations. The Dutch Embassy in Kabul is directly supporting NGOs in delivering a range of education services and CD activities in the south of Afghanistan. MFS-I[84] is another window through which the Netherlands supports organizations that provide education services and CD in countries dealing with fragile situations.

In the capacity strengthening framework, the Netherlands has developed a response to the need for CD in tertiary education: the Netherlands Initiative for Capacity Development in Higher Education (NICHE). NICHE aims to strengthen institutional capacity in 23 countries by providing post-secondary education and training. Both NICHE and the Fellowship Programmes of the Dutch Government target Profile 2 countries, by enabling local authorities to develop their capacity in the fields of security, justice, human rights, and basic social services. The programmes are developed to strengthen the capacity of government services, NGOs, and the private sector by targeted training and advice; at the same time they aim to train professional staff for economic development in the medium term. As of July 2010, Afghanistan is included in the NICHE programme; however, implementation has not yet started.

The Netherlands is a member of INEE and its Working Group on Education and Fragility. The Working Group aims to coordinate diverse initiatives and catalyse collaborative action on education and fragility. The Netherlands subscribes to the INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. This tool aims to support the delivery of quality education and increase the resilience of education systems. It can also be used for education sector planning, capacity gap analysis, and coordination. The Minimum Standards were updated in 2010 and are applicable in a wide range of contexts, including acute emergencies, protracted crises, fragile states, and post-conflict and

84. MFS-I is a subsidy framework for Dutch civil society organizations supporting partner organizations in developing countries, including Afghanistan. MFS-I covers the period 2007–2011.

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post-disaster recovery. (More information is available at www.ineesite.org/standards.)

Box 11. UNICEF community-based schools

The Government of the Netherlands supported UNICEF's Basic Education and Gender Equality Programme in partnership with the MoE through the EEPCT programme. This programme aims to ensure that girls benefit from the child-friendly school concept, female literacy, and community involvement. It also aims to respond to key challenges in Afghanistan, including the conflict and emergency situation, gender disparities, and capacity issues such as the increase in school enrolments.

UNICEF and the MoE recognize that many girls are restricted from travelling any distance within the country, particularly in rural areas, due to security, cultural, and environmental constraints. There is a clear need to support the establishment of CBSs* closer to the communities. UNICEF developed a strategy involving communities, based on community participation in identifying out-of-school and school-age children, and training educated men and women from within the community as CBS teachers. In the absence of educated people in the community, educated local religious leaders are employed as teachers. Learning spaces are provided in community buildings, clubs, or mosques. Essential supplies and teaching and learning materials are provided to facilitate schooling, based on the formal curriculum and textbooks in Dari and Pashto. With help from UNICEF and support from the EEPCT programme, the MoE delivered 70,000 schoolbooks to Uruzgan. The CBS initiative has proved to be an effective way of giving children access to education in hard-to-reach rural areas through supporting sector reform and community development, improving quality primary education with special focus on girls; and investing in women's literacy and empowerment. The Government of the Netherlands more specifically contributed to the establishment of CBSs, construction of cost-effective schools, capacity building through teacher training, incentives for CBS teachers, and advocacy, monitoring, and evaluation.

Given the insecurity and cultural barriers to girls' education in Afghanistan, CBSs proved to be an effective way of bringing education to young children and enabling them to enrol at the right age in rural areas. It is crucial to involve community elders and religious leaders in the process, as they are embedded in local governance structures. School management committees, including parents and community members, ensure improved educational services and quality and a more protective environment for children. They also play an important role in promoting girls' education within communities.

* Community-based schools (CBS) is the term that UNICEF uses, meaning that there actually is a school building, classrooms, students, and a teacher. CBS can be seen as a subset of the term 'Community-based education' (CBE), which is broader and more frequently used by NGOs, as in *Chapter 6*. CBE appears to be the most widely used term and is therefore also used in this publication.

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In the context of the IS Academy,[85] a research partnership has been formed between IIEP, the IRC, and the University of Amsterdam to carry out research on education in emergency situations. The partnership seeks to develop knowledge about specific interventions, strategies, and methodologies to be used to improve access to quality education for all in fragile states. The partnership has resulted in two publications so far, one on certification issues of displaced students (Nicolai, 2009), the other on education innovation and reform during and after conflict (Kirk, 2009). The partnership also funds the present book.

7.7 Concluding remarks

In 2010, while the present chapter was being written, the Dutch Cabinet collapsed and became *demissionair*[86]over differences on whether to extend the Dutch military mission in Uruzgan province. However, Dutch NGOs were quick to declare that they would continue their work in Afghanistan, including Uruzgan, because of the issue of extending the current military mission in Uruzgan province and a new Cabinet was not yet in place.

Experience shows that the chief challenge is balancing priorities for immediate reconstruction with long-term processes like CD. For a donor, this is even more pronounced since the home parliament and tax-payers increasingly call for quick results. It is the aim of the Netherlands to support CD of government institutions through, for example, technical assistance and training, preferably multilaterally, embedded in a long-term strategy. But at the same time, the creation of a peace dividend is important to let the population experience the advantages of peace and stability through improved educational services and a path towards employment. Education should be linked to creating economic opportunities; investing in TVET/agriculture education is a good start. It is vital to involve women and girls as much as possible, and at all levels.

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85. The IS Academy is a partnership established in 2006 between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and the Amsterdam Institute of Development Studies, University of Amsterdam. More information can be found at http://educationanddevelopment.wordpress.com.
86. A demissionary cabinet is a caretaker government limiting itself to urgent and pressing matters and traditionally not taking any controversial decisions. A government becomes demissionary when a legal parliamentary period ends, or when parliament loses confidence in the government, or loses one coalition party.

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In the education sector we need a strategy for CD from the classroom to the district, provincial, and central administrative levels, including civil society and the private sector. GoN provides CD support at individual, organizational, and institutional levels. The Netherlands uses all possible instruments and channels to support service delivery and CD, considering them as integrated and inseparable.

The GoN is involved in broad strategies of support for developing the capacity of the education system in Afghanistan, the MoE, and the Deputy Ministry of TVET, through multilateral and bilateral instruments:

- pre-service/in-service training of teachers and trainers, curriculum developers, and management staff;
- supporting community and school-level governance for decision-making, funds use, teacher appointment or review, etc.;
- physical supply, school design, site selection and negotiations, contractor selection, construction supervision, CBS building, and quality assurance;
- planning, monitoring, and evaluation, including decentralized and consolidated planning exercises;
- communication and awareness-raising campaigns around education, schooling, and/or education sector plans;
- donor coordination mechanisms.

The impact of this approach is as yet difficult to assess, as capacity investments take time to show results.

Whatever the instruments chosen, successful CD in the education sector is based on an integrated approach, including key factors like a country-led process (ownership as well as leadership). The Netherlands considers multiple stakeholder involvement essential, from ministry and private sector down to community and schools. A sound diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats regarding capacity through individual, organizational, and institutional perspectives is necessary, as is building on the good practices that continued to function during the conflict; UNICEF's CBSs are a good example of this. And, last but not least, it is essential to identify sources of country-owned change and to find instruments and strategies to support them.

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Chapter 8

UNESCO Kabul's capacity development work in literacy: An irreconcilable dilemma?

Yukitoshi Matsumoto

8.1 Introduction

Long periods of prolonged conflict and chronic social instability have resulted in a profound loss of educational opportunity for the people of Afghanistan, a history clearly implicated in the fact that only 26 per cent of the adult population (over age 15) are said to be literate. Even these low levels of literacy, however, mask substantial geographic, social, and gender cleavages: in rural areas where 74 per cent of all Afghans reside, an estimated 93 per cent of women and 65 per cent of men cannot read and write (MRRD and CSO, 2009: 66). To address such a dire situation, the NESP identified literacy as one of its key priorities, with the more recent NESP-II (2010–2014) envisioning 'increasing literacy of the population aged 15 and over to 48 per cent by 2014'. Such an ambitious target is to be achieved by providing literacy education to 3.6 million people, a policy initiative that clearly requires substantial attention to, and resources for, CD. The MoE has therefore partnered with UNESCO to achieve these goals.

Historically, equipping a highly diverse – ethnically, linguistically, culturally, and geographically – Afghan society with adequate levels of literacy has been seen as a major priority, especially in the context of (less than successful) nation-building and efforts to foster social cohesion. The 1964 Constitution under the then royal government stipulated that 'facilities for free basic education shall be made available as far as possible to illiterate adults and young people above school age (Article VII)', resulting in the establishment of the Department of Adult Literacy (Samady, 2001: 30). Similarly, the communist government of the 1980s established a National Commission for the Eradication of Illiteracy, headed by the prime minister. It spearheaded an ambitious, nation-wide National Literacy Campaign that placed particular emphasis

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on women. There was substantial, often violent, resistance in villages due to the political nature of the campaign, which as a result was largely unsuccessful (Rubin, 2002: 115, 126, 140; Samady, 2001: 17, 70). Despite the prolonged conflict that followed the demise of the communist regime and its successors, the Literacy Department (LD) established in 1980 managed to survive to this day. Even the Taliban regime tried – without success – to implement literacy classes for males.[87]

8.2 Capacity development needs of the MoE

With its own planning department, and administration and management staff separate from the MoE, the LD has considerable autonomy from the Ministry and the wider government bureaucracy (UNESCO, 2009). The LD's primary functions are programme design and the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of literacy programmes throughout the country. At the same time, a separate Literacy Directorate under the Education Directorate operates at the provincial and district levels, charged with overseeing field implementation of literacy classes. Other significant actors in the literacy landscape include the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Defence, and the Ministry of Women's Affairs, as well as NGOs, which all implement component parts of national literacy plans or smaller literacy programmes. Given all of these actors, coordination is another important role for the LD. The LD provides support services to the greatest extent possible within its highly constrained financial resource base. The support includes the provision of facilitators – that is, literacy teachers – as well as monitoring, programme provision, and, at times, something as modest as permission to use national literacy primers and/or government certificates for the learners, in which case the implementing agency is responsible for printing primers and certificates.

8.3 Capacity development activities

In order to achieve the ambitious national literacy goals, the NESP-II directs the LD to focus on five key areas where further improvement is crucial: (1) balanced access to literacy programmes, (2) development of curriculum and learning materials, (3) conducting literacy facilitator education, (4) monitoring and supervision, and (5) overall coordination

87. Author interview with MoE and LD staff who worked at the MoE under the Taliban regime.

of literacy efforts. UNESCO's CD efforts aim to complement the LD and focus on these areas too.

The Literacy and Non-Formal Education Development in Afghanistan (LAND Afghan, 2003–2005) programme aimed to develop national literacy and non-formal education resources (NESP-II, area 2). Before LAND Afghan, when post-Taliban reconstruction started, the LD only had three volumes of 'literacy textbooks' with no curriculum framework, and these were neither well designed nor based on any kind of needs assessment. Different agencies delivered fragmented literacy interventions with contents that the LD had no influence on. A remarkable achievement of LAND Afghan was to successfully restructure national literacy efforts under an overarching, coherent curriculum framework; it was based on a rigorous and nation-wide needs assessment survey, and as a result the LD was equipped with the resources and tools it needed – such as a literacy primer and facilitator guidebook – to conduct relevant and improved literacy interventions. After LAND Afghan, the LD was at least capable of presenting a national literacy framework and asking other agencies to respect, align with, or be in synergy with it.

The UNESCO-led Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) has now been designated as the national literacy framework, enabling all stakeholders to promote literacy education in a more effective and collaborative manner (NESP-II, area 5). UNESCO and the Deputy Minister for Literacy chair a monthly LIFE coordination meeting where all major literacy agencies meet and coordinate their efforts. Joint analysis and planning has been strengthened through LIFE's Needs Assessment Report (NAR) and the National Literacy Action Plan (NLAP). The NAR analyses the literacy situation and identifies gaps between needs and ongoing literacy interventions. The NLAP is envisaged as a road map for all literacy stakeholders to follow and collaborate on as they promote literacy education. Both are seen as essential components for fostering a common vision, guiding principles, and a sound, effective national literacy strategy.

Most prominently, UNESCO and the MoE's joint programme for Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan, 2008–2013 (ELA), now one of Afghanistan's largest literacy programmes, aims at developing comprehensive human and organizational capacities of the LD's central, provincial, and district level offices. ELA seeks to provide nine months of literacy instruction to 600,000 youths and adults as well as skills development to selected neo-literates in 18 provinces. One of the serious

challenges the Afghan government faces is its weak leverage over the sub-national levels, particularly rural society and villages. Although there are MoE personnel in charge of literacy at provincial and district level, interaction between central and sub-national offices is minimal, mostly due to lack of communication facilities, but also to weak capacities in monitoring, evaluation, recording, and reporting at all levels. As such, the LD at central level is unable to survey the field, which makes identification of CD needs difficult. Experience acquired through joint implementation of literacy programmes at the community level will be used to inform CD and future literacy interventions at the central level. Three ELA CD efforts are conducted at the national and sub-national (provincial, district, and community[88]) levels.

1. **Development of technical knowledge and skills for delivering quality literacy education (national level).** The ELA emphasizes two key areas for quality literacy education: quality of curriculum and primers and skills of literacy facilitators. Literacy programme content needs regular updates, as the socio-political situation (including social needs and demands) in Afghanistan changes constantly and rapidly. Literacy facilitators need to upgrade their skills and knowledge accordingly. The goals have been to strengthen material and human resources for quality literacy education through careful reviewing and timely upgrading of teaching and learning materials and training manuals, and training of master trainers within the LD. The aspiration is to enhance individual and organizational capacity and create a pool of knowledge within the LD to ensure sustained literacy education quality for the future.
2. **Development of planning and administration capabilities (national level).** The Afghanistan Literacy Assessment Survey (ALAS) and the Literacy and Non-Formal Education Management Information System (Lit/NFE-MIS) aim to improve the capability for accurate strategic planning of literacy programmes within the LD. As mentioned previously, given the task's magnitude, many organizations beyond the LD – other government ministries, UN agencies, and a host of loosely affiliated international and national

88. Activity at sub-national level is one of four main CD activities (the three others take place in Kabul), but the intervention scale is the largest at sub-national level. Most of the ELA programme's US$34 million budget is spent at the provincial, district, and community levels, on training costs, operation costs of literacy classes, skill development, salary for staff, teachers, etc.

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NGOs – have been delivering literacy programmes throughout the country. Unlike the formal education sector, literacy and non-formal education tends to be characterized by flexible delivery in terms of venue, time, curricula, and teaching methodologies. The Ministry as well as literacy providers thus need good communication and coordination to be able to understand the totality of literacy interventions and plan for future integration or change.

Although the LD has been trying for quite some time to collect information from literacy providers, the accuracy of such data is somewhat dubious, which severely hampers the LD's yearly and mid-term strategic planning. With more accurate statistical data, understanding, managing, and catalysing further change would be greatly improved, since such information would capture change and the totality of literacy efforts on a regular basis. The ALAS system is thus designed to equip the LD with accurate literacy statistics acquired through test-based surveys, while the Lit/NFE-MIS provides updated data on literacy and non-formal education programmes through programme mapping and nation-wide monitoring. Both systems are crucial for any further promotion of literacy in the county: it is impossible to manage and plan effective literacy intervention without a clear idea of what goes on in the field and where the needs are.

3. **Development of capability in programme delivery and monitoring (sub-national level).** The primary focus of sub-national CD efforts is to ensure a stable organizational-level frame, by setting up provincial literacy centres (PLCs) and district literacy centres (DLCs). Although literacy directorates have recently been established under the provincial and district education directorates as a result of the MoE's restructuring process, poor facilities severely constrain them from carrying out even their most basic responsibilities. PLCs and DLCs are thus to be enhanced, to function not only as the field offices for ELA implementation, but also as provincial and district strategic bases for literacy delivery, where ELA programme personnel and MoE provincial and district literacy personnel work together on a daily basis. Joint ELA implementation and monitoring serves as hands-on training for the MoE's literacy personnel, and organizational and human capacities are intended to develop to the point where quality literacy delivery can be sustained after the completion of the ELA programme.

8.4 Analysis of impact

Since the prolonged conflict has severely broken down continuous transfer and accumulation of knowledge and skills within the LD, one of the most pressing tasks is to develop technical capacities among individuals, as well as between and within organizations. However, as Fitzbein (1997, cited by Barakat and Chard, 2003) pointed out over a decade ago, capacity 'is the combination of skills and professionalism that determine staff quality, but their ineffective use because of inhibiting conditions and lack of resources can also result in apparent lack of personal capacity' (Fitzbein, 1997: 1031). Similarly, as noted in *Chapter 2*, Davies (2009) suggests that CD needs to be addressed in three dimensions, namely the organizational, institutional culture, and enabling environment/political context dimensions; De Grauwe (2009) suggests four dimensions (individual, organizational, public administration, and contextual). There is a growing realization that CD needs to be viewed far more holistically, rather than focusing exclusively on the personal knowledge, abilities, and motivations of personnel (Barakat and Chard, 2003).

From having witnessed even highly motivated and competent officials in Afghanistan sit idly in poorly furnished offices due to lack of personal connections and adequate financial/material resources, it becomes apparent that effective use of technical capacities and professionalism of individuals is heavily conditioned by the immediate work environment and the larger context. In other words, the lack of the 'enabling environment/political context' described by Davies (2009) explains the 'apparent lack of personal capacity' in large parts of the LD, much in line with Fitzbein's warnings raised a decade ago.

For these reasons, the ELA approach to CD has been not only to address its technical aspects (such as organizing training of trainers, establishing a task force for curriculum review and revision, and collecting statistical data), but also to translate this into an enabling environment where LD personnel can use their enhanced capacities in practice to create positive change. In spite of Afghanistan's high illiteracy rates, the LD receives a very small portion of the MoE budget: 2 per cent of the core budget, 1 per cent of the development budget. A severe lack of facilities such as office space and equipment, as well as communication and transportation, particularly outside the capital, means that even when human capacity is successfully developed its transformation into changed organizational practice is far from automatic. This inadequate

programme budget has demotivated literacy personnel. Because of the poor conditions within the MoE, they feel that they do not get the chance to use the new technical capacities they acquired through costly and time-consuming training with international aid agencies. In this regard, the construction of PLCs and DLCs and the provision of basic equipment under the ELA would improve the infrastructural environment for literacy officials. Moreover, joint implementation and monitoring of the ELA literacy programme in the 100 districts under their initiative would greatly increase their opportunities to use their professional skills in the real field settings where those skills are intended to be used. Having the opportunity to use their skills would surely lead to further reflection on their current capabilities and encourage personal motivation to improve. Yet while the ELA attempts to develop capacities as well as provide opportunities for using these new skills, the lack of sustainable resources is still likely to be a serious obstacle to LD personnel's ability to engage and commit. Exacerbating this situation is the substantial salary gap between civil servants and programme personnel employed by international aid agencies.[89] This gap affects the LD's initiatives and has created a highly counterproductive 'incentive culture' among government personnel, where engagement in and commitment to the externally funded training and activities is conditioned by good lunches and generous allowances. Under such conditions, CD in actual programme implementation continues to falter, even though on paper capacity has been developed. Continuous resource mobilization that can provide at least a decent salary and decent working environment becomes one of the key issues, one with no immediate solution given the international trend towards decreasing investment in adult literacy education. To address this problem, UNESCO has been attempting through ELA and other literacy programming to develop the organizational capacities of the LD as a department in a wider sense (technical skills, professionalism, motivation, etc.) that can help convince donors that the LD is worth investing in.

De Grauwe (2009) has argued that improving public administration is one of the four key dimensions the CD needs to address. Dysfunctional administrative and financial government mechanisms, particularly at provincial and district level, also create a severe obstacle for effective CD, giving LD personnel no opportunities to act and negatively affecting motivation and drive to do so.

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89. Editor's note: An issue that was also raised in *Chapters 4* and *5*.

With this in mind, UNESCO signed an Implementation Partnership Agreement with the MoE and the MoF in April 2009 as one way to affirm this more encompassing vision. The agreement aims to integrate the administrative and financial aspects of ELA field implementation into the overall government system. Under this agreement, the field implementation budget, including field staff salary and field operation costs, is disbursed through existing government channels. This should eventually strengthen ownership of the programme within the Ministry, as well as improving financial and administrative aspects of literacy delivery.

The Agreement does, to some extent, appear to have enhanced Ministry ownership of the ELA, but at the same time complex bureaucratic processes have resulted in severe delays in field-level activities. Delays in disbursement of field operational budgets have stalled activities such as implementation of the literacy classes, literacy facilitator training, and so on, and delays in salary payment of field staff and facilitators have reduced their motivation and commitment to the programme. In this way, substantial, insoluble tensions have emerged between the twin goals of delivering effective literacy programmes and building capacity, two activities traditionally seen as complementary.

Faced with this intractable dilemma, UNESCO Kabul and the Ministry have conducted a thorough evaluation of the activities under the partnership agreement. Although challenges remain serious, substantial improvements and flexibility in some of the administrative procedures have also been identified. As of 2010, UNESCO Kabul is using a new modality of the partnership with the Ministry, in which activities that have improved under the previous agreement, such as human resource management of ELA field personnel and joint field monitoring, are continued with a view to further improvement, while other activities are temporarily outsourced to external partners such as NGOs. The good practices of external partners will be incorporated in future partnerships with the Ministry.

8.5 Reflections and lessons learned

Whilst UNESCO's intention is to influence the governmental administrative structure in literacy delivery through joint financial and administrative management of ELA, an evaluator who appraised the approach in 2009 concluded that 'it is totally beyond the scope and ability of a literacy programme such as ELA to try to reform the

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National–Provincial budgeting mechanisms of the Afghan Government', since 'in reality, there is no single system available to the programme through these channels, and those that do exist are far too cumbersome and bureaucratic to allow effective support to a programme such as ELA'. He further maintained that 'in this case, focus on some aspects of CD defeats the fundamental purpose of a programme. Care must also be taken to ensure that the areas in which capacity building is attempted are within the frame of influence of the programme' (Reynolds, 2009). As already noted, these insights from the external evaluation suggest that efforts to enhance capacity can be in stark opposition to the purpose of the programme. Here one is faced with a difficult decision: to sacrifice a degree of capacity to deliver a programme in a timely fashion, or to sacrifice a degree of the original programme goals to try to work towards CD.

As Rubin (2002) points out, modern efforts at nation-building in Afghanistan can be understood as attempts to incorporate the numerous Afghan cultures and societies into a single entity through the formation of a strong state. However, the modern history of Afghanistan shows that the state has never succeeded in extending its authority to sub-national level, where tribal kinship and warlords continue to reign. Under the current new state-building efforts, significant procedural standardization has already been achieved at the national level, but administrative and financial systems still vary greatly at sub-national level and are 'often heavily dependent on informal patronage networks' (Reynolds, 2009).

The dilemma is how to balance actual literacy goals with system reform efforts. It is probably too ambitious to address organizational and human aspects of capacity with such a small budget in domains where ineffectiveness is deeply rooted, while at the same time delivering a programme in the field. Yet without sustained, robust capacity, any substantial gains in literacy that the programme might make can easily be pushed aside with the next change of government. In this way, literacy in Afghanistan can be considered a classic case of conflict between programme delivery and sustainable CD – a typical but highly problematic challenge, that of developing government capacity over the long term while implementing and delivering social services such as literacy education in the confines of fixed short-term budgets and fixed time-frames. In a rapidly changing social and political environment framed by the immediate need to provide social services to a war-ravaged population (which ultimately contributes greatly to nation-building

efforts), no easy solutions to this dilemma are immediately apparent. Although there may be little alternative to trying to achieve both goals simultaneously, it is critical to recognize that they are not always complementary and may require hard choices in the near future about where to place greater priority and thus resources.

One overarching concern is that the current somewhat state-centric or top-down approach to nation-building, if not crafted very carefully, might exacerbate rather than mitigate conflict between the state and still largely rural Afghan society, even if administrative and procedural systems are established at the sub-national level.

The history of nation-building in Afghanistan shows that its approach was always top-down, whether under the royal government, communist government, or Taliban regime (although it is not clear that the Taliban were very concerned with nation-building), and social services such as education have always been an important tool for instilling ideologies such as modernism, Pashtunism, communism, or Islamic fundamentalism among the population. As Rubin (2002) pointed out, in its nation-building process and its dependence on external resources (including 'foreign' ideologies as well as foreign funding), this top-down approach led to the state seeming not only illegitimate to its people but also increasingly distant from them. As a result, Afghanistan has lost many other potential means for the state and the population to interact. Significant numbers of the population experience their day-to-day interaction with the state in the form of direct violence or other forms of predatory activity, as is evidenced in UN surveys of corruption (UNODC, 2010) or in CARE's research on attacks on schools, where community members perceived the police and armed forces as at best largely irrelevant to security (Glad, 2009). Several analysts point out that a main reason for the success of the current insurgency is not the strength of the Taliban, but simply that the current state has so little to offer.[90] Here, education has a key role to play in making the state relevant to its citizens and helping to establish a social contract of mutual rights and responsibilities between them.

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90. Such analysts include especially civil society and advocacy organizations, whose organizational mandates permit them to 'speak truth to power' (for instance Oxfam, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), or Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN). However, comments by leading power figures such as the US ambassador to Afghanistan Karl W. Eikenberry's leaked confidential memo to the US State Department (2009) point in the same direction.

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This would be a key element in bringing the Afghan state to be able to raise funds through taxation and thus gradually become independent of foreign influence.

In a war-torn nation such as Afghanistan, a functional state is a prerequisite for nation-building. After all, numerous anti-government elements have vested interests in preventing a unified Afghan nation from emerging, as it would undermine their power base. As Giustozzi (2010) points out, nation-building is only possible through the use of cultural-ideological and armed force, as the history of state formation in Europe shows. Certainly, a unified Afghan nation will be forged not only by state institutions but also by religion, popular movements, civil society, and a functioning market allowing for peaceful exchanges inside and outside the country. But fundamentally, an Afghan nation needs a state to come into existence, and vice versa. A key CD objective in a post-conflict context is therefore to contribute to strengthening state functionality in a sustainable manner.

In the meantime, quick delivery of social services to a war-torn society may greatly contribute to nation-building, in that it increases government visibility among rural communities. However, it is equally important to identify Afghans' diverse needs and aspirations, which need to be incorporated in whatever social services the state decides to deliver. The approach here is necessarily bottom-up. CD efforts should encourage and train Afghan society to actively participate in the nation-building process; capacity developers (and nation-builders) in post-conflict contexts need to think hard about where to situate themselves in the multiple complexities they face.

Ideally, there should be no trade-off between quick, effective delivery and sustainable CD. On the ground, however, agencies usually tend to establish ad hoc systems and institutions that parallel the state in order to quickly deliver programme outputs in the field. The ideal approach helps create a functional government, a crucial prerequisite for nation-building. The actual approach helps create a more active, educated society. The dire situation of the Afghan population, reeling from three decades of conflict, makes this latter approach the more appealing one. Yet it cannot be overlooked that a functioning state and an active society are both prerequisites for nation-building. Nor can it be overlooked that national and international efforts are essentially the latest version of nation-building, a project that Afghanistan has never

succeeded at in the past. So while keeping in mind what appears to be an irreconcilable dilemma for the foreseeable future, aid agencies must resort to compromises that can serve both goals. There can be no single ideal solution, nor a static one: aid agencies must use their resources and influence to maintain a balance between the two goals until major structural reforms in the wider government and international arena take root and hopefully push Afghanistan beyond this dilemma – something that may well take a decade or more.

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Chapter 9

Afghanistan towards inclusive education: Reaching the goals of EFA

Marina Patrier and Celina Jensen

Promoters of an inclusive and child-friendly environment in schools have had many achievements over the past few years. Most importantly, the Minister of Education, Farooq Wardak, has embraced inclusive education (IE) as a goal to which Afghanistan is strongly committed. In his message to the 48th session of the International Conference on Education, he stated that 'the Constitution and the Education Law of Afghanistan guarantee all children the right to education regardless of their gender, their abilities and disabilities, as well as their backgrounds and circumstances' (Wardak, 2008: 1).

9.1 Capacity development needs of the MoE

The number of students in Afghanistan's General Education schools has increased from 2.3 million in 2002 to 6.2 million (36 per cent female) in 2008. Despite the progress made over the past few years, half of the school-age children are estimated to be out of school. In addition to the children who are excluded from education, many are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion within the education system.

One of the long-term goals of the MoE's new draft NESP-II (2010–2014) is to ensure that all schools in Afghanistan become inclusive and child-friendly (MoE, 2010*a*: 21). All children, regardless of their abilities, disabilities, backgrounds, or circumstances, should therefore be welcomed in their neighbourhood schools. In line with this goal, UNESCO has been supporting the MoE to implement IE so that all children have equal access to quality education, with a special focus on girls, children affected by conflict and war, children affected by drugs, children from ethnic, language, or social and religious minorities, children from poor economic backgrounds, children with disabilities, children in conflict with the law, children living on the street, nomadic (Kuchi) children, children suffering from neglect, abandonment, or abuse, children living far from schools, and working children.

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The first NESP (2006–2010) acknowledged a commitment to provide quality education for all children. However, the importance of establishing inclusive and child-friendly education was not mentioned specifically, nor was the importance of mainstreaming IE into all education programmes to effectively address the diversity of children's needs and abilities.

In 2007, the MoE started implementing the Inclusive Education Pilot Schools Project with the support and collaboration of UNESCO, UNICEF, and the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA), based on provisions in the Afghan Constitution, the Afghan Education Law, the World Declaration on EFA (1990), and the Dakar Framework for Action (2000), as well as the Afghan MDGs.

At the policy level, the concept of IE was largely unknown prior to the implementation of this project. Knowledge relevant to IE was for the most part nonexistent. There were no resource persons available within the MoE with specialized knowledge of the educational needs of children vulnerable to exclusion from, and within, the education system. As a result, how IE could help solve some of the challenges to quality education provision was little understood. Another problem was that IE required communication and cooperation between many ministerial units and departments, but there was little dialogue between the ministerial counterparts who needed to work together.

The long-term goal of IE was to reach the EFA goals in Afghanistan, but there was a general lack of understanding of how the education system needed to change to address all the diverse needs within schools. It was important to raise awareness of the idea that the system should adapt to children's different needs, rather than the children having to adapt to the system. In short, there was an all-round need for greater awareness, knowledge, and sensitization on the issue of IE, but achieving this level of awareness was difficult because of the overwhelming needs of Afghanistan's education system as a whole.

For quality education to materialize, it is equally important to acknowledge the need for CD at the teacher education level. Only 24 per cent of teachers have an education of grade 14 or above, according to 2008 figures (MoE, 2010*a*: 40). Neither IE as a concept nor teaching methodologies that promote an inclusive, learning-friendly environment (ILFE) in schools are taught to future teachers. As a result, UNESCO works with the MoE's Teacher Training Department to include IE

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training in the curriculum. The disregard for IE in Afghanistan up until recently stems from old teaching methodologies in which teachers teach all children in the same way without actively engaging them in the teaching–learning process or addressing their individual needs. The low overall education levels of the teachers themselves also play a role.

Children learn in different ways because of their diversity of experiences, environments, abilities, and personalities. Teachers need to use a variety of teaching methods and activities to meet all these different learning needs. Embracing student diversity is not an easy task, but teachers can achieve this goal by recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of each child and planning lessons accordingly; by using teaching strategies such as participatory learning and subject integration (e.g. using art as a means to learn language and mathematics) and by adapting the curriculum to fit the abilities and background of each child. It is important for all teachers in Afghanistan to understand what an ILFE is and how it can be created in each school and in each classroom. In addition to learning how to manage an inclusive classroom, teachers need to understand the importance of involving parents and community members in schools. They also need to understand the various barriers that exclude children in school and how to address those barriers, so that all children have equal access to education.

9.2 Description of capacity development activities

CD at the policy level is critical to making long-term change in the education system; it can take the form, for example, of awareness-raising about ILFEs. A major challenge is the lack of coordination within the MoE and among development partners. Another critical obstacle is the shortage of teachers trained in IE, as well as the shortage of learning materials for students with special educational needs, according to the draft NESP-II (MoE, 2010*a*: 31). To address these three issues, UNESCO has been supporting the MoE to provide better access to quality education for all children through five main interventions.

Since 2007, UNESCO, UNICEF, and MACCA have supported the MoE in establishing pilot schools for IE in Kabul, focusing on CD for master trainers as well as training of teachers, school principals, and parents. The training of teachers focused on learning how to teach children with diverse abilities and backgrounds,[91] how to manage

91. Editor's note: This includes different types of disability, not just physical but also mental.

classrooms so that all children feel welcome and participate actively, and how all children can benefit from the learning process. Parents learned different techniques for supporting children with disabilities at home, such as sign language, orientation, and mobility, as well as active daily living skills, such as grooming, bathing, or toileting.

Results improved progressively during the projects' second phase in 2008, involving 12 pilot schools with a total enrolment of 90 students with special education needs. At present, the number of IE pilot schools has increased to 29, including more than 400 students with special educational needs. In total, 250 teachers and 350 parents have received training in IE. In addition, the principals, headmasters, and deputies of these schools have also received IE awareness training, which has also improved the quality of education for the thousands of other children in these pilot schools.

Three different areas of Kabul with different ethnic and socio-economic compositions were chosen for the pilot implementation. Schools in these areas were identified and teachers and school principals were approached and introduced to the programme. Local mosques announced the project to community members and encouraged them to bring their children to the schools. Teacher training took place during four afternoons every month for nine months, and parents received training two afternoons every month for nine months. The school principals and headmasters were also included in the sessions.

Ultimately, the teacher training aims to improve the skills of teachers and their knowledge of IE so that they recognize barriers to education and can actively seek ways to remove them. Parents receive information on the rights of all children to education. In 2010, children with speech impairments, hearing impairment, developmental impairment, epilepsy, disabling health conditions, and visual impairment, along with other groups mentioned at the start of this section who are vulnerable to exclusion from and within the education system, attend the pilot schools.[92]

In March 2008, an Inclusive Education Coordination Working Group (IECWG), co-chaired by MoE and UNESCO, was established with the fourfold objective of supporting the MoE:

92. Source: UNESCO monitoring visits to the schools and interviews with parents and teachers. Case stories are documented in Enabling Education Network Asia (2008, 2009) and an IE booklet (UNESCO Kabul Office, 2010).

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1. to create a shared conceptual understanding of IE;
2. to advocate for advancing the IE agenda in Afghanistan;
3. to improve coordination and collaboration among IE stakeholders, existing working groups, and related line departments to align them with the EFA Goals and the NESP;
4. to review existing and proposed policies, strategies, and guidelines in order to make recommendations for ensuring that they become inclusive.

The Working Group consists of local and international NGOs working on IE, as well as UN agencies. It reports to the Human Resource Development Board (HRDB), which brings together four different ministries, donors, and some NGOs and UN agencies. It has proven to be an effective coordination mechanism as well as a platform for knowledge sharing and CD. Since its inception, members have benefited from UNESCO training on child rights and on inclusive and child-friendly education. This training has been extended to develop the member organizations' staff capacity, for instance on the use of the ILFE toolkit. NGOs such as the IRC and the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) are now using the toolkit for their teacher training programmes in the provinces. Save the Children have provided support to train the master trainers in child rights issues. The Working Group has developed a comprehensive list of resource personnel available to support MoE programmes as well as partner organizations to maximize the use of existing human resources. It is also a means to share knowledge, experience, and successful practices. In addition, UNESCO's technical support has led to improved practices in some IECWG member organizations, such as the Afghan National Association of the Blind (AAB), the Afghan Association of the Deaf, and SERVE Afghanistan, a humanitarian NGO. For instance, AAB will establish youth groups in the association, thus involving more young people in its future organizational development.

With the support of UNESCO, the MoE developed a National Report on Education in preparation for the 48th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE), which focused on IE and was organized by the UNESCO International Bureau for Education in Geneva in November 2008. In this report, and in his message to the ICE, the Minister of Education pledged Afghanistan's commitment to the establishment of inclusive and child-friendly pilot schools, in addition to a number of other goals targeting IE (MoE, 2008: 4; Wardak, 2008).

As a follow-up to the ICE, UNESCO and IECWG members supported the MoE in conducting an Inclusive Education Needs and Rights Assessment for Afghanistan. The assessment aimed at informing policy by developing a road map to move IE forward in Afghanistan. The MoE aims to implement IE throughout the country in the 2010–2014 period, since IE is essential to reaching the EFA goals.

Based on this road map, UNESCO and the MoE initiated a project called Afghanistan towards Inclusive Education (2009–2010), funded by Sida. In accordance with the principle of the right to EFA, the IE project aims to promote quality basic education for all children in Afghanistan, particularly for those who are most vulnerable to exclusion from and within the education system, and to ensure that all children enrolled in the education system participate actively in the learning process. It also aims to change attitudes of teachers and school authorities, developing their understanding of how to meet individual children's learning needs as well as the importance of including all children in the learning process. The project has two specific objectives: improving policy development and coordination for education in general and IE in particular, and strengthening MoE capacities to create inclusive, learning-friendly environments in schools.

To date, the project – which builds on the pilot schools project – has several notable achievements, including the promotion of IE in 29 pilot schools in Kabul (also supported by UNICEF and MACCA); training parents to better address the needs of their children; training teachers and school principals on inclusive and child-friendly teaching methodologies; the development and publication of the Embracing Diversity Toolkit, which serves as a teaching guide for teachers; and support to students and teachers at Kabul Education University.

As part of the project, in 2010 the MoE with the support of UNESCO organized a High Level Roundtable and a National Conference on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education. This led to three main achievements: the adoption of an IE definition for Afghanistan; the adoption of the Afghanistan Declaration on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education; and a new *tashkeel* for the MoE adopted by the Parliament, which is supportive of the nation-wide implementation of inclusive and child-friendly education. IE was also included in the draft Interim Plan to the EFA-FTI (MoE, 2010*b*) as a crosscutting issue.

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9.3 Impact, lessons learned, and reflections

The Inclusive Pilot Schools project has gone through three phases and has shown impressive CD achievements since its 2007 inception. Following a bottom-up approach, the project did not have a detailed long-term strategic plan, but rather innovated along the way, in response to the needs of the MoE and the education system as well as inputs from master trainers, parents, and children. It was difficult from the outset to create a set plan and guidelines for IE, since it was a new concept, but this is now being developed based on the experience of the three pilot test years.

While the MoE was involved in the project from the beginning, it initially showed little interest in IE; nor did teachers and school authorities. Interest among key government stakeholders grew over three years as the project showed significant progress, through increased enrolment and retention of children who used to be out of school, and thereby became more visible.[93] The most evident result is that the IE project has expanded from the initial 3 schools in 2007 to 29 schools in 2010. This expansion was not initiated by UN agencies but has been the choice of the MoE – a clear indicator of government officials' increased understanding of IE and its importance in the provision of quality education.

Initially, most teachers involved in the process were sceptical about the benefits of IE and its impact on improving education quality. By working first with teachers and conducting a series of training, the concept and importance of IE became more widespread, as graduates trained further teachers in their schools and advocated for the importance of IE to school authorities and eventually to government officials.

UNESCO supports the training of master trainers and teachers, and works closely with them. More than 200 teachers have been trained. Teaching methodologies have improved through the creation of the IE toolkit and by increasing communication among teachers, students, and parents. Teachers have become more open to new ideas, even ideas that at first seemed challenging and difficult to understand or accept. Teacher attitude changes towards groups of children vulnerable to exclusion (children with HIV and AIDS, children with developmental impairments, etc.) were measured using pre- and post-training questionnaires.

93. Source: author interviews with teachers, school inspectors, principals, and headmasters.

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Many MoE officials have now come on board – an important achievement. They now understand the concept of IE and encourage the development of a policy for it; as such, MoE government officials have become much more active partners in promoting IE in schools and teacher training programmes. For instance, the Teacher Education Department has expressed its support for a component on IE in its teacher training programme, so that all new teachers will be trained in the concept as well as in teaching methodology to ensure that all children actively participate in the education process. In addition, the Working Group on Inclusive Education, consisting of UN agencies, NGOs, and the MoE, has been established to coordinate all IE activities.

The Teacher Training Department has also come on board. Its first staff training on IE was held in April 2010, and there is potential to reach across the country so that teachers from all provinces and districts become aware of IE and its importance in ensuring quality education across Afghanistan.

Finally, district education officers in the pilot school districts have also become aware of the pilot schools, and have supported IE. The master trainers carry out their training tasks in addition to their regular teaching jobs. The district education officers have been flexible about the number of hours the master trainers allocate to their regular jobs, so that they can spend more time assisting teachers in other schools to make them more inclusive. This was approved by the MoE's head of section for IE.

IE initiatives in Afghanistan have had a great impact on the Afghan education system, a policy-level change evident in the difference between NESP-I and NESP-II. Structurally, the MoE's new IE unit is a firm step forward. IE has become a vital tool for achieving the EFA goals. There is also greater awareness among teachers, parents, school authorities, and government officials: parents and other community members have become more active in their support of the educational and committee activities of the IE pilot schools. By government regulation, schools in Afghanistan are supposed to have seven committees to address and campaign for issues of health and sanitation, the environment, and community involvement in school activities, among other topics. However, in most schools they are inactive. As a positive outcome of the IE project, these committees have become active in some of the 29 IE pilot schools. Parents and other community members now come to the school more often, asking teachers

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how to support their children educationally. Their increased involvement has led to heightened awareness.

The impact of IE has not been felt on the schools and the education system alone; it has also extended to individual families regardless of their background, their circumstances, or the disabilities or special needs of their children.[94] The families and parents of the 400 children who are now in school due to the project are also its indirect beneficiaries. In addition, teachers who have received training in IE go on to train other teachers in their schools, thereby changing the overall mindset positively.[95]

The mindset of parents has changed as well. They have become more proud of their children; they do not look only at their disabilities but have learned to value their abilities (Enabling Education Network Asia, 2008, 2009). At the outset of the project, many parents expressed concern that their children with disabilities would be bullied; in 2010, parents were meeting with master trainers twice a month and there had not been a single report of bullying of these children in any of the pilot schools. It can be assumed that the inclusion of these children in the schools and in regular classrooms has created empathy among other students, resulting in a more child-friendly atmosphere and one that is more conducive to learning.

Overall, these achievements owe their success to the approach taken initially in implementing this project. It started as a grassroots project with a bottom-up approach that sought to train teachers and parents within communities. Due to the overwhelming needs of the education sector in Afghanistan as a whole, it was decided not to develop a concrete strategic plan, but to work with and include teachers, parents, and government officials in every one of the project's steps, slowly introducing the concept and incorporating the ideas, opinions, and concerns of all those involved. Ultimately, the project has been successful because it allowed time for perceptions to change and encouraged all those involved to design the process and define the goals together. It did not push too far or too hard at the beginning, but made space for change and for the perceptions of

94. For an example, see the case story 'Now they respect me' about a deaf boy who became able to communicate with his family after he and his older brother received IE training (Enabling Education Network Asia, 2008: 17).
95. Source: weekly UNESCO visits to the pilot schools for the last two years; attitude changes observed during training.

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those involved to change. The achievement therefore is marked by strong project ownership and a successful process of inclusion, in addition to reaching the project's targets.

CD and awareness-raising activities have also made a real impact at the policy level. In 2009, UNESCO supported the MoE in drafting NESP-II (MoE, 2010*a*). This led to the recognition of the importance of IE, as reflected in NESP-II, which clearly emphasizes the MoE's commitment to promoting IE throughout Afghanistan. Furthermore, IE is now a crosscutting issue in the Interim Plan to be submitted to the FTI (MoE, 2010*b*), supporting the belief that Afghanistan will not reach the EFA goals unless schools become inclusive and child-friendly. The MoE also prepared a Country Report titled 'Reaching the unreached and decentralization' (MoE, 2009*b*) with the support of UNESCO for the second South Asia EFA Ministerial Forum in December 2009.

According to the new *tashkeel*, the MoE is planning to establish a Unit on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education under a new Department for Equal Access to Quality Education for All. The impact here is double: consensus is growing on the fact that EFA cannot be reached without IE. The new unit will ensure sustainability, ownership, and leadership of the different projects within the MoE and, more importantly, will help institutionalize the IE efforts made so far. This new unit will focus, among other priorities, on policies and regulations, human resource development, data collection, and the expansion of the pilot schools.

There are several lessons to be learned from the implementation of the Inclusive Pilot Schools project. First, a comprehensive baseline survey was not conducted at the outset, making it difficult to measure the exact project impact. Second, better-structured reporting should have taken place throughout the project's initial phases to ensure quality assurance as well as better-structured training. Most of the training was ad hoc, based on need and requests by the teachers, and therefore was not consistently documented. Third, until recently the principals of schools and the district education officers were not sufficiently involved, which created some friction between teachers and school management. Fourth, until recently master trainers were not legally appointed by the government. More efforts should have been made to formalize their role as master trainers, which would have strengthened their authority within the system.

Lastly, the initial project phases were not sufficiently anchored within the different MoE levels. While some government officials were involved from the beginning, considerable staff turnover later resulted in project implementation difficulties. The implementing agencies should have worked more comprehensively with the different layers of the MoE to ensure full and consistent involvement by all key MoE government officials. As suggested by Barnett R. Rubin, the Afghan government needs to receive both resources and assistance to develop its leadership if it is to deliver tangible benefits in areas of international development (Rubin, 2007). While the country has re-established basic government institutions, they need to be considerably strengthened (Rubin, 2006). Future projects promoting inclusive and child-friendly education in Afghanistan will need to engage the MoE in order to build IE capacities at all levels of the government. The establishment of a new unit on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education will most definitely strengthen this component.

It is critical to concentrate CD activities on civil servants, not on people temporarily linked to a project. It is important to institutionalize CD activities, which should be seen as a cycle with constant follow-up. This task is the responsibility of all stakeholders. One-off training can be a waste of time and money without proper follow-up and a strategy for sustainability identified and followed. Refresher training is always needed, which is also a way to test the CD impact. To assess the impact, it is important to discover whether the attitude of participants has changed. Changing the way people work is one of the indicators of success of CD, in addition to knowledge and skills.

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Chapter 10
Lessons learned

Morten Sigsgaard

10.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 detailed IIEP's experiences in CD with the MoE's DoPE. *Chapters 5–9* offered an account from the MoE's own point of view, as well as the experiences of a consortium of international NGOs (PACE-A), a donor agency (the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and a UN agency (UNESCO Kabul), all of whom have been involved in developing capacity in other parts of the MoE.

This chapter traces common patterns in these case studies to draw out lessons learned for CD agencies involved in Afghanistan's education sector.

10.2 Lessons learned about capacity development with Afghanistan's MoE

Building trusting relationships takes time, and is required for high-level political backing

Earning trust, respect, and legitimacy – a subset of the capability to relate and attract resources and support – is a necessary prerequisite for CD in Afghanistan's operational environment, which is characterized by trust gaps due to high levels of corruption, insecurity, and political instability.

Sperling (2006) uses the concept of trust gaps to identify a number of issues affecting education donors and recipient governments that may prevent donor involvement. The trust gaps concern: (1) the recipient government's ability to manage and disburse funds, (2) governmental diversion of funds to finance war, (3) the ability of the central government to prevent fraud and abuse, (4) inequitable use of funding across regions or across groups, (5) the use of education aid to teach hate or perpetuate oppression, and (6) concerns about the government's basic motives.

Waldman (2008) has documented that some donors in Afghanistan face aid effectiveness issues that could put their own credibility in question.

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For example, regarding trust gap (2), it could be asked why some donor governments invest 14 times more in the war than in reconstruction and development, especially when 2008 saw US$25 billion committed but only about US$15 billion spent, 'an aid shortfall of some $10 billion, equal to thirty times the annual education budget' (Waldman, 2008: 1).

The NGOs in the PACE-A consortium had earned credibility through 28 years of experience in delivering education in Afghanistan and in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan; in the 1990s, NGO education was often all that existed. IIEP had to wait four years before its project really started rolling. Those years were spent figuring out jointly which CD modalities made sense, training a number of planners, and getting to know key individual MoE counterparts such as the Deputy Minister and the director of planning.

This foundation of mutual trust was the basis that IIEP and PACE-A needed to seize the political window of opportunity that opened when Hanif Atmar became Minister in 2006. It enabled IIEP to convince Atmar to join hands and take a leap of faith in trying out a more long-term and participatory approach to planning, despite the risk of push-back from central government. PACE-A, too, relied on Atmar's personal support for community education to get its policy modifications through, and to discipline less cooperative provincial education directors to get in line with policy and treat PACE-A's provincial liaison officers properly.

It helped that Minister Atmar possessed an outstanding capability to commit and engage, including high aspirations for education, perseverance, determination to see things through, and the ability to instil conviction among the MoE staff around him. As mentioned in *Section 2.3*, this capability is the driving energy for the other four recognized capabilities; because Atmar communicated this energy to his staff, the CD agencies could focus on developing other capabilities. From a Ministry point of view, one senior MoE staff member commented that it was the MoE that influenced the NGOs, preventing them from running a parallel system competing with public education, and instead turning CBE into a complementary and integrated part of the national education system (personal communication, December, 2010).

When UNESCO Kabul enlisted the support of the current Minister of Education, Farooq Wardak, for its IE programme, it was also able to draw on credibility earned from leading literacy programmes, as well as its presence in Kabul since 2002 (also a key factor for IIEP's

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success) and an institutional history of partnership with Afghanistan's MoE dating back to the 1960s. UNESCO Kabul attributes the success of the programme to its experimental bottom-up approach, but has also put much work into securing the needed top-level support of the Minister and other high-level officials by partnering with the MoE to produce reports for UNESCO's 48th International Conference on Education in Geneva 2009, and organizing a high-level roundtable and a national conference on IE in 2010.

Lobbying, awareness-raising, and building knowledge are all parts of the advocacy work needed to generate mutual agreement on the end goal, which leads to political support and the Ministry taking ownership. PACE-A, IIEP, and UNESCO Kabul's IE programme all emphasized this. Joint review mechanisms, where TAs are held accountable not just to their implementing agency but also to the MoE, form one way of ensuring this alignment and ownership. Collaborative drafting and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the MoE and the CD agency is another mechanism that ensures that counterparts are literally on the same page.

The Ministers and the MoE, as well as IIEP, PACE-A, and UNESCO Kabul (and also the Netherlands), have made sure to take advantage of the political capital that education carries with it. Embracing CBE or IE would count on the Minister's track record in seeking to meet EFA goals. Such political capital is necessary for pushing reform through, and it would be irrational not to tap into it.

People come and go, but systems remain

The capability to carry out technical, service delivery, and logistical tasks is often seen as the main capacity to be developed, because this is where the measurable results stem from, as pointed out in *Section 2.3*. The agencies in this book underline that this capability hinges on systems: the title of *Chapter 6*, 'People come and go but systems remain', points to the fact that political will, personal charisma, or strength of leadership are dependent on personalities and therefore unreliable – especially in a political reality that has seen no less than six ministers of education during Hamid Karzai's presidency (as of October 2010). Systems outlive personalities.

Chapter 5 testifies to this: systems allow for planning based on facts, can reduce corruption, and are key to actually enacting the MoE's

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policies. These systems include the EMIS, school maps using GIS, the Academic Supervision system for surveying teaching quality, the Education Planning System with its simulation and projection models and logframes, and the massive P&G system that includes ToRs, pay scales, and staff evaluation procedures. The MoE notes that more remains to be done, for example extending the systems to the sub-national levels, and also that more systems are needed, such as a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system.

Systems, though, are no stronger than the staff who operate them. There are limits to the structural contradictions systems can bridge – for example, the P&G system, with its improvement of civil servant salaries, still remains unable to compete with international agency salaries. Yet it is telling that the MoE has some degree of faith that the P&G reform will lead to a culture of competitiveness and self-improvement, to replace cultures of nepotism, patronage, and passivity.

UNESCO Kabul reports similar challenges from the literacy sub-sector. Systems such as Literacy Surveys (ALAS) and the EMIS for Non-Formal Education (NFE-MIS) are in place; the next challenge is staff retention, and here the key is decent salaries and working conditions, and getting a chance to actually use the knowledge acquired through agency-sponsored training courses in the local MoE context.

Establishing specialized national CD programmes is a logical next step for the MoE in systematizing, regularizing, and nationalizing current CD efforts. IIEP as well as the Netherlands support the EQUIP programme through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). The Dutch are establishing a National Agriculture Education Center (NAEC) in Kabul, using an interesting 'employment bond' to retain staff within the organization: this bond combines a one-year master's course in the Netherlands with a contract to stay at least five years in the service of NAEC, plus a job guarantee from the MoE. IIEP is set to create a national training programme in its upcoming cooperation with the MoE. And the MoE itself aims to establish a number of national institutes for CD, educational planning, and curriculum development, and academies for teacher training in basic education, literacy, and TVET.

PACE-A and UNESCO Kabul's literacy programme's systematic bottom-up mobilization of teachers and communities was another method for becoming less reliant on individuals. Creating grassroots movements

for inclusive or community-based education is also a kind of system that MoE structures can tap into and draw strength from.

Figure 1 (p. 33) highlights that CD agencies cannot just implement their systems, but also need to take into account the institutional culture dimension, which in some cases means dealing with unpleasant features such as patronage and clientelism, lack of initiative, and the 'allowance culture' (*Section 2.2*). The MoE has written at length about insufficient staff motivation related to physical insecurity, political instability, or sluggish financial procedures. To the MoE, the third factor seemed as hopeless as the first two. Temporary acceptance or resignation over these issues seemed like a rational responses. Meanwhile, the MoE hoped that other issues, such as unclear ToRs, or underpaid staff, could find a technical solution – a space that CD work could meaningfully fill at the time. The MoE hoped that the P&G system would help create a work culture based on initiative, self-improvement, clear ToRs, and CD objectives. However, some of the larger contradictions, such as the TA salary discrepancy, were still at issue, and the MoE had to accept that changes were more up to donors and would take time. UNESCO Kabul had similar experiences, noticing the existence of the 'allowance culture', but also highlighting its own attempts to make its Literacy Programme is worth investing in by the MoE.

PACE-A and the MoE both note that establishing systems and, for PACE-A, placing TAs at provincial levels, can help to uncover patronage and clientelism. Systems need to be supplemented with political pressure: to get things done, the highest-level political support in the form of letters signed by the Minister was necessary – and even that was not always enough.

At the end of the day, the statement 'People come and go but systems remain' has a double meaning. These systems are not only the technocratic (and for any education administration, deeply necessary) systems that CD agencies try to put in place. They are also the traditional and embedded systems (such as those of patronage and loyalty to other forms of social organization than the state), which agencies and the MoE itself have to work with, as they will not change in a hurry.

Focus on processes, policy, and procedures, more than products

In assisting the MoE to develop the NESP-I, IIEP emphasized a focus on process as much as products. The style of partnership could be termed

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'accompaniment', meaning both sitting down and planning together, and IIEP always remaining available to discuss new policies before they were tried.

PACE-A's approach was based on working on policy and procedures, combined with counselling individuals to take on their new responsibilities. One of these policies was an Afghanization of the INEE Minimum Standards for CBE in Afghanistan, a set of standards that for instance the Netherlands help fund globally.

The aim for the CD agency should be to become redundant over time, as both PACE-A and IIEP have stated. This implies letting go, as IIEP did when the MoE suddenly developed a new draft of the NESP-II on its own initiative. Of course, the products – the NESPs – had a number of benefits, such as enabling donor coordination and creating coherence within the sector. UNESCO Kabul's literacy framework and PACE-A's CBE policy had similar effects. But what really mattered was the capacity that the NESPs gave the impetus to develop. With time, the NESP-II itself began addressing capacity explicitly, and it became obligatory for every NESP-II programme to have a CD objective.

When the process is more important than the product, CD can begin to take place through a broad variety of modalities, as both *Chapter 4* and especially *Chapter 7* document. This is a source of robustness: If one modality were to be blocked, for instance for security reasons, then there would always be alternatives.

Donors' flexibility and long-term commitment are invaluable

If time is required to develop trusting relationships, then CD agencies need donors to remain flexible and committed to funding long-term projects. The success stories in this book are partly thanks to donors willing to engage themselves for multi-year periods and 'take responsible risks', as the Netherlands put it in their guiding policy principles. In doing so, these donors have lived up to their commitment to the Paris principles, which is laudable given the domestic pressures they face from parliaments and taxpayers, to whom it is easier to sell short-term projects with tangible impacts than long-term CD. In the Dutch case, the government in 2010 had to step down and call elections because of popular discontent with Dutch military involvement in Afghanistan's Uruzgan province.

USAID supported PACE-A over a five-year period. Understanding that Atmar's period in office was a unique window of opportunity,

USAID permitted PACE-A to shift funds to development of MoE capacity for CBE at central and sub-national levels, even though the new CBE policy was still in draft form, and the strategies went well beyond the parameters of the original project design (for example, they entailed hiring 20 new advisors).

Sweden's development agency (Sida) was very flexible in supporting a two-year set-up of UNESCO Kabul's IE programme without any long-term strategic plan, favouring instead bottom-up participatory programme design with teachers, parents, and education officials. This allowed perceptions to change and enabled an ongoing negotiation of goals and content. It resulted in strong ownership and was central to the programme's success.

Norway (NORAD) supported IIEP for over three years. This medium-term time horizon meant that IIEP did not need to spend time on raising funds, which in the 2002-2005 period had limited IIEP's capability to commit and engage. NORAD permitted wide-ranging changes in project design, such as suddenly hiring 10 new project staff when the project needed it, and actively took part in discussions around the project, thanks to having a highly committed education specialist in charge of the portfolio.

Agency coordination and TAs: take ourselves as the starting point?

Coordination mechanisms such as the HRDB and the use of the NESPs as a coordination tool have been crucial in replacing individual donor commitments with collective alignment and harmonization based on policy dialogue. Coordination mechanisms seem like the only possible way to harmonize TA salaries. As pointed out in *Chapter 5*, the widespread use of TAs and their high salaries led to negative – albeit unintended – consequences such as brain drain, jealousy, marginalization, and demoralization on the part of the civil servants, who are supposed to run the Ministry, but whose salaries are lower than the lowest TA salary, even after the effects of the P&G reform.[96] Three questions arise: How can Afghanistan develop an education system that it can actually afford?

96. Figures vary, but entry level civil servant salaries were US$60 a month before the P&G reform and doubled to US$130 after the reform. Salaries for heads of departments quadrupled from US$160 to US$650 a month. Meanwhile, the lowest TA salary is usually around US$600 a month, but can be much higher. In comparison, an Afghan driver for the UN can earn US$1000 a month.

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What might such an education system look like if it was designed to be run mainly by civil servants? How can the MoE, donors, and CD agencies make it highly attractive to become a civil servant?

The fact that donors are able to pay international advisors US$20,000–40,000 per month (Waldman, 2008: 3), and can pay Afghan TAs salaries seven times higher than those of civil servants (MoE, 2010*c*), as noted in *Chapter 5*, shows that there are donor funds available to make a civil servant career more attractive. Whether Afghanistan will be able to afford this wage bill on its own through taxation at some point is less clear, as pointed out in *Chapter 5*; this principle of sustainability is perhaps one reason why donors refrain from further bolstering civil servant salaries. Yet it seems clear that donors could spend aid much more effectively.

Given the MoE's sluggish financial procedures – noted in *Chapters 5*, *6* and *8*, and evidenced by its inability to spend more than 44 per cent of its core development budget in 2009 – it would be unreasonable to expect donors and CD agencies to simply get rid of the TA job category.[97] But the least donors and CD agencies can do is to cooperate with the MoE on mapping and harmonizing TA salaries. The MoE has a TA policy and a standard TA salary, which it has presented to the donors at the HRDB. According to a senior MoE staff member, the issue is that some donors have adopted their own salary standards instead of approving and pushing for the MoE's salary policy (personal communication, MoE senior staff member, December 2010). Donors and agencies cannot ignore the fact that their policies and practices are a significant part of the challenging context that the MoE operates in. An exercise for donors and agencies would be to translate the first OECD-DAC principle into 'Take *ourselves* as the starting point', and apply the 'do no harm' principle to their own staffing policies. This may run counter to some agencies' rational self-interest: for example, they may want to get the best staff by paying high salaries. However, the question is whether donors can afford to look after their own best interests only. In the long run, the MoE's human resource issues can only be solved if donors agree to take collective action. Donor coordination on TA salaries would lead to greater aid effectiveness for donors and the

97. As mentioned in *Chapter 8*, there are limits to the scope of what CD agencies should expect to reform. In the case of the Afghan state's financial systems, the aim of education agencies cannot be to 'fix' them, but instead to work around them and have other arms of donor agencies work in parallel for incremental change.

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MoE alike, thus enabling them to deliver better education results for the Afghan people.

The art of the possible: pragmatism goes a long way

PACE-A's experience with CBE agency coordination from the Working Group on CBE demonstrates that respectful, pragmatic compromises across agencies are possible. The situation facing the Group was that CBE provision was spread unevenly across the country: some provinces were underserved while in other provinces several CBE organizations were active delivering education programmes – for example, UNICEF, BRAC, SCA, and Save the Children. Minister Atmar, in the name of equity, asked if perhaps CBE organizations could geographically relocate themselves and saturate the country more evenly. Organizations were not prepared to leave provinces altogether, because they would have had to sacrifice longstanding working relations, but they were willing to find compromise where possible. Later, PACE-A held CBE forums every month from December 2006 to April 2009, which led to further compromises between NGOs, perhaps founded on a solid level of trust, and because such compromises were necessary in the eyes of the MoE to enhance the CBE outreach and hence increase equity. Perhaps this spirit of cooperation and compromise could be an inspiration to donors in the HRDB for dealing with the TA dilemmas?

Pragmatism, compromise, and tailoring systems to Afghan realities were also necessary ingredients in both the MoE's and PACE-A's approach to teacher training. Teachers are the largest group of MoE employees and working with them is a test of the ability to scale up, a different challenge from central-level planning exercises. Some PACE-A teachers delivered teaching of an acceptable quality, as they had gone through informal NGO training, despite never having gone beyond grade 9 in the formal school system. PACE-A lobbied for their recognition and thus retained a valuable human resource, which could have been disqualified if abstract policy criteria from Kabul had not been adapted to field realities. The MoE also had to resort to short-term INSET programmes, given the impossibility of upgrading all its 159,000 teachers properly. It is better to work with what you have got than to do nothing; as is often the case in Afghanistan, the approach has got to be incremental.

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Begin with the basics – office space, language, computers

PACE-A, IIEP, and UNESCO Kabul found that being embedded in MoE offices was necessary for ensuring policy enactment, keeping abreast of the latest developments in the MoE, and building trust and political capital. They started out by helping refurbish the physical buildings (PACE-A furnished the director of basic education's office with a carpet) and providing MoE staff with basic furniture and computers. UNESCO Kabul simply built provincial or district literacy centres and invited MoE staff to come and work there.

Language and cultural competencies were also central. IIEP offered its staff a package of English lessons and computer skills (which is also a 'language' that needs to be learned). Translation into Dari and Pashto was central to government ownership of the NESP-I as well as the CBE policy. The fact that NESP-II was initially drafted in Dari carried symbolic significance, and MoE staff training in Iran, Jordan, and India had the advantage of cultural and linguistic proximity. Conversely, the MoE as well as the IIEP point out that international advisors who lack Dari or Pashto skills and knowledge of Afghan culture and realities are less efficient, as they need translators.

Starting with the basics made it possible to develop the capability to commit and engage, something that cannot be taken for granted. After having carpeted her office, given her a laptop with internet, and taught her computer skills, PACE-A's CBE advisor worked alongside the MoE's director for basic education and provided her with a monitoring tool that made it easy for her to visit CBE schools and assess them. The director quickly showed commitment. IIEP had similar experiences with the director of the DoPE and other staffs.

Keep advancing the gender agenda

Women are drastically under-represented in Afghanistan's education sector: 26 per cent of all MoE employees are female. As noted in *Chapter 5*, the stereotypical assumption is that women are not suitable for planning and management positions, and that the public authorities tend to collude with this belief. This keeps many women from even trying to compete with men for high managerial positions and produces a serious human resource issue.

Just as all aid agencies should 'analyse all their activities for CD opportunities that may exist within them' (Bethke, 2009: 25), so should

all CD agencies analyse all their activities for opportunities to increase gender equity and participation.

IIEP and the MoE, and probably several other agencies, have experimented with positive discrimination (employing female applicants wherever possible), financial and practical incentives (ensuring accommodation in separate dorms, hiring taxis for transport), and a public information campaign to increase awareness of the positive benefits of women's education. Afghanistan's education sector needs to keep experimenting with these initiatives.

Decentralization and nation-building

Decentralization of education – how much, of which responsibilities – is a key question in the larger nation-building scheme, as discussed in *Chapter 3*. The agencies in this publication have run into this issue in various ways.

The MoE has devolved recruitment of civil servants, decision-making on spending allocated budgets, and local-level planning to its sub-national offices. It confirms, however, that control over the curriculum cannot just be left entirely to provincial preferences; without central oversight, local power holders would be likely to hijack the curriculum, resulting in a fragmentation of the Afghan nation, each province with its own set of war heroes, with unpredictable consequences for access and equity within the provinces. National-level equity across provinces requires central control too. This, however, has to be weighed against a realistic estimate of how much control the centre can expect to exercise over the periphery.

PACE-A's programme went in the opposite direction, centralizing coordination and funding of an otherwise autonomous CBE system. It succeeded in getting CBE schools registered within the mainstream system, and in persuading the MoE to put CBE teachers on its payroll. Still, much of the training and service delivery was kept in NGO hands to avoid the MoE system's worst drawbacks, such as financial management. PACE-A's experience shows that not even Atmar's ministerial decrees were enough to get all provincial officers in line with CBE policy. Compromise and negotiation seem to be necessary.

Drawing on Rubin (2002) and Samady (2001), *Chapter 8* points out that, historically, nation-building in its top-down, ideological form has never succeeded in Afghanistan. Yet as indicated in the discussion of Giustozzi in *Chapter 3*, imposing an ideology is not the only way to

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make a population feel allegiance to the state. Equitable, non-ideological education provision is itself a way for the state to make itself relevant to its citizens. In the very long run, this should contribute to building a social contract, enable efficient taxation, and reduce the state of Afghanistan's dependence on foreign aid.

Perhaps a two-track curriculum, with a centrally defined and non-negotiable base and a modifiable superstructure to suit local preferences, would be a solution. In any case, the challenge of monitoring and enforcing these rules remains, particularly in insecure provinces. It remains to be tested whether technological solutions such as school monitoring using mobile phones, as has been tried successfully in Southern Sudan,[98] could play a role here.

Hope, faith, and trust: people matter

In drafting the CBE policy, 'the Ministry needed to set ambitious goals for itself. Minister Atmar made no apology for setting high goals but rather viewed it as his duty and the right of all Afghan children to receive quality education', according to PACE-A. This idealistic ambition pervaded not just CBE but NESP-I as a whole, as well as NESP-II, and has drawn flak for doing so, for instance during the 2010 review of the NESP-II for FTI endorsement (Adam Smith International, 2010*b*). Planning, after all, has to be realistic, otherwise it is a vision, not an operational plan. Hope is not a strategy.

A parallel example is the INEE Minimum Standards for Education, a global reference tool for education in emergencies, which is supported by the Netherlands and has been adapted to the Afghan context by PACE-A. Despite being called 'minimum', these are often rather high standards compared with field realities, which is why they also serve as an advocacy tool (personal communication with international NGO representative, 2009).

98. The US consultancy company Academy for Educational Development has pioneered the use of mobile phones in data gathering and monitoring in Southern Sudan (AED, 2009). Teachers, parent–teacher association members, or others, can use simple mobile phone questionnaires to report on the actual state of schools to the central level ministry. The same reporting could be done for curriculum or other aspects of the schools. This could circumvent layers of bureaucratic paper reporting and could potentially lead to better links between the citizens and the MoE and improved accountability. Technology will not be an easy fix to the problem of school governance, but the idea deserves to be tried.

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In response, it could be argued that a national strategic plan is *not* the same as a set of minimum standards. But that misses the point. In Afghanistan's political process, an ambitious national plan signalled a will for drastic change, a statement of national self-confidence, as if to say 'The country may be devastated, but that is even more reason why the education sector deserves the best.' After the plan had been presented in public, President Karzai ordered other line ministries to produce similar plans. NESP-I was an expression of will directed towards donors, education agencies in the sector, and the population, a refusal to accept mediocrity. A national plan may inspire feelings of hope, dignity, or confidence – invaluable resources in a context where everything is a priority and everything a challenge.

Sustained financial support is a must for achieving national development objectives

This book has analysed the challenges of developing capacity in Afghanistan's MoE, challenges of a technical nature as well as at policy level. However, beyond all this, it seems wise to recall the higher purpose of this exercise: Why is it essential to invest in education in Afghanistan?

For many years to come, there will be a critical need for sustained financial support – from the international community as well as the Government of Afghanistan – not just for the purpose of developing the MoE's capacity, but more importantly for enabling Afghanistan to achieve its overall national development objectives, which is a precondition for nation-building and socio-economic growth.

An education programme of a decent quality and relevance obviously needs committed and well-trained staff working in proper systems in order to deliver results across the country. However, adequate financial resources are also needed to run the education system and absorb the remaining 42 per cent of out-of-school children.

One of the MoE's recent accomplishments, as outlined in *Chapter 4*, is its production of a revised national education sector plan, the NESP-II. Perhaps the level of ambition outlined in the NESP-II is a good indication of the fact that the Government of Afghanistan, as well as the international community, still has a long way to go in developing the financial and human resources of the MoE and of Afghanistan as a whole.

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Chapter 11
Conclusion

Morten Sigsgaard

This chapter sums up the lessons learned, and points to future directions for CD in Afghanistan's education sector.

11.1 Future directions

The MoE's educational planning process in 2010, under the leadership of Minister Farooq Wardak, was marked by its attempt to join the EFA-FTI and thus gain additional funding for its NESP-II. In early March 2010, the MoE had an almost complete draft NESP-II ready (MoE, 2010*a*). This draft, however, featured a huge US$8 billion budget. As a part of the FTI accession process, an international consultant team from Adam Smith International (ASI) produced an education sector analysis (ASI, 2010*a*) and an assessment of the NESP-II (ASI, 2010*b*), which recommended developing an Interim Plan with a more realistic budget and clearer priorities. This Interim Plan was prepared with the assistance of an IIEP consultant, among others, and by December 2010 existed in draft form only (MoE, 2010*b*). This book has deliberately stuck to past events and refrained from commenting on this FTI accession process, as it is still ongoing. It can be noted, however, that the current draft Interim Plan looks fairly realistic, partly because it features a more credible analysis of the risks in Afghanistan's context, partly because its budget seems geared more towards actual implementation than the draft NESP-II was.

2010 was also a year where the much-debated governmental reconciliation process with the Taliban and other insurgents caught the news headlines, as it became apparent that the US and other international armed forces will pull out most of their troops, with US President Obama mentioning July 2011 as a deadline. It is uncertain whether the Taliban will join the government and, if so, what will happen to the education sector and the MoE. Would girls' education still be permitted? Would the attacks on education end? To what degree would international agencies support a different government? Would the MoE be able to retain the capacity that it has developed since 2002?

Until these political issues become clearer, the MoE and its partner agencies have lots of work to do, as *Chapters 4–9* show. A task that seems relevant, as described by the MoE in *Section 5.6*, is to further efforts to strengthen the provincial levels by establishing specialized CD institutes where larger numbers of national staff could be trained.

Given the potential risk of increasing conflict affecting the education system, another highly relevant task would be to set up a M&E system (as pointed out in *Section 5.6*, the MoE currently does not have one), which should include indicators for conflict and disaster preparedness, tailored to Afghanistan.[99] These preparedness measures are increasingly being integrated in educational planning risk zones around the world, including in the Global Education Cluster (IIEP, forthcoming).

11.2 Summary of lessons learned

A number of lessons were learned about CD from this book's case studies:

- **Building trusting partnerships takes time and is required for high-level political backing.** Decade-long engagements in Afghanistan have allowed agencies to gain credibility and develop trusting partnerships with the MoE. The agencies needed this base of trust and credibility in order to capitalize on windows of opportunity. Political backing was also ensured through advocacy and collaborative work.
- **People come and go, but systems remain.** Service delivery and enactment of the MoE's many positive policies hinges on systems. They enable planning based on facts, and can reduce corruption and reduce reliance on individuals. Systems can include EMIS, education surveys, and the P&G scheme; but can also be systematic support of grassroots movements. The next step in this process of systematization is to establish national CD programmes.
- **Donor flexibility and long-term commitment are helpful.** The donors – the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, and the USA – who supported the CD activities adhered to the Paris principles by engaging over several years, showing flexibility, and taking 'responsible risks'. Examples of good donor support were the acceptance of sudden changes in project design and of bottom-up

99. Such as the indicators for conflict preparedness exemplified in the *FTI Progressive Framework* (EFA-FTI, 2008), or Save the Children UK's *Education and Fragility Barometer* (2007).

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participatory programme design rather than a long-term strategic plan.

- **Donor coordination is needed for salary harmonization.** Coordination mechanisms such as the HRDB could be instrumental to solving a major staffing challenge: the salary disparity between the parallel systems of civil servants, funded by the MoE, and national TAs, funded by donors. Agencies should collaborate with the MoE to map and harmonize TA salaries. This would improve aid effectiveness and lead to better results for donors and the MoE alike.
- **Choose pragmatic and basic solutions.** The partnerships often began with the basic infrastructure, like supplying office space or teaching English and computer literacy. (Conversely, MoE planning in Dari led to increased Afghan ownership.) Pragmatic compromises were key: underqualified teachers were upgraded through short in-service teacher training programmes, and not all CBE teachers got on the MoE payroll immediately. 'Good enough' governance is better than none.
- **Gender is also a human resource issue.** Only 26 per cent of all MoE employees are female. Many women refrain from competing with men for high managerial positions due to internalized stereotypes of female inferiority. This is a serious human resource issue. Agencies need to scan all activities for opportunities to increase gender participation.
- **Nation-building should build on decent, non-ideological education.** Through equitable, non-ideological education provision, the state might one day make itself relevant to its citizens and become less dependent on foreign aid. Decentralization of education – how much, of which responsibilities – is a key question in the larger scheme of building an Afghan nation and state.
- **Put processes before products.** Agency collaboration with the MoE on policy documents such as the NESP, the Afghanized INEE Minimum Standards for CBE, and national policies for CBE, IE, and Literacy gave impetus to CD and enabled donor coordination. In the process, the MoE gained self-confidence, a prerequisite of the ability to commit and engage.
- **A plan is a statement of will and self-confidence.** The policy documents mentioned have been criticized for being unrealistic. However, in Afghanistan's political process, ambitious national plans signal a will for drastic change, and may create hope and

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self-confidence – invaluable resources in a context where everything is a priority and everything a challenge.

- **Sustained financial support is a must for achieving national development objectives.** Investment in developing MoE capacity is an investment in national capacity as a whole, which is a precondition for nation-building and socio-economic growth. An education programme of a decent quality and relevance obviously needs committed and well-trained staff working in proper systems in order to deliver results across the country. However, adequate financial resources are also needed to run the education system and absorb the remaining 42 per cent of out-of-school children. The level of ambition outlined in the NESP-II indicates that the Government of Afghanistan as well as the international community still have a long way to go in developing the MoE's financial and human resources.

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The editor

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